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Marlowe on Immortality

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I assert my moral right to be identified as the author of
this work.

Christopher St Johanser

February 2011

Hoc opus, hic labor est.

Virgil, Aeneid VI, 129.

Abstract

“Marlowe on Immortality” considers the work of Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) for its ideas of immortality. He employs varying genres to represent differently the intersections which arise between concepts, encounters which often reflect the historical collisions of ideologies. The question for research is “How do Marlowe’s texts function to represent conflicts in the late sixteenth century among and between classical, Christian and gnostic concepts of immortality?” The thesis employs an eclectic approach, including generic analysis and close reading of references in Marlovian texts to immortality. An introductory biographical chapter precedes a focus in Chapter Two upon the influence of Ovid in Marlowe’s works. Under consideration here are his translation *Ovid’s Elegies*, the play *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, an epitaph, a dedicatory epistle, and a mythic interlude in *Hero and Leander*.

Chapter Three is concerned with the stars, as stellar discourse impinges upon ideas of immortality. The first section is on the classical process of stellification in Marlowe’s work. The second is on the *Tamburlaine* plays; their focus shifting from stellification motifs arising within a classical cosmology, to discussions of stellar influence. The third concerns the astrology and astronomy in *Doctor Faustus*. An Appendix is attached which provides background to sixteenth-century understandings of cosmology. It is suggested that Marlowe does not employ Copernican thinking, but foregrounds an Aristotelian perspective against a Neoplatonist conception of the Heavenly spheres.

Chapter Four provides a reading of *Doctor Faustus*. The play is considered in the light of allegory; with Faustus figured as Everyman, as Icarus, as Lucifer, and as Simon Magus. Allegoresis is suggested as supporting also a unitary approach to the play. Attention is drawn to oblique referencing of gnostic beliefs figured in the partnership of Faustus and Helen, reflective of an alternate approach to immortality. An Appendix focused upon patristic accounts is provided to support this claim. The reading also addresses the Calvinist interpretation of Hell as it impacts upon Faustus, and argues that this theme is not diverted by Faustus's late attention to Pre-Socratic solutions to problems posed by conflicting ideas of immortality.

Preface

This study examines references to immortality across the full range of Christopher Marlowe's writing: poetic, dramatic and other. Marlowe represents ideas of immortality deriving from different traditions and perspectives which frequently overlap. These include: the poetry of Ovid, epic, the Olympian cosmogony, various philosophies, stellar influence and stellification stories, the histories of Christian conceptions of, and conditions for arriving at afterlives in Heaven and Hell, and gnosticism. He employs varying genres to represent differently the intersections which arise between these concepts, encounters which often reflect historical collisions of ideologies. Not all of his work has this focus, but many of his texts can be read for their referencing of immortality. The theme continually resurfaces, when it is looked for. My purpose has been to read those works in order to find out what Marlowe has to say on immortality, and to present my own critical thoughts and conclusions on the meanings of his words. In the process, I have learned much about ideas on immortality as they have arisen through the ages. I have learned also how ignorant I am, have been, and am certain to remain, of the breadth of thought and scholarship devoted over millenia to this subject. That awareness in particular makes all the more impressive to me the scholarly, poetic and dramatic achievements of Christopher Marlowe, as he addressed the theme of immortality in his brief life as a writer.

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Chapter One

Introduction

My ghost be with the old philosophers

Doctor Faustus 1.3.60

Christopher Marlowe's culture was partially constructed and challenged by a variety of meanings for the word "immortality". A close reading of his work for concepts surrounding that word, particularly when they collide with each other, will facilitate understanding his work, his culture, and the influence of his work on his culture. Deats has suggested of Marlowe that "we need to encompass the complications of cultural contexts if we wish to advance to a more comprehensive understanding of the playwright and his works" (2). I understand clusters of concepts around immortality in Marlowe's texts to be representative of the "complications of cultural contexts" in Marlowe's time. This thesis will employ close reading of references in the texts to immortality in relation to contemporary concepts in their intertextual environments. The main question for research is "How do Marlowe's texts function to represent conflicts in the late sixteenth century among and between classical, Christian and gnostic concepts of immortality?"

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) became a scholar at the King's School in Canterbury at Christmas in 1578, when he was nearly fifteen (Urry 42). John Gresshop, his first headmaster there, "had a larger private library than almost anyone outside of the circles of bishops and noblemen, far greater than the private collections of university dons" (Urry 47). The collection included many classical works in Latin and Greek, much Reformation theological literature and works of history

and poetry in English (Urry 47). The extent to which Marlowe had access to these books is not known. However, the King's School:

provided a classical education which supplied a new vocabulary and a new range of images with which to come to terms with contemporary upheavals; and it also introduced the performance of plays in Latin and Greek which might be compared with the popular drama and entertainments of courtyard and street (Urry xxv).

Evidently Marlowe inhabited an environment which valued an eclectic approach to study. That Marlowe was an apt student is evidenced by his being sent to Corpus Christi College in Cambridge at some time early in December 1580. He was entered in the university register of matriculation as "Christoferus Marlen" in March 1581 (Urry 55). His "Canterbury" scholarship was one of many to have been established by Archbishop Matthew Parker, primate of Elizabeth's Reformed Church. Successful candidates were required to be:

competently learned in grammar, born of honest parents, and be of such qualities as should be thought meet, and of such as were thought likely to proceed in Arts, and afterwards to make Divinity their study (Ingram 63).

Marlowe certainly proceeded in Arts, and studied Divinity, but he never took the Holy Orders for which this privileged education had intended him.

Marlowe and his fellows depended upon Latin texts and commentaries which were frequently themselves lenses through which to read Greek ideas. The advent of printing had enabled humanists to disseminate old texts more widely than had been possible with hand-copied manuscripts, so that "By the early 16th century, the major Latin and Greek works of oratory, history, political and moral philosophy and poetry had been put into print" (Rivers 107). Students could also

read relatively modern works in Latin, including those of Petrarch, as part of a curriculum of studies in Christian divinity.

Ingram says that Thomas Heywood, “at this period ... a Fellow of Peterhouse” (75), across the road from Corpus Christi College, remarks that “dramatic entertainments were publicly acted, in which graduates of good place and reputation have been specially parted” [i.e. given parts] (28). Heywood in 1633 provided Marlowe’s play *The Jew of Malta* with a dedication to one Thomas Hammon. According to Cheney, Hammon had been a classmate of Marlowe’s at the King’s School, and followed him to Corpus Christi (2004 286). There was a thriving theatrical subculture at Cambridge, as there continued to be in Canterbury, but London was the natural centre of the Elizabethan theatrical world. By September 1589, Marlowe was lodging there with Thomas Watson (c.1557-1592) in Norton Fulgate, close to the Curtain theatre, one of the first public, purpose-built playhouses (Simkin 20).

While Marlowe as writer is remembered mainly for plays and poetry, his translations provide the most direct evidence of his classical scholarship. His extant work consists of two verse translations from the Latin (Ovid and Lucan), one short lyrical poem, one longer and perhaps incomplete epyllion, seven plays, an epitaph and a dedicatory epistle. In this oeuvre, the influence of a range of classical authors including Aristotle, Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Lucan, Seneca and Lucretius can be demonstrated, as will become evident in this thesis. Marlowe’s friend Thomas Watson “proved it was possible for a scholar to forge a career as a playwright and patronage poet” (Cheney 2004 91). He produced a Latin translation of Sophocles’ *antigonei* (1581) and responded to Tasso’s Italian pastoral play *Aminta* in a Latin poem entitled *Amyntas* (1585), not the later work *Amintae Gaudia* that Marlowe arranged to be published (Belnarz 91). With other students from Cambridge and Oxford colleges, such as

Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, Thomas Lodge and George Peele, Christopher Marlowe was at the nucleus of the so-called “University Wits”, who shared a penchant for Ovidian poetry reflective of their interest in the Italian Renaissance and the erotic sonnets of Petrarch (1304-1374). Boas, Belnatz, Ingram and Nicholl discuss these. They were the “bright young things” of their time, and Marlowe early established himself as a leading light among them.

On leaving Cambridge, it seems that Marlowe took up with a grouping of intellectuals, known since 1903 as the School of Night, a name first put forward by Arthur Acheson in *Shakespeare and the Rival Poet* (Bradbrook 7). The group’s activities took place under the patronage of Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1603), then reigning favourite of Queen Elizabeth (Bradbrook 4). Thomas Harriot (c.1560-1621), a mathematician of European reputation, was tutor to Raleigh and afterwards to the Earl of Northumberland, one of several noblemen supposed to be members of his “school”, which by Bradbrook’s account included the poets Chapman, Marlowe, Roydon and Warner. They “studied theology, philosophy, astronomy, geography and chemistry...Harriott, Marlowe and Raleigh were generally suspected of atheism, if not of direct intercourse with the devil” (Bradbrook 8). Bradbrook details interactions between members of this supposed school, and traces those difficult events which arose for each of the named three as a result of this “general suspicion”. The significance of the group for this thesis is not in those outcomes, but in the breadth of their shared and documented intellectual activity. Regardless of any other personal effect, as a member of this group Marlowe expanded his knowledge-base beyond the limitations of a Cambridge degree in divinity, to include the New World, and a scientific viewpoint. This increased breadth of knowledge is reflected in his work, particularly in his approach to astronomy in *Doctor Faustus*.

Chapter Two, “On Immortal Fame and Love”, will focus on Ovidian influence upon Marlowe’s ideas of immortality, as it flows through the different genres he employs. His translation of the *Amores* into his own *Ovid’s Elegies* requires study of the changing poetic forms of elegy, which Ovid metamorphoses from funerary lament back into erotic verse, in order to express ideas about immortality other than those presented in the epic genre. Marlowe continues the process of change by employing heroic couplets in his translation. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is a play also generally supposed to have been written early in his career. Cheney says that “most studies typically work from a popular three-phase model” in which *Dido* is written in his Cambridge years (1997 4). *Dido* challenges epic heroism in Virgilian form in favour of immortalisation of its heroine through erotic tragedy. Then follows the main sequence of plays.

Works definitely written near the end of Marlowe’s short career are his Latin blank verse epitaph on Sir Roger Manwood, and his Latin prose dedicatory epistle to Mary Sidney Herbert on the occasion of the posthumous publication of Thomas Watson’s *Amintae Gaudia*. The epyllion *Hero and Leander* is also generally considered to belong to this period. For present purposes it is irrelevant that debate on dating continues. All attend to the subject-matter of immortality in formal and conceptual ways that extend an essentially Ovidian poetic. The epitaph continues to explore the form and style of elegy in Latin, the epistle offers unique self-references for Marlowe’s poetics of immortality, and an invented myth fragment in the epyllion provides a moral for those who contemplate seeking knowledge of immortality.

Immortality as an idea in Marlowe’s work has associations not confined to what are generally considered to be classical or Christian cultures. His literary output emerges from diverse intellectual and

cultural contexts. With more works becoming available in Latin and vernacular editions in the late sixteenth century in England, one effect was to increase further the array of possible meanings for immortality persisting in residual forms from Celtic, Norse and Germanic lore; expressed in terms of Arthurian legend, rebirth, ghosts, Hel as a Norse goddess, and so on.

Marlowe's translation of *Lucan's First Book*, for example, contains reference to a belief attributed to druids, that may have surfaced with them *de novo*, or perhaps originated in a deep historical link to Pythagoreanism:

For you hold
That souls pass not to silent Erebus
Or Pluto's bloodless kingdom, but elsewhere
Resume a body: so, (if truth you sing)
Death brings long life (450-454).

The idea that immortality can be obtained through bloodlines is another cross-cultural example. Marlowe has Tamburlaine, a Scythian, explain to his sons that, "My flesh, divided in your precious shapes, / Shall still retain my spirit, though I die, / And live in all your seeds immortally" (*II Tamb.* 5.3.173-6). Watson (not the one who was Marlowe's friend) suggests that in Elizabethan society, a systematic Protestant attack on Catholic links between living and dead had disturbed and displaced the community's sense of generation:

Procreation became, in part, a displacement of sacramentalism and transubstantiation; a tangible and communal form of immortality tied to the cycle of human life, a consuming of the body in the hope of rendering life eternal (6).

The theme of generationally-adduced immortality is reprised and classically modified in Marlowe's dedicatory epistle to accompany the last work of the Watson who *was* Marlowe's friend, wherein Watson's poem is figured as a child to be made immortal. In an elaborate

conceit, Mary Sidney Herbert is urged to “be patroness to this posthumous Amyntas as you would to adopt a son” (8). She, now as crowned with poems as Ariadne was with stars, should also accept this new star to her crown, and “with the clarity of mind which the creator of men and gods, Jupiter, has assigned to your family, receive him and keep him safe” (15-16). Jupiter’s power to immortalise can be passed on, and Marlowe’s epistle suggests that as member of a so-gifted family, she herself can choose to be an agent ensuring the immortality of Watson’s verse when it is re-figured as a star-child of her own adoption.

Chapter Three, “Stars, Stellification and Astrophysics”, is divided into three sections. The first, *Marlowe’s Stars*, is a discussion focusing upon “stellification”, an epic process through which human immortality is linked to the stars. (Stellification is the mechanism Marlowe proposes to be operative in immortalising Amyntas above). In the Virgilian perspective of the *Aeneid*, Apollo approves Julius’ military heroism with “so man scales the stars” (Fowler 59). This is the common perspective of classical Homeric poetry; so that Ovid also, though through Venus rather than Apollo, describes how Julius’s “new expuls’d sprite, / ...a goodly shining star it up aloft did stye [mount] / And drew a great way after it bright beams like burning hair” (*Metamorphoses* XV 948-56).

The second section of Chapter Three, *Tamburlaine’s Stellar Influences*, shows how the ambitious Scythian shepherd also follows epic tradition by expecting to be immortalised amongst the stars. He predicts that his soul “dissevered from this flesh, / Shall mount the milk-white way” (*II Tamb.* 4.3.131-2), but shows himself to be much more interested in earthly conquest than in stellar immortality. Primarily, he relates to his own star for its enormous influence. He has something of a fixation upon the power of his star, by which he

understands that his success on earth is guaranteed. This stellar influence is ruminated upon by friend and foe alike, but none disagree with his basic premise. Armed with the confidence given by this literally unbounded guarantee, Tamburlaine will not be outdone by any person, or constrained by any limitation: “I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune’s wheel about” (*I Tamb.* 1.2.174-5). Nevertheless, he meets his death with a surprisingly stoic equanimity, having always allowed in Epicurean terms for his own bodily dissolution.

In the third section, *Faustian Astrophysics*, I discuss how Marlowe deals with the stars in *Dr. Faustus*. He explores ideas around immortality such as “soul”, “star” and “heaven”, hybrids of ancient ideas of an afterlife with predominantly Greek attempts to derive rational notions of astrophysical phenomena. I have provided an Appendix A, *On Sixteenth-Century Cosmology*, in which some necessary background is provided. The physical universe, represented in Elizabethan times in terms of Greek and Ptolemaic cosmology, supposed a geocentric paradigm that lent itself to a tradition assumed by Faustus’s magic, including the Pythagorean idea of a cyclic passage for immortal souls migrating between celestial spheres, their fates governed by the stars (Fowler 62 *et seq.*). Christianity accommodated some of these ideas and rejected others, within a defining framework of revelation, sin and redemption through faith, and Christ as saviour, that had been worked out over centuries. All cyclic formulations of immortality were condemned by the Christian Church as incompatible with revelation, but they persisted, especially in classical poetic tropes.

The stars had long been guided by “Intelligences”, or angelic spirits; now these spiritual Intelligences, demoted by Reformed theology and multiplied by telescopic observation, offered *loci* for personal immortality (Fowler 71).

Faustus is curious about these, as befits a theological scholar; but, like Tamburlaine, he is apparently not greatly interested in immortality for himself. He seems to reject the conventional Neoplatonic translation of his soul to a suprastellar heavenly sphere that is offered by Christian faith, in favour of a quest for more certain knowledge of what he supposes to be the underlying Aristotelian physics.

In Chapter Four, “Helen and Hell”, I suggest that gnostic ideas play a role in *Doctor Faustus* by presenting an alternative to Christian eschatology that is not based upon the usual Olympian cosmogony. I argue that the play can be read as an allegory, containing not only classical and Christian but gnostic elements in its allusions. Central elements of gnostic tradition are textually embodied in the scripturally-verifiable persons of Simon Magus and his companion Helen. This pair, subject to Christian discreditation as heresiarchs, hold a significance for the play that has been somewhat neglected. I suggest that Marlowe recuperates gnostic ideas in allegorical figurations of Faustus and Helen and their interaction. With regard to immortality, the gnostic conception of knowledge offers a distinctly alternative framework to Christianity’s sin and redemption, while a contrasting universal human folly, displayed in farcical variety, is a theme which unifies the play, especially integrating the central sections. Some exploration of the history of gnosticism is essential to developing this argument. I have written Appendix B *On Simon, Helen and Gnostic Belief* to provide what I hope will be a sufficient introduction to a large and difficult subject without inserting a lengthy digression in a chapter primarily concerned with a close reading of *Doctor Faustus*. In the early centuries after Christ, theological syntheses were attempted to assimilate Greek thinking and a selection of Jewish scriptures into Christian doctrine. Alternative ideas of an afterlife, developed in cultures and traditions which did not find

acceptance in developing doctrine, were anathematized (Ferreiro 135). Gnosticism falls into that category.

More obviously, *Doctor Faustus* is enveloped in debates arising at a time when Protestant conceptions of immortality developed by Calvin were being adapted to the political needs of Elizabeth's Reformed Church, itself still locked in mortal struggle with a Catholic Church intent on proscribing Protestant heresy. Classical concepts informed all Christian doctrines as:

Reformation and Counter-Reformation theologians alike appealed to the authority of the early Latin Fathers and...of the still more pristine Greek Fathers, with all the difficult learning that entailed (Fowler 7).

Erasmus prepared his own edition of the New Testament from the Greek in 1516 and found many errors in Jerome's Latin translation, the Vulgate, used by the church since the fourth century (Rivers 89). Jerome's is the Bible to which Faustus refers (*D.F.*1.1.38).

Of concern to Elizabeth's Government and Reformed Church was a new Catholic translation into English of the Vulgate issued in 1582, "to counteract the doctrinal tendentiousness of Protestant versions" (Rivers 92). The curriculum at Corpus Christi was directed towards supporting that Government and Church. The scholarship which took Marlowe to Cambridge was part of Archbishop Parker's design to bolster the church with more divinely-educated brainpower. Marlowe himself may have carried out intelligence work for the government, visiting the Catholic English College at Rheims between 1584 and 1587 during absences from College detailed in records of the buttery book (Urry 58). Scholastic ability in the translation of religious texts *was* political intelligence in Europe.

It is not my intention in this thesis to attempt to unravel complications of Christian beliefs as they pertain to ideas governing access to immortality in *Doctor Faustus*, such as, for example, the timing of repentance. First, it is too large a task. Second, *Doctor Faustus* can be seen to skirt description of immortality in heaven from any Reformed perspective, focusing instead on Ptolemaically heavenly states discussed in Chapter Three. Of greater relevance is that *Doctor Faustus* considers damnation as a “method of access” to Hell, and explores the idea of Hell as a locus, with final action taking place around a “hellmouth” standing in sharp contrast to Mephistophilis’s celebrated Calvinist conception of Hell.

This present work is an exploration of Marlowe’s *oeuvre* in which I set out to trace references to immortality. I have not considered passing references in *Edward II*, *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*. Marlowe utilises differing genres to display a large variety of ideas resisting easy summary and interacting restlessly. It will not be thought surprising then, that there are many knotty problems of scholarship presented, literary-critical and otherwise, which I have noted (where I have noticed them) only to pass by. Existing scholarship is extensive and venerable. Ideologies operate competitively when they address the question of immortality in contemplation of the finitude of mortal life, working at the grandest scales of thought, hope, fear and despair. In his textual references to immortality, Marlowe represents the available variety of ideology in concepts of the late sixteenth century, presents their inherent complexities, and portrays indirectly the conflicts arising between them. To do so, he employs a wide range of genres in verse, prose and on stage; always in ways which interrogate, rather than assert any particular authorial belief. These ways have been my focus.

Chapter Two

Immortal Fame and Love

*An old wood stands uncut of long year's space,
Tis credible some godhead haunts this place.
Ovid's Elegies, Liber Tertius, Elegia I. 1-2.*

The depth of Marlowe's interest in Ovid (43 BCE – CE 17/18) is first demonstrated by his innovative translation into English of the *Amores*, a work unpublished in his lifetime. There are many difficulties in dating Marlowe's texts, into which it is not necessary here to inquire, but critical consensus judges this an early work, perhaps completed while he was still at Cambridge (Cheney 2006 12). Marlowe's *Ovid's Elegies* is the first translation of this work from Latin into any European vernacular, being printed in three editions between 1595 and the early years of the seventeenth century, each edition having Sir John Davies's "Epigrams" as a companion piece (Cheney 2006 2-5). *Dido, Queen of Carthage* also shows a strong Ovidian influence even though its obvious principal source is Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*. I shall have nothing to say about *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, set though it is in a erotic timeless Ovidian pastoral, because the poem has nothing else to say about immortality. Other works strongly suggestive of an Ovidian influence are the Latin prose *Dedicatory Epistle* to Mary Sidney Herbert, the Latin blank verse elegy *On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood*, and the epyllion *Hero and Leander*, perhaps an unfinished work.

My main aim in this chapter is to examine how Ovid's influence operates upon these works of Marlowe, in order to illustrate the interactive outcomes of his generic explorations of erotic elegy, funerary verse, tragedy and prose epistle, together with his literary methods of expressing sixteenth-century classical ideas of

immortality. This is a large subject, even when limited to the subject-matter of immortality. Cheney, an invaluable source, has for example attempted to demonstrate that Marlowe develops an “Ovidian career... to contest the Virgilian-based model of his first great rival, Spenser” (1997 14). Along the way, Cheney demonstrates that the choice of poetic genres has political, religious and sexual implications common to “Queen Elizabeth’s nascent Empire” (15) and the Roman Empire in which Ovid, Virgil and Lucan wrote. A further restriction I shall impose upon this thesis is to eliminate the putative rivalry with Spenser (c.1552-1599) as an area of discussion. Another is to refrain from any attempt to tease out political allusions or lessons for his own society that Marlowe might arguably draw upon from other writers. What I do hope to show is Marlowe’s developing grasp of differences arising when immortality as a subject is handled in a variety of genres.

What is certain is that Ovid’s poetry influenced Marlowe throughout his career. For an Ovidian poet, eternal fame and immortality is accessible through writing in genres in which Venus, draped in sea-shore myrtle, is the governing principle of a timeless universe. The Ovidian tradition in poetry arises together with that of Virgil (70-19 BCE), the two poets being contemporary in imperial Rome. Their contest is symbolised poetically by adoption of the laurel and the myrtle as emblems, these being trees sacred to the cults respectively of Apollo and Venus. Marlowe assigns the primary symbolic power in his own poetry to the myrtle of Venus. A self-reference makes this declaration in a preface to a work he brought to the press at the end of 1592. This was *Amintae Gaudia*, the last work of his long-time friend Thomas Watson, for which Marlowe was literary executor (Cheney 2006 23). The work is prefaced with a prose Latin *Dedicatory Epistle* to Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke (1561-1621). In it, Marlowe writes:

Thus I, whose very slim ability is owed to the seashore
myrtle of Venus and Daphne's always-greening hair,
on the first and every page of these poems will beg
your favour, chosen-lady of the Muses.

(*trans. Striar* 16-19)

The dedicatory epistle, as Cheney puts it:

sheds light on Marlowe's sense of his role as an Elizabethan poet near the end of his life. He is seeking patronage from the age's most distinguished literary patroness, and he presents himself as an Ovidian and Petrarchan poet on the path to a higher, Virgilian career, in search of fame and glory (2006 25).

As all knew from Ovid's tale, the leaves which form Apollo's laurel crown are taken from Daphne's metamorphosed hair after Apollo's intended rape (*Metamorphoses*). Cheney here considers the "ever-greening hair" reference to follow a Petrarchan twist by which the lyric poet "serves a beautiful mistress" in order to gain renown (2006 24). He takes this as slender evidence of a Petrarchan component he proposes to exist in Marlowe's poetic *cursus*. Kennedy suggests instead that "Apollo cannot possess Daphne but he resolves to make the laurel she becomes 'my tree' so that his failed desire becomes a species of self-memorial" (129). It may be that Marlowe suggests Mary Sidney Herbert reflect upon the manner in which the laurel became an object of veneration. He draws delicate attention to Apollo's wreath as a theft of forever-dead leaves, a self-aggrandising substitute memento of failed violation. Daphne's always-greening hair itself is preferred to the laurel as a living symbol for a poet such as Marlowe; he suggests it befits better that which is more truly eternal.

The dedicatory epistle was in Marlowe's far future as he embarked upon translating the *Amores* into *Ovid's Elegies*, a set of erotic poems which soon declares the relevance of genre in a comic encounter over immortalisation with Virgilian epic. Each of the three

books to the *Amores* contains a pattern of elegies. Ovid's poet-persona launches himself into his first: "With Muse prepared I meant to sing of arms" (5). The past tense is important because it denotes a condition of frustration arisen before the poem even begins. Cheney observes that the particular prepared Muse is Epic, by whose service a poet might sing the immortal fame of a hero in dactylic hexameters, and that Ovid's line parodies the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid*, epic poem *par excellence*. But the second line of each couplet is now a metric foot short in the Latin—though not in Marlowe's English, a point to which I shall shortly return. The frustrated poet-persona feigns indignation, holding Cupid responsible: "Rash boy, who gave thee power to change a line?" (1.9). The poet-persona's verse form is reduced from the formal paired hexameters in which he claims to have intended to write an epic. He is perforce now obliged to apostrophise a substitute muse, *viz.* the "Elegian muse, that warblest amorous lays, / [To] girt my shine [sic] brow with sea-bank myrtle sprays" (33-34). He describes her features:

Elegia came with hairs perfumed sweet.
 And one I think was longer of her feet.
 A decent form, thin robe, a lover's look,
 By her foot's blemish greater grace she took (III. 1. 7-10).

Here as elsewhere, Marlowe modifies the elegiac couplets, that is alternating dactylic hexameters and pentameters (Kennedy 11), in which Ovid composed this quatrain. Formally, he reinscribes elegy's metre. *Ovid's Elegies* is the first early modern English poem, granted a translation, to be composed in sustained heroic couplets (Cheney 2006 2-5). This particular quatrain suffers by losing the self-referencing elegiac form, doing so in order that Elegia may regain a metric balance. Marlowe thereby extends Cupid's original metamorphosis, that which frustrates Ovid's desire to write epic.

According to Kennedy, elegy's history as a genre begins in Greece in the seventh century B.C. with elegies dealing with war and love, while later poets employed the established form of elegiac diptychs for funerary lament (11-12). Ovid uses elegiac metric to re-target an old audience for a comic erotic romp, but he is not obliged thereby to abandon funerary elegy's *topos* of immortalisation. Marlowe honours these original functions of elegy in *Tamburlaine II*: "Zenocrate had been the argument / Of every epigram or elegy" (2.4.94-5). Brown notes that "An elegy was a poem of commemoration, but it was also a love lyric, and as such it had potential to spill over into satire" (Cheney 2004 109). Marlowe's return to apparently commemorative lament in his Latin blank epitaph of Manwood may contain just such a satirical subtext, as I shall later discuss.

Ovid's poet-persona blames Cupid for determining not only the new metric of the *Amores*, but also the new theme: "Firm with his knee he flexed the sinuous bow, / And crying, 'Poet, here's your theme!', let go" (1.27-8). His erotic assault obliges the poet-persona to take up an implicit challenge; to immortalise the living by erotic, rather than heroic, verse. Through him, Ovid asserts that the genre of erotic elegy offers a Venusian route to immortality that is surer and more generally available than the heroic route of Apollo's warriors. Abandoning in these poems (though not others) the *topos* of lament, he has restored an older function of Greek elegy to suit his erotic representations of a contemporary Latin society. By the time Ovid's poet-persona reaches his third elegy, he is committed to erotic immortalities, and able to meet the challenge with (in Marlowe's words) "I love but one, and her I love change never, / If men have faith, I'll live with thee for ever" (*Ovid's Elegies* 1.3.15-16). Marlowe gives double assurance of erotic eternization in the end-rhymes of this couplet but what the poet-persona is actually proposing to do in the

splendid first line is left crucially underdetermined. It may be that he vows never to exchange his love for another, or he may express a wish that she never change, or he may undertake never to enact such a change upon her himself. How much of this polysemy is Ovid's in the original Latin and how much is owed to Marlowe's translation is uncertain, to me at least.

The first clause of the second line imposes a major condition, one that may be being voiced as an aside to his audience, and/or as a condition raising portentous questions about men, the nature of faith, and the faithfulness or otherwise of men. The second clause does address the loved one and possibly steers the line towards a particular mortal woman, say to Corinna. In that case, it appears that he proposes to render her immortal, and to do so in a manner paralleling the "singing" of a hero in epic verse. This proposition becomes more direct in later elegies as the potential becomes more widely known amongst his fans. We learn without any doubt later that the poet-persona is a deceiver, and we can legitimately read these assurances, one or all, as merely a seducer's lies. At all events, the claims he makes are seen in retrospect to be for the moment only. Their truth-status is at times comically uncertain. None of this ambiguity, doubt, and comedic potential obviates the poet-persona's clearly-stated intention to immortalise by way of elegy, Cupid having forbidden him the epic form.

There remains a not inconsiderable possibility that the line is directed to an eternal feminine principle. The muse of love poetry, Erato, is herself a candidate for the poet-persona's attention. He suggests that his one love is this myrtle-clad muse when he later claims and prays that "Verse is immortal, and shall ne'er decay. / About my head be quivering myrtle wound, / And in sad lovers' heads let me be found" (1.XV.32). He is perhaps urging himself to keep

faith with her against the grain of what he will admit to be his own faithless mortality, as a poet must if he seeks to be eternally remembered for his immortal verse.

Ovid celebrates an opportunity open to the poet, as well as to his subject, to gain immortality by way of the fame of an enduring name in these elegies: “Thy scope is mortal, mine eternal fame, / That all the world may ever chant my name” (1.X.7-8). The gloating exuberance of this ambition, so suited to Marlowe’s interest, is reinforced in the dedication he provides to *Elegia XV ad invidios, quod fama poetarum sit perennis* / “to those who are envious that the fame of poets is eternal” viz. “Verse is immortal, and shall ne’er decay. / To verse let kings give place, and kingly shows” (1. XV.32-33). The dedication refers to the fame of poets, but in these lines, it is verse itself which is perdurable, taking proper precedence over both earthly placeholders and the pomp and pageantry of their ceremonials.

There was a certain risk attached to such assertions, one with which Marlowe the translator himself was to become familiar. As Barsby puts it:

it was impossible for a Roman of the Augustan age to detach himself from the political and social conditions of his time, and the *Amores* inevitably reflects Ovid’s attitude to the regime of Augustus and its ideals...Ovid is hinting at a position which becomes more explicit in the *Ars Amatoria*—the assertion of the validity of the life of *cultus* and modern sophistication as against the religious and moral earnestness of Augustus’ reforms and his idealization of the past (11).

Ovid’s poet-persona insists that “After death all men receive their right. / Then though death rakes my bones in funeral fire, / I’ll live,

and as he pulls me down mount higher” (1.XV.40-42). He is proclaiming an egalitarian *post-mortem* justice; and a sure personal fate to live beyond his own death, a life conflated with the condition of his fame. The longer he is dead, it seems, the higher will he be raised in the world’s esteem, and the more he himself will live. Marlowe, translating this conundrum, no doubt also pondered upon it.

In sum, the Ovidian tradition, with which Marlowe became familiar by way of his translation, subverts the Virgilian by challenging epic in favour of a genre in which immortality belongs not to heroes acquiring honour through martial glory, but to poets, their verses and those they love. Beyond his own fame, his own fate, and the fame and fate of his verses, Ovid’s poet claims a godlike power to make others immortal. In Elegia III *ad amicam* / “to his mistress”, for example, the poet-persona invites Corinna in particular to join the company of goddesses, claiming that the fame of commemoration in his verse equates to immortality for his mistress. He arrogates to himself as poet a Jovian power to immortalise minor goddesses, inviting Corinna to share their fame:

Be thou the happy subject of my books,
That I may write things worthy of thy fair looks.
By verses horned Io got her name,
And she to whom in shape of swan Jove came,
And she that on a feigned bull swam to land,
Gripping his false horns with her virgin hand.
So likewise we will through the world be rung,
And with my name shall thine be always sung (19-26).

The last two lines in particular provide a good example of the happy balance between content and poetic form Marlowe was able to achieve, emphasising the symmetric, intertwined immortality of poet and lover by way of a deceptively simple heroic couplet, equally symmetric and intertwined in its internal assonance and euphony.

Otherwise, the poet-persona is playing a trio of matching queens from his Olympic suite. These legendary figures, living on, provide capital exempla for his strategy of seduction. Of particular interest is the legend of the mortal Leda, raped by Jove as swan. She was not metamorphosed or immortalised by the experience, but went on to give birth to four children at once. The mortal status, or immortality, of these children is famously at question; especially that of the Dioscuri, the Gemini twins, because their paternity in legend is shared with Leda's mortal husband. Helen is another child of that peculiar union, one who is generally credited as carrying Jovian genes. Marlowe refers to this history in *Doctor Faustus* when Faustus credits Helen with just this Jovian power to immortalise: "Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss" (5.1.99). When Faustus lauds his raised Helen with "Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter, / When he appeared to hapless Semele" (5.1.112-3), he is obliquely confirming her origin and divinity. I shall return to the significance of this inheritance in Chapter Four, noting here only that there are gnostic implications to a supposed divinity for Helen that go beyond her capacity to immortalise, or her incarnation at Troy.

More generally, Ovid's poet-persona boasts to his audience that through the eternizing function of elegy he may immortalise whomever he chooses. He acknowledges a predilection for "kinde wenches", but it seems his poetic strategy has forced him to adopt a defensive measure, of sorts. He encounters his fans:

In verse to prepare kinde Wenches t'is my part,
And whom I like eternize by mine art.
Garments do weare, iewells and gold do wast,
The fame that verse gives doth for ever last.
To give I love, but to be ask't disdayne,
Leave asking, and I'le give what I refraine (1.X.60-4).

Ovid is developing an erotic topos in which “kinde wenches” are tempted by fame counterfeiting for them a goddess-like immortality, to “prepare” them for that which he insists they do not ask.

By the time in this elegiac sequence at which the poet-persona would wish to serve only Corinna, he can afford to express a satiated complacency: “For great revenues, I good verses have, / And many by me to get glory crave” (1.XVII.27-28). Cheney glosses: “Marlowe’s and Ovid’s sense is ‘Many women hope to acquire eternal fame through my verses’” (2006 98). Ovid is advertising his erotic strategy as effective. His promise of immortalisation through verse puts money in his sexual bank, with a queue of hopefuls still outside his door. There is in this programme of elegiac seduction a commonality of sexist reference with the epic mode, in which focus is always upon the hero’s experience. In this view, the female, once conquered and inseminated, immortal or not, is an obstacle to male progress, her beguilement necessary only in that it sets up a demonstration of the final superiority of his heroic will. In Ovid’s Elegia XVII, for example, “love-snared Calypso is supposed to pray, / A mortal nymph’s refusing lord to stay” (15-16). Calypso is cast in the role of an entangling mortal woman baulking a hero’s struggle to fulfill his destiny.

Some critics consider Marlowe’s translation of Elegia XVII faulty, a judgement having relevance to his treatment of immortality, as I shall explain over the next few paragraphs. Cheney says:

Here is a case where Niger [A Venetian commentator in Latin upon the *Amores*] clearly explained the Latin but Marlowe either did not read it or did not pay attention to it... According to McKeown: “*mortalis*, pointedly juxtaposed to *nymphe*, is emphatic: Calypso [herself immortal] tempted Odysseus to stay with her by promising him immortality” (Cheney 2006 98).

Marlowe continues in another genre the process of weaving the theme of inconstant males and erotic women together with immortality. He writes the tragedy of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, a play based closely upon “The Passion of the Queen”, Book IV of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which epic continues the *Iliad* into the period after Aeneas’ escape from the destruction of Troy. Ovid in *Elegia XVII* and Virgil in the *Aeneid* repeat the common Homeric trope of a hero overcoming the blandishments of a sorceress who seeks sexually to enchant him, in order that he may journey on to reach his true heroic destiny and immortalisation.

As Virgil’s hero journeys towards the founding of a New Troy in Rome he, like Odysseus, is shipwrecked and succoured by a powerful woman who wishes him to stay. Gamel suggests that: “Aeneid IV raises the possibility that the poem will metamorphose from epic to tragedy, with Dido taking center stage from Aeneas” (614). The possibility in Virgil is realised in Marlowe. Marlowe’s error in respect of Calypso, if that is what it is, functions to equate Dido’s standing with that of Calypso as mortal, seeking immortality. She purchases a kiss from Aeneas, whose constancy she has doubted, at the price of the crown and sceptre of imperial Libya. “This kiss shall be fair Dido’s punishment”, says the seriously tempted Aeneas (4.4.37). She rhapsodises her happiest moment. “Now looks Aeneas like immortal Jove: / O Where is Ganymede, to hold his cup, / And Mercury, to fly for what he calls?” (4.4.45-48). Dido identifies Aeneas as Jove, whose power to immortalise is undoubted:

It is Aeneas’ frown that ends my days.

If he forsake me not, I never die;

For in his looks I see eternity,

And he’ll make me immortal with a kiss (4.4.120-4).

Levin writes: “When Dido wooed Aeneas and spoke of becoming ‘immortall with a kisse’, it seemed to be little more than a figure of speech” (154). I think Dido is sufficiently stung by Cupid’s intoxicating barb as to believe her delusion of him as Jovian. For Dido, Aeneas has, like Helen, the power to immortalise with a kiss.

Aeneas, though tempted by her adulation, and the crown of Libya to boot, is unstung by Cupid, and so returns to consideration of the impact of clogging indebtedness upon his own prospects for immortality through epic fame:

Grant she or no, Aeneas must away;
Whose golden fortune, clogg’d with courtly ease,
Cannot ascend to Fame’s immortal house,
Or banquet in bright Honour’s burnish’d hall,
Till he hath furrow’d Neptune’s glassy fields,
And cut a passage through his topless hills (4.3.7-12).

Aeneas has thus already decided to stop vacillating and enact his abandonment of Dido when he is castigated by Jove’s messenger Mercury on a follow-up visit: “Why cousin, stand you building cities here, / And beautifying the empire of this Queen, / While Italy is clean out of thy mind?” (5.1.27-29). Marlowe altogether subverts Virgilian epic, rendering heroic Aeneas disreputable.

Marlowe foregrounds instead the queen’s erotic perspective and reinscribes the story as tragedy. Contact with inconstant Aeneas must prove fatal to Dido, for in contrast to the teleological epic imperative imposed upon him by Jove and (oddly) his mother Venus to obtain heroic glory, Dido’s tragic telos is oriented to an erotic eternization. It is demanded by Jove that Aeneas, as Virgilian hero, overcomes her influence and fulfils the destiny of his line to found a New Troy. As author of a revisionist script, Dido’s “fantasies of absolute agency intermittently threaten to rewrite imperial mythology and literary

history" (Kinney 261). In a patriarchal culture, absolute female erotic agency will not serve to underpin a narrative, this being a reason why major accommodations were required to be made in Elizabethan England. Elizabeth chose publically at least to remain a virgin, perhaps to avoid the fate of Queen Dido who, as an abandoned mortal lover, must die. Love is a weakness in a Queen, even if, in terms of an Ovidian poetic, her love immortalises her.

When Marlowe returns in poetry to the subject of commemorative fame, he does so in a twelve-line Latin verse epitaph which echoes the now conventional content of Ovid's brief return to the tradition of commemorative elegy in the *Amores*. Ovid writes, of Tibullus, "Thy bones I pray may in the urn safe rest, / And may th'earth's weight thy ashes naught molest" (3.IX.67-8). Marlowe writes of Manwood, "may your bones rest happily, / and your fame outlive the memorials of the marble tomb (*trans.Farey* 11). In *Obitum Honoratissimi Viri Rogeri Manwood Militis Quaestorii Reginalis Capitalis Baronis*, usually referred to as *On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood*, is a work written after Manwood died on December 14, 1592. That it was composed at around the same time as the *Dedicatory Epistle* prefaced to Watson's *Amintae Gaudia* adds interest. The two pieces provide what might be figured as a stereoscopic view of Marlowe's applied poetics. They comment on immortality near the end of his own life, after the deaths of two men known to him who knew each other, in very different ways. Ingram states in a note that "This epitaph was discovered on the back of a title-page of a copy of *Hero and Leander*, ed. 1629" (274). Manwood's actual interment is within an imposing marble monument featuring a three-dimensional skeleton, a bust of himself and figures of his wife and children, prepared before his death and thus available for Marlowe to have seen.

Marlowe's choice to employ Latin blank verse for the epitaph in preference to either elegiac or heroic couplets may provide the first hint of an intentional ambiguity raising questions as to the poem's sincerity. The use of blank verse here has two significant attributes. First, it is the form Marlowe himself established as a standard. Second, it might be argued that blank verse makes no prior commitment to immortalising its subject in the way that elegiac and heroic couplets are commonly expected to do. Put another way, in this view Marlowe refuses Marwood's obituary elegiac or heroic form. The epitaph anyway contains such erudition in reference to classical forms and themes, and their association with immortality, as to demonstrate conclusively Marlowe's accomplishment as a classical elegist choosing to write elegantly in blank verse.

Sir Roger has usually been considered somewhat uncritically as a benefactor to Marlowe, having been one judge on a full bench that cleared him and his friend Thomas Watson of wrongdoing in the death of William Bradley in 1589, three years previously. The view expressed by Cheney in 2006 is that: "as a scholar trained in classical culture, Marlowe views Manwood's passing as a somber event, a sad departure into the grim beyond" (2006 23). A revision of that view (see Brown below) is current in which Marlowe makes use of the punning capability of Latin to allot an ambiguous form of immortal Ovidian fame to Manwood.

Translation of a text with a satiric potential of this kind presents intriguing problems, and not only to the translator. Different translations of course suggest different meanings for words and Marlowe, a proficient translator of texts from Latin into English, had to have been aware that no exact matching may be possible of words having a particular meaning in one language. Lucretius refers to the difficulty in *de Rerum Natura*, translating Epicurus, "The poverty of

Latin will not permit [me] to use (a Greek term) but the thing itself is easily explained” (1.833). The problem is exacerbated when the word (or other lexical unit) is polysemic, polysemy being defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “The fact of having several meanings; the possession of multiple meanings, senses, or connotations”. I have decided not to employ the translation of *Striar* which accompanies the original Latin published in Cheney’s 2006 edition of Marlowe’s *Collected Poems*. For me, it is too free. For example, the scythe in his translation has no equivalent in the original. Inadequacies such as this in the translation of Marlowe’s text under present consideration would have a major effect upon the argumentation which follows. I have opted instead to provide the original Latin for the reference of readers choosing to play this game, together with a translation by Peter Farey, (personal communication), the best of those I have encountered:

Noctivagi terror, ganeonis triste flagellum,
Et Jovis Alcides, rigido vulturque latroni,
Urna subtegitur. Scelerum gaudete Nepotes.
Insons, luctifica sparsis cervice capillis
Plange, fori lumen, venerandae gloria legis,
Occidit: heu, secum effoetas Acherontis ad oras
Multa abiit virtus. Pro tot virtutibus uni,
Livor, parce viro; non audacissimus esto
Illius in cineres, cuius tot milia vultus
Mortalium attonuit: sic cum te nuntia Ditis
Vulneret exsanguis, feliciter ossa quiescant,
Famaque marmorei superet monumenta sepulchri.

The terror of the night-prowler, harsh scourge of the
profligate, both Jove's Alcides and vulture to the
stubborn bandit, is buried within the funeral urn.
Rejoice, you sons of crime. You the guiltless one,
your hair unkempt on your sorrowful neck, mourn.

The light of the courts, the glory of the venerable
law is dead: Alas, with him to the exhausted shores
of Acheron much virtue departed. Before one of so
much worth, Envy, spare this man; be not too
unwary of that which is in ashes, he whose look left
so many thousands of mortals thunderstruck: Thus,
though the bloodless messenger of Dis shall wound
you, may your bones rest happily, and your fame
outlive the memorials of the marble tomb.

Farey's translation of *sic cum te nuntia Ditis / Vulneret exsanguis* is in my view preferable to that of Striar. There is no introduced scythe, and Dis's messenger is retained instead of being renominated as Death.

Georgina Brown's close reading depends upon just such subtleties in Latin, some of which may not survive some translations. Her article is included in Cheney's *Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* and stands in contrast to his later published view mentioned above. She summarises her reading of the epitaph as "an excellent example of the way Marlowe uses classical culture to undermine the social and political authority classicism is supposed to uphold" (108). She reads Marlowe as employing his erudition in classical references to immortality to write a subtextual critique of his subject, writing polysemically between the Latin lines of an epitaph which appears on the surface only to praise the man's virtues. She regards the poem as "ambivalent ...[implying] criticism and praise". Marwood is described, she says, as *rigido vulturque latroni*: "a vulture to the hardened criminal...a phrase which praises Marwood, at the same time as it suggests that he is the kind of scavenger that will pervert justice for money". Marwood's final years as Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer were "characterised by serious and repeated charges of misfeasance...in the final year of his life he was confined to his own house, by order of the Privy Council" (108-9).

Had Marlowe chosen, he could have used the Latin term *raptor* to preserve his metre—at the risk of Manwood being thought a rapist—rather than caricature him as a vulture in the English metaphorical sense. On the evidence of his extant portrait, Manwood was anyway an exceptionally sharp-featured man, very “beaky” indeed. Marlowe here may be alluding to the Stymphalian birds, man-eaters with beaks of bronze shot at by Hercules to drive them from an area they infested in Arcadia near the Acheron, a swamp in the rainy season. In Euripedes’ plays *The Frogs*, and *Alcestris*, the Acheron is depicted as a swamp. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Aeneas interviews Achilles, stuck by the Acheron and humbler than he was in the *Iliad*. He would now rather “be a slave on earth even to a poor man with no land, than be king of all the dead below” (*Od*.XI.489). When Faustus begins his conjuration of the demon Mephistophilis, it is with the invocation “*Sint mihi dei Acherontis propitii!* / May the gods of Acheron be propitious to me” (*D.F*.1.3.16). Zenocrate regards her later situation as:

A hell as hopeless and as full of fear
 As are the blasted banks of Erebus,
 Where shaking ghosts with ever-howling groans
 Hover about the ugly ferryman,
 To get a passage to Elysium! *II Tam* 1.5.2.176-185.

This is not a perfumed place to which Marwood is translated. The Acheron is no Elysium, let alone a Christian heaven.

Brown says of the epitaph’s final line: “‘Fama’ is a pun which invokes the divergent meanings of fame, rumour, and even ill repute, so the thing that might live forever is Manwood’s bad name” (109). Martindale also notes that “Ovid’s Fama is the recipient of all speech and the source of all rumour, true or false” (72). But it is also that after which Ovid himself lusted, as a route to immortality. For me, the

Manwood epitaph drips a veiled sarcasm reflective of Marlowe's resentment at the winter-long imprisonment in "the Stink" of "witty Tom Watson", though already cleared of wrongdoing (Nicholl 179). In the end, the matter will likely prove incapable of resolution. That may be just how Marlowe intended it.

A churchyard grave at St. Bartholomew the Less received Thomas Watson's remains on September 26, 1592 (Cheney 2006 xvi). As previously remarked, Marlowe edited and prepared Watson's last work, *Amintae Gaudia*, for publication. He provided a dedicatory prose epistle in Latin, grandly entitled *Illustrissimae Heroinae Omnibus & Animi & Corporis Dotibus Ornatissimae, Mariae Pembroekiae Comitissae*: "To the Most Illustrious Woman, Adorned with All Gifts of Mind and Body, Mary, Countess of Pembroke". In it, he conveys a plea Marlowe or the Countess herself probably heard, "especially because his father [Watson, of Amyntas] as he lay dying humbly beseeched you and committed to your care the safety of this child" (8-10). The Countess as Delia [Diana] was "the nurturing mother of letters" (2), to whom a dying father bequeathed a son for her adoption. "Letters" are taken to be Marlowe's children as they were Watson's, aspiring to immortality by being works of art.

Marlowe concludes his dedication to the Countess with: "*Tua denique virtus, quae virtutem ipsam, ipsam quoque aeternitatem superabit* / In the very end it will be your virtue which will surpass both virtue itself and even eternity" (20). The compliment arises in a context in which Elizabethan poets seek continued patronage in exchange for hyperbolic praise, but the hyperbole is interesting in its own right. Read with care, Marlowe's suggestion is that Mary Sidney Herbert's virtue, itself lying beyond virtue and eternity, and having encountered a limit to virtue it transcends, challenges also a lack of limit set by definition upon eternity. As "chosen-lady of the Muses",

her virtue can surpass virtue itself, because her possession enhances that which is possessed. Marlowe poses also the pertinent question: “how can infinity increase?” (12-13). Her virtue can surpass eternity only if her embodiment of Delia transcends time itself, eternal though measured time may be. Intimated is a pastoral Golden Age, one which poets share with shepherds, boys in Dian’s shape, country girls, gods and goddesses, all free from Virgilian toils and the taints of “honour”. Transcendence beyond eternity’s limit into this ever-greening realm is Marlowe’s enmyrtled revelation to his patron and fellow-poet/playwright of the form of her own immortality-to-be.

Five years later, it was the turn of Edward Blount, printer and bookseller of St. Paul’s Churchyard, to discharge his duty to a friend, Christopher Marlowe:

the unhappily deceased author of this poem...living an after life in our memory [had written] an unfinished tragedy [*Hero and Leander*] an issue of his brain...whose first breath [should be] the gentle air of [Sir Thomas Walsingham’s] liking [which would] prove more agreeable and thriving to his right children than any other foster countenance whatsoever (1-16).

The work was first registered in the Stationer’s Register of September 28, 1593 along with *Lucan’s First Book* (Wilkinson 201).

Marlowe knew of the Greek poem *Hero and Leander* by Musaeus, a 5th century C.E. Greek grammarian, whom Renaissance scholars mistook for the “primeval poet Musaeus”, regarded as a founder of poetry along with Orpheus (Cheney 2006 3). He refers to this origin in lines 51-2: “Amorous Leander beautiful and young / (Whose tragedy divine Musaeus sung)”. Marlowe’s 818-line Ovidian narrative poem responds to Ovid’s two verse letters about the tragic lovers in the *Heroides*, poem 18, “Leander to Hero” and poem 19 “Hero to Leander” (Cheney 2006 3). Within his framing narrative,

Marlowe centres an invented myth in which “Heaven’s winged herald,
Jove-born Mercury, / The self-same day that he asleep had laid /
Enchanted Argus, spied a country maid” (386-9). The day these events
take place is thus that on which Jove had intercourse with Io. Spring
was in the air, I suppose, as Mercury’s maid:

Thirsting after immortality—
All women are ambitious naturally—
Imposed upon her lover such a task
As he ought not perform, nor yet she ask.
A draught of flowing nectar she requested
Wherewith the king of gods and men is feasted.
He ready to accomplish what she willed,
Stole some from Hebe (Hebe Jove’s cup filled)
And gave it to his simple rustic love;
Which being known (as what is hid from Jove?)
He inly stormed, and waxed more furious
Than for the fire filched by Prometheus
And thrusts him down from heaven (427-439).

Alas, no more is heard of the maid, who has taken the risk of all
mortals who seek or presume equality with the gods. We are not to
know whether the nectar did its fabled work.

In this thoroughly Ovidian way, Marlowe demonstrates his
mastery of the new genre of epyllion, or “little epic”. Marlowe’s witty
moral in *Hero and Leander*, whether it be finished or not, is contained
in this invented myth fragment centrepiece of Mercury and the country
maid:

And but that Learning, in despite of Fate,
Will mount aloft, and enter heaven gate
And to the seat of Jove itself advance,
Hermes had slept in hell with Ignorance. (465-8).

The penalty for this striving for knowledge is determined as Mercury negotiates his way back into favour, in that “to this day is every scholar poor” (470). Those who seek knowledge will inevitably pay a high price. Prometheus, for his presumption, was bound to a rock where a vulture (again) eternally devours his liver. The opposition/pairing of Learning and Ignorance with heaven and hell forms, I shall argue, a dramatic armature to *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe’s primary treatment of this fate. I shall return to this claim in Chapter Four.

My aim in this chapter has been to examine those of Marlowe’s works which most clearly show Ovidian influence in their references to forms of immortality. *Ovid’s Elegies* is dominated by reaction to an epic immortalisation of the “hero”. Marlowe’s translation records Ovid’s assertion of the power of poets instead to immortalise those whom they love by means of elegy, and also themselves to obtain undying through the fame their immortal verse will bring. Marlowe continues to react against the Virgilian epic in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, foregrounding for his genre the queen’s erotic tragedy. He returns to the traditional function of elegy as funerary commemorative verse in a formal epitaph in the blank verse he pioneered, making use of Latin to leave a polysemic impression of the kind of immortality his subject might expect. The Latin prose of the *Dedicatory Epistle* contains a meditation on poetic immortality that demonstrates his championing of Ovidian forms of immortality within the framework of an aristocratic subculture dominated by Virgilian epic verse. Finally, in *Hero and Leander*, within the epyllion genre he dominated, Marlowe inserts an invented myth fragment, drawing a delicate Ovidian moral about the relationship of immortality to ambition for knowledge. Marlowe follows Ovid in being eclectic in his utilisation of poetic and dramatic genres, maintaining a connection between them by way of the forms of immortality with which they treat.

Chapter Three

Stars, Stellification and Astrophysics

*No pen can anything eternal write
That is not steeped in humour of the Night.*

George Chapman, *Hymnum in Noctem*.

A. Marlowe's Stars

A close reading of Marlowe's referencing of immortality must explore within his works questions such as: What are the relationships of the human body and soul (if any) to stars, and to immortality? What is the eternal heaven, where, and by whose account are we to know about it? Where and what is hell, and how are these entities supposed consistently to work together in actual practice? This chapter will focus upon what might be called the logistics of Marlowe's stellar spaces, in an attempt to shed light upon proposed mechanisms of translation between states of being, by interrogating his work for its bases in both mythic cosmogonies and proto-scientific cosmologies.

I shall first consider the notion of "stellification", defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* as "the action of stellifying or placing among the stars", an idea which has a long history of connection to ideas of immortality. According to Fowler:

Virgil added his authority in one of the most influential passages in ancient literature, *Georgics* I, 32, where he imagines that Augustus 'may add himself as a new star or constellation...where, between Virgo and the grasping Claws [of Scorpio], a space is opening'. In the Middle Ages... stellification generally followed this Virgilian plan of aggrandizing national champions with quasi-imperial claims. It was a destiny for the great, like Arthur. {Arcturus, the Bear}. The exception of Chaucer proves this rule, for he is terrified to

think he may have been seized upon for the stellification of celebrity. Such ascensions sat awkwardly with Christian doctrine, and one may guess them to be vestiges, in part, of older star worship surviving as a popular under-cult (36).

Marlowe makes use of stellification in diverse ways in his works. My initial discussion will move from a more general survey towards a substantial focus upon the *Tamburlaine* plays, whose hero, while acknowledging the significance of stellification, understates it in regard to his own godhood. He is unequivocal, however, about the power of stellar influence. Tamburlaine shares a strong interest in the stars, divinity, death, and the loci of immortality with his supporting characters/casts; they ruminate upon the problem his existence presents for their archaic cosmogony, occupying extensive passages of the text to do so, often in his absence. The views of his friends, his enemies and Tamburlaine himself at various stages of his career are given substantial authorial significance in both plays, as all puzzle their way through life and death.

The third section of this central chapter, dealing with *Doctor Faustus*, brings stellification up to an Elizabethan date. *Doctor Faustus* presents contemporary views available to Marlowe of the physics of heaven and hell, and of their source-derivations in pagan and early Christian models. Differences between models have special significance for Marlowe's presentation of ideas of immortality, in that Faustus, who asks pertinent questions of Mephistophilis, also journeys physically beyond the sublunary sphere, and interrogates Christian notions of a purely spiritual superlunary existence in an Aristotelian fashion. Faustus thereby attempts to gain knowledge of the mechanisms of the celestial spheres and what he takes to be the Intelligences governing them. This knowledge base, and these flights, have antecedents germane to Marlowe's deeper consideration in the play of esoteric forms of immortality in conflict with ideas of the early

Christian church and of Calvinism. These are matters upon which my focus will be directed in the chapter which follows, rather than in this.

The Ovidian taste Marlowe shared with many of his contemporaries perhaps ensured his employment of *topoi* centred on the stars, associating stellification with immortality. Many of Ovid's metamorphoses "end in unambiguous stellification. Hercules, Castor and Pollux, the seven daughters of Atlas; all these and many more are translated to the stars" (Fowler 50). An aspiration to be stellified "went back to antiquity, when general belief linked the soul's immortality with the heavens" (65). It might be expected that Marlowe's poetry would evidence such stellification, but in fact the *topos* appears in only three of his dramatic works. His translation of *Ovid's Elegies* contains only a few glancing references to stars, of the kind: "Sharp eyes she had; radiant like stars they be" (3.III.9), in which stars are employed for their metaphoric value rather than as an immortality *topos*. The dedicatory epistle to the Countess of Pembroke notes the large number of stars to be found in Ariadne's crown, doing so in order to allow for the immortalisation of Watson's work, which Marlowe hopes will take place by inclusion as a star in her own crown. There is no stellar reference in *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, in *Hero and Leander*, or in the Manwood epitaph. Beyond his poetry, Marlowe has little to say about the stars and immortality in most of his dramatic works, and that conventionally metaphoric. The *Tamburlaine* plays and *Doctor Faustus* are exceptional in this respect.

Before turning to those plays, there is one stellar reference of interest in Marlowe's other work which merits attention with respect to immortality. There is an interesting degree of intertextuality in Marlowe's *Lucan's First Book* when he translates Lucan's modification of Ovid's celebration of Julius Caesar's apotheosis by stellification. As earlier discussed, the epic genre proposes immortality

for its heroes, and a succession of Roman emperors were anxious not to be left off the divine list. Virgil's *Aeneid* was directed at Augustus's divinity. Ovid took a twist upon the *topos*, querying the physics of translation, and, unusually for him, not suggesting a metamorphosis:

And from her Caesar's body took his new expulsèd sprite,
That which she not permitting to resolve to air quite,
Did place it in the sky among the stars that glister bright,
And as she bare it, she did feel it gather heavenly might,
And for to waxen fiery. She no sooner let it fly,
But that a goodly shining star it up aloft did stye [mount]
And drew a great way after it bright beams like burning hair.

(*Metamorphoses* XV.950-956)

Caesar's bodily death having been so famously public, it is the soul's ascent through an action of Venus, invisibly present in the Senate at the time, which provides the focus of attention in Ovid's scrupulously observed details of transition.

Marlowe translates Lucan developing a flattery which in contrast *does* use a metamorphosing model when dealing with the body of a later emperor. Lucan says, to a living Nero, "Thee (seeing thou, being old / Must shine as a star) shall heaven (whom thou lovest) / Receive with shouts" (*LFB*.172). Nero is to join Ovid's Julius in the stars. His apotheosis must necessarily be to a triumph (implies Lucan) but will involve nothing so unpleasant as a bodily death. On that account alone he shall exceed the stellification of his predecessor. Lucan's sardonic development (he risked all on Nero's egocentrism) is to have Nero's massive body threaten the balance of "vast heaven". Marlowe translates: "The burdened axis with thy force will bend. / The midst is best" (57-8). Lucan's fate may not have been sealed by this veiled reference to Nero's fat, but rather by the timid temerity of his presumption in advising his emperor.

B. Tamburlaine's Stellar Influences

An imperial will sets its own limits and Marlowe's Tamburlaine provides an extreme example of epic disregard for the opinion or expectations of others, seeking only to bend them to his will so that he may reach his destiny. He lays out the bones of his overall ambition fairly enough when wooing Zenocrate. As he says, she:

Must grace his bed that conquers Asia,
And means to be a terror to the world,
Measuring the limits of his empery
By east and west, as Phoebus does his course.

(I Tamb.1.2.37-40)

Though the extent of his earthly ambition is left in no doubt, his metaphorical reference to Phoebus is ambiguous, leaving open a possibility that he might really propose at some future time to control also a heavenly sphere. He does fulfil this potential, when on the point of stabbing his son Calyphas (*II Tamb.4.1.114-122*). I shall return to this. Zenocrate understands him well enough from the first, and makes what protest she can about her own detention:

The Gods, defenders of the innocent,
Will never prosper your intended drifts,
That thus oppress poor friendless passengers.
Therefore at least admit us liberty,
Even as thou hop'st to be eternised
By living Asia's mighty emperor. *(I Tamb.1.2.68-73)*

In response, he tells her: "Thy person is worth more to Tamburlaine / than the possession of the Persian crown, / which gracious stars have promis'd at my birth" (*I Tamb.1.2.90-92*). Marlowe dots both *Tamburlaine* plays with the fateful promises of stars. This particular interchange introduces a constantly-running theme connecting ambition, will, immortality and the influence of stars. Zenocrate projects onto Tamburlaine a hope to be eternised by his living

accomplishment, which projection he does not here acknowledge. His failure to respond cannot be read as agreement to any idea of having future status as immortal, but what he does have to say shows how strongly he believes in stellar influence.

He, in turn, does not suggest at this point that she is a goddess *in potentia*. Only in metaphor does he describe her as “The only paragon of Tamburlaine; / Whose eyes are brighter than the lamps of heaven” (*I Tamb.*3.3.120), by which he means the stars. It is her erstwhile suitor, the dying King of Arabia, who first calls her “divine Zenocrate” (*I Tamb.*5.2.57), a tribute then echoed by Tamburlaine as he crowns her Queen of Persia in the closing speech of the first play (*I Tamb.*5.2.445). Zenocrate does not seem quite to occupy a place for Tamburlaine like that of divine Helen for Faustus. Despite consistently describing her as “the world’s fair eye / whose beams illuminate the lamps of heaven” (*II Tamb.*1.4.2) [her eyes light the stars], she does not bring immortality or divinity, but illumination. His affectionate flattery of “his lovely queen” (*II Tamb.*1.4.16) acts rather to conserve his own enigmatic approach to divinity. Though he subordinates the presumptive star-gift of the Persian crown, indeed all his “martial prizes” (*I Tamb.*1.2.102) and his own proper person, to her, it is his will which tops the scale of his value-set. Tamburlaine is not at any time to be gainsaid. Zenocrate will not have the liberty she craves.

Tamburlaine also woos Theridamas, exploiting the latter’s “noble and mild” character (*I Tamb.*1.2.162) for its vulnerability to a strong will. He notes shrewdly that “in thee I see the folly of thy emperor” (*I Tamb.*1.2.167). In order to seduce Theridamas, he vaunts a power and status far beyond mundane limits, again without actually claiming divinity for himself:

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
And with my hand turn Fortune’s wheel about;

And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome. (*I Tamb.*1.2.175-178)

He gestures generously to Theridamas that “both our souls aspire celestial thrones” (*I Tamb.*1.2.237), but there is no urgency in the expression. The usage seems rhetorical, rather than literal, and he is largely consistent in this. He observes instead a sufficiency for himself in the sensible cosmos, in the present of life, so that:

Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet’s course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown. (*I Tamb.* 2.7.21-29)

Reflecting later, and justifying his decision to transfer allegiance, Theridamas observes:

Aand that made me to join with Tamburlaine;
For he is gross and like the massy earth
That moves not upwards nor by princely deeds
Doth mean to soar above the highest sort.

(*I Tamb.*2.7.30-33)

Waith judges this speech indicative that “the earth itself is despicable—
—inert—the negation of heroic energy” (Leech 75) which is surely not
Theridamas’ position. He respects that the earth is valued by
Tamburlaine, who wants all of it.

A tradition has arisen of critical frustration with the supposed bathetic end of Tamburlaine’s speech quoted immediately above. Ellis-Fermor, for example, says “And then, at the end, comes the inevitable bathos... the fact is that Marlowe has suddenly—it may be all unconsciously—broken faith with his idea” (Ellis-Fermor 29).

Waith remarks that “the sweet fruition of an earthly crown is indeed bathos, as it has often been called, unless the earthly crown means something rather special in this play” (Leech 73). That it does. Marlowe, in my reading, has judged Tamburlaine’s speech nicely to its audience. Its purpose is to emphasize that his taking of Theridamas by the hand is a signal that their *hearts* [my emphasis] shall be combined “until our bodies turn to elements” (*I Tamb.* 2.1.236). Theridamas concurs with the limited aspiration implied in this humanist speech.

Tamburlaine lays claim before an insufficiently wary Cosroe, temporarily his superior, to be able to “threat the gods” (*I Tamb.* 2.3.21) and to “chase the stars from heaven” (*I Tamb.* 2.3.24). Theridamas enjoins Cosroe to attend to the rhetoric and to the action it presages; expressing admiration for the boasts as metaphor, surely, rather than as literal claim, “You see, my lord, what working words he hath: / But when you see his actions top his speech, / Your speech will stay” (*I Tamb.* 2.3.25-27). It stretches his character’s credulity too far to have Theridamas actually expect the stars to be chased from heaven. Rather, he reveals himself star-struck. Ironically, Theridamas’s words are themselves predictive. Cosroe is indeed brought to silence by Tamburlaine’s actions. Later, dying, Cosroe listens in silence to the conversation taking place between his erstwhile captains, Tamburlaine himself being offstage. While they conduct an intellectual debate, he breathes his unregarded last. Cosroe’s conclusion—addressed to the audience in the moment of his death—is that they are “the strangest men that ever nature made” (*I Tamb.* 2.7.40).

Usumcasane asserts to Theridamas that “to be a king is half to be a god” (*I Tamb.* 2.5.56). Burnett, commenting upon a later remark

of Theridamas, viz: “Not Hermes, prolocutor to the gods, / Could use persuasions more pathetic” (*I Tamb.* 1.2.209-10), concludes that:

The implication is that Tamburlaine is beyond even the most rhetorically skilled of the deities and thus functions as a type of god himself. By extension, Theridamas, who is privy to the divine communication, joins the rank of a heavenly elite (128).

I think Burnett draws altogether too long a bow with this inference. Usumcasane might possibly think that; but against both the implication Burnett derives from the metaphor Theridamas deploys, and his extension of it to a self-ascribed divinity, is Theridamas’s own earlier reply to Usumcasane: “A god is not so glorious as a king: / I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven, / Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth” (*I Tamb.* 2.5.57-59). Theridamas has some desire for kingship, it is true, but none for divinity. From the first seduction, he seems content to follow Tamburlaine around, be his tool, and put into actual effect throughout the world the strength of will he admires. This is an aspect of his character which Tamburlaine immediately understood. If Theridamas is deceived by the carefully-tailored rhetoric of Marlowe’s excessive hero, it is in an opposite direction to that of literary critics who take aesthetic umbrage at what they take to be its mundane limitation. His type is essential to the deployment of an imperial will. Marlowe’s portrayal is acute, and compelling.

Theorising upon unusual conjunctions through the bars of his cage, a doomed Bajazeth expounds a bitter syllogism on stellar influence, the logic of which his unhappy wife Zabina then extends to a profoundly nihilistic conclusion. Here, Bajazeth talks with her, and says sadly of Tamburlaine:

Ah, fair Zabina, we may curse his power,
The heavens may frown, the earth for anger quake;
But such a star hath influence in his sword
As rules the skies and countermands the gods

More than the Cimmerian Styx or Destiny.

(*I Tamb.* 5.2.167-171)

Bajazeth has just been spitting his most powerful curses upon an insouciant Tamburlaine, off to another victory and glorying in these curses of his foes, “having the power from the empyreal heaven / to turn them all upon their proper heads” (*I Tamb.* 4.4.29-31). His auditor gone, the erstwhile emperor reveals this deeper thought: that the Scythian is empowered by a specific star of unmatched belligerence, one seriously upsetting the natural heavenly order as well as the earth itself. It is no ordinary bright star, this of Tamburlaine, its power of command extends to rule the skies. Bajazeth allows the power of Cimmerian Styx and Destiny to overrule the gods, but contends that the influence of Tamburlaine’s star is greater still.

As ever, these are not casual references in Marlowe. Styx, an underworld river, is also the name of an archaic goddess respected by the gods, who would swear binding oaths by it and her. As a river, it had immortalising powers, being in one tradition that in which Achilles’ heel was famously not dipped. Destiny is more or less synonymous with Fate, which the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defines as “the principle, power, or agency by which, according to certain philosophical and popular systems of belief, all events, or some events in particular, are unalterably predetermined from eternity”. In the *Tamburlaine* plays, Fate is unalterable, except by Tamburlaine’s star. Bajazeth’s glum proposition of supercession is fully understood by his classically-educated wife. Marlowe employs her response to develop a deeper nihilism about the nature of such power:

Then is there left no Mahomet, no God,
No fiend, no fortune, nor no hope of end
To our infamous, monstrous slaveries.
Gape, earth, and let the fiends infernal view
A hell as hopeless and as full of fear

As are the blasted banks of Erebus,
 Where shaking ghosts with ever-howling groans
 Hover about the ugly ferryman,
 To get a passage to Elysium!
 Why should we live? (I *Tamb.* 5.2. 176-185)

Zabina extrapolates from Bajazeth's understanding a conclusion that the star empowering the Scourge of God annihilates God, his prophet, gods and fiend.

Zabina apostrophises the earth ironically, calling upon it to reveal not a fantasised hell below, but one real, present and equal in horror, to be viewed *on earth in life*, by fiends in whom she can plainly no longer consistently believe. She conceives that all powers are negated by Tamburlaine's star, including contesting abstractions such as Fate, and (she adds to Bajazeth's list), Fortune, conventionally considered from Homer in various forms as the most potent poles of order, both in human life and in existence itself. For Zabina as victim, confronting her own reluctant belief in these astounding terms, there is even "no hope of end". Servitude is eternal in a hellish life, and death itself offers no hope of passage. She develops from Bajazeth's despair a vision of enormous obliterating stellar influence. Beyond the annihilation of personified forces lies an engulfment of all differentiation and of time itself. It would be hard to be more hyperbolic about power. Zabina's words may be read as exceeding those of Lucan's matron, as the Roman poet closes his apocalyptic vision of his city's self-destruction with her words: "I have seen Phillipi'. This said, being tired with fury she sank down" (*LFB*.693-4). "All great things crush themselves" (*LFB*.81), says Lucan portentously—and of Nero hopefully perhaps—summarising from his own experience. Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays reject that idea totally.

Orcanes' report is that Tamburlaine calls himself "the emperor of the world, and earthly god" (*II Tamb.*3.5.21-2). While "emperor of the world" is plain enough, discussion of the internal contradiction enclosed in the phrase "earthly god" is critical to any assessment of Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine himself completely concurs with Bajazeth and Zabina regarding the magnitude of his power. He claims that "Over my zenith hangs a blazing star, / That may endure till heaven be dissolved" (*II Tamb.* 3.2.6-7). As previously quoted, he claims as well to maintain an iron control over both Fate and Fortune. He claims additionally that:

The chiefest god, first mover of that sphere
Enchas'd with thousands ever-shining lamps,
Will sooner burn the glorious frame of heaven
Than it should so conspire my overthrow.

(*I Tamb.*4.2.8-11)

Tamburlaine has previously employed the comparison of Zenocrate's eyes to these same "ever-shining lamps" as a metaphor for the stars, but Marlowe's repetition here has Tamburlaine linking himself with "the chiefest god" as allies, *not* identifying himself as divine. The empyrean sphere, the *primum mobile*, his ally, is the measure of his power on earth, though itself outside and beyond the lower celestial sphere of the stars. His power is rendered god-like by this alliance.

When Tamburlaine predicts that his soul, "dissevered from this flesh, / Shall mount the milk-white way" (*II Tamb.*4.3.131-2), he is following a traditional "pilgrims' route" to immortality. Souls climb by the Milky Way to the celestial sphere of fixed stars. To discuss his stellification, he turns to Greek cosmogony—although it should be noted that Aldeboran is an Arabic name:

If Jove, esteeming me too good for earth,
Raise me, to match the fair Aldeboran,
Above the threefold astracism of heaven,

Before I conquer all the triple world.

(*II Tamb.*4.3.60-63)

He does not at all esteem himself “too good for earth”, though he suspects Jove might. He conflates Jove with the “powers” to whom he makes the only concession he *ever* makes: “In vain I strive and rail against those powers / That mean t’invest me in a higher throne, / As much too high for this disdainful earth” (*II Tamb.*5.3.121-3). His concession is in respect of his own willed limit to aspiration. For Tamburlaine, immortality through stellification is a relatively insignificant outcome, not at all an aspiration when compared with the god-like power he obtains from his stellar influence and expends in earthly conquest. His life of action is enormously fulfilling, saturated with success and blood. He recognises the inevitability of stellification, but considers that when it takes place, it will happen *to* him, be an imposed event against his will-to-power, barely thinkable and grudgingly conceded. He certainly does not wish it to take place before he has finished conquering the earth.

Tamburlaine is of course aware of classical precedents for immortality. Jove shows himself to be Tamburlaine’s model, “Sometimes masked in a shepherd’s weeds, / And by those steps that he hath scal’d the heavens / May we become immortal like the gods” (*I Tamb.*1.2.199-201). It is immortality here, not divinity, that will be shared. Tamburlaine recognises also that Jove’s conquest of the ancient order provides a model and a method by which he might, should he choose, reach higher still:

The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown,
That caus’d the eldest son of heavenly Ops
To thrust his doting father from his chair,
And place himself in the imperial heaven,
Mov’d me to manage arms against thy state.
What better precedent than mighty Jove.

(*I Tamb.*2.7.12-17)

Fortunately for Jove, Tamburlaine ordinarily has no interest in overthrowing him in heaven, though he who had overthrown the previous order of Ops “looks pale and wan / Fearing my power should pull him from his throne” (*I Tamb.5.2.191-2*).

There is one exception in the build-up to stabbing his son Calyphas. Tamburlaine calls upon Jove, and conveys the full extent and implication of his own roused anger:

Here, Jove, receive his fainting soul again,
A form not meet to give that subject essence
Whose matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine,
Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves
Made of the mould whereof thyself consists,
Which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious
Ready to levy power against thy throne,
That I might move the turning spheres of heaven;
For earth and all this airy region
Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine.

(*II Tamb.4.1.114-122*)

His “sweet fruition” is otherwise steadfastly an earthly crown. Even though he expects immortality among the stars, he will take no action to advance his heavenly promotion. He expects no worship from his followers. Tamburlaine performs with ferocity his own answer to the question of his earthly godliness, largely as a bloody-handed unstoppable tyrant slaughtering millions without remorse, including the innocent virgins of Damascus and Calyphas, his son.

He commands: “Techelles, drown them all, man, woman, and child; / Leave not a Babylonian in the town” (*II Tamb. 5.2.168-169*). This feat accomplished by his ready captains and rapacious armies, his mood improves, and he begins once more to busy himself with the

ongoing practicalities of conquest. “But stay” (*II Tamb.5.2.216*). He feels himself suddenly distempered. This, the second time Tamburlaine encounters death at a personal level—Zenocrate’s being the first—is the onset of his own demise. For now, Tamburlaine attempts to outface his distemper, “whatsoe’er it be, / Sickness or death can never conquer me” (*II Tamb.5.2.220*).

Normally, Tamburlaine is content to dispense death liberally and without a vestige of remorse, but his perspective on death is somewhat different when Zenocrate dies, earlier in this second play. Her last moments are then occasion for an extended paean of Marlovian poetry, in which the light of Tamburlaine’s life is represented as going out. He begins to lament her passing:

Zenocrate, that gave him light and life,
Whose eyes shot fire from their ivory bowers,
And temper’d every soul with lively heat,
Now by the malice of the angry skies,
Whose jealousy admits no second mate,
Draws in the comfort of her latest breath,
All dazzled with the hellish mists of death.
Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven,
As sentinels to warn th’immortal souls
To entertain divine Zenocrate.

(*II Tamb. 2.4.8-17*)

She gave him, he says, his light and life. Their partnership is resented by jealous angry skies, whose hellish mists are deathly. The angels, heaven and immortal souls are conventionally, neo-Platonically, Christian. What Tamburlaine sees will be familiar to his audience as an image of Augustine’s City of God, and her immortality is portrayed as unimpeachably Christian in the old style. As the power Zenocrate has to illuminate him is dimmed, so Tamburlaine’s vital power diminishes. He recognises his previous dependence upon light from

her eyes, and must call upon “Apollo, Cynthia and the ceaseless lamps” (*II Tamb.2.4.18*) to compensate now, to turn their illumination like floodlights to “deck the heavens” themselves (*II Tamb.2.4.20*) upon angels preparing immortal souls and other intelligences, cherubins and seraphins, for her arrival. In their splendid light, he will then see her received into heaven, wherein “the god that tunes this music to our souls / holds out his hand in highest majesty...to entertain divine Zenocrate” (*II Tamb.2.4.31-32*), a phrase iterated four times.

Zenocrate herself is conscious that “her frail and transitory flesh...waned with enforced and necessary change” (*II Tamb.2.4.42-46*). Tamburlaine acknowledges his love for her “whose heavenly presence, beautified with health, / Gives light to Phoebus and the fixed stars” (*II Tamb.2.4.29-30*), and implores her to “Live still, my love, and so conserve my life, / Or, dying, be the author of my death” (*II Tamb.2.4.55-56*). Zenocrate rejects this last desperate narcissistic plea as predicated upon a set of false alternatives, asking instead that he let her die, as she must, without bearing responsibility for his bodily death, in which she professes there is no need to believe:

Live still, my lord! O, let my sovereign live!
And sooner let the fiery element
Dissolve, and make your kingdom in the sky,
Than this base earth should shroud your majesty
For, should I but suspect your death by mine,
The comfort of my future happiness,
And hope to meet your highness in the heavens,
Turn'd to despair, would break my wretched breast,

And fury would confound my present rest (*II Tamb.2.4.57-65*). She anticipates a second life for herself in the heavens, where they shall meet again, and reproaches him lest “Your grief and fury hurts my second life” (*II Tamb.2.4.68*). Her suggestion, first, is that he must stay alive if he is to be apotheosed into his properly immortal heavenly

kingdom. She does not mention divinity. Second, only if he lives will her immortal soul be in heaven, having avoided the sin of despair. Third, if he allows that outcome by staying alive, they will later meet again. Thus she comforts him without gainsaying him.

Predictably, Tamburlaine turns his anger upon that which “dares torment the body of my love, and scourge[s] the Scourge of the immortal God” (*II Tamb.* 2.4.79-80), but at the last Marlowe provides his character with a passage beyond the usual unrelenting solipsism of his earthly-godliness:

Her sacred beauty hath enchanted heaven,
And, had she liv'd before the seige of Troy,
Helen, whose beauty summon'd Greece to arms,
And drew a thousand ships to Tenedos,
Had not been nam'd in Homer's Iliads:
Her name had been in every line he wrote.
Or, had those wanton poets, for whose birth
Old Rome was proud, but gaz'd a while on her,
Nor Lesbia nor Corinna had been nam'd:
Zenocrate had been the argument
Of every epigram or elegy. (*II Tamb.* 2.4.86-95)

Marlowe has metamorphosed his protagonist's discourse from heroic epic into an Ovidian erotic mode, in form as well as subject. Tamburlaine is not, for just this once, thinking of himself. Walsh observes that “The inclusion in his nature of the capacity to love is a characteristic Renaissance addition to the classical model of the Herculean hero” (77). Under the influence of a myrtle-wrapped Muse, Tamburlaine projects an immortality for Zenocrate reflecting the preferred values of his author. The music sounds and Zenocrate dies. Tamburlaine rages. Theridamas, his constantly pragmatic friend, applies his own reality-testing form of comfort: “She is dead, / And all this raging cannot make her live” (*II Tamb.* 2.4.119-120). Tamburlaine

accepts the idea from Theridamas of his own need for acceptance; but this he will as yet postpone, beginning formal mourning in more characteristic fashion by burning down the town.

The time comes when Theridamas in his turn must face loss, this time of Tamburlaine, when the latter says “Ah, friends, what shall I do? I cannot stand. / Come, carry me to war against the gods, / That thus envy the health of Tamburlaine” (*II Tamb.5.3.51-53*), and Theridamas replies: “Ah, good my lord, leave these impatient words, / Which add much danger to your malady” (*II Tamb.5.2.54-55*). Tamburlaine raves again, hallucinating his “slave, the ugly monster Death” (*II Tamb.5.2.67*) while Theridamas and the First Physician soothe as best they can the “fury of his fit” (*II Tamb.5.3.79*). Burnett thinks that:

given the bodily emphases of the plays, it is appropriate that Tamburlaine should fall prey to a mortality that is registered in starkly anatomical terms...suggesting a reinverted hierarchy that places the Scythian at the base and his former servant at the apex (140).

After consultation with this learned First Physician, a less disturbed Tamburlaine thinks he can perhaps live a while longer: “Then will I comfort all my vital parts, / And live, in spite of death, above a day” (*II Tamb.5.3.100-101*). He does not show fear, nor does he now bluster: “In spite of death, I will go show my face” (*II Tamb.5.3.115*). There follows an awkward stage direction when he exits with all the rest only to re-enter presently.

Thus returned, he calls for a map on which he might see “how much is left for me to conquer all the world” (*II Tamb.5.3.124-135*), and, repeating his newly-favoured phrase, farewells his two remaining “lovely boys: what death forbids my life, / That let your lives command in spite of death” (*II Tamb.5.3.160-161*). Instructed

carefully in his own special style of imperial charioteering, his sons will attend to the unconquered regions of earth. He comforts despairing Usumcasane with his own reality-test:

Casane, no. The monarch of the earth,
And eyeless monster that torments my soul,
Cannot behold the tears ye shed for me,
And therefore still augments his cruelty.

(*II Tamb.5.3.217-220*)

Techelles calls for some god to “oppose his holy power / Against the wrath and tyranny of Death” (*II Tamb.5.3.221-222*), but Tamburlaine is now too busy to employ such desperate rhetoric. He has, after all, consistently accepted the idea that “our bodies turn to elements” at death (*I Tamb.1.2.236*). “Nature [he says elsewhere] has fram’d us of four elements” (*I Tamb.2.7.18*). And so his final moments are actually passed in exemplary stoic conclusion of earthly business, with cheerful farewells to his friends and especially his sons.

He brings the hearse of his beloved Zenocrate onstage. Burnett has it that “Marlowe’s hero endeavours to cheat death through the preservation of a living appearance: the spectacle bespeaks an attempt to transcend mortality via an immaculate sublimation with one of its chosen victims” (141), and it is true that Tamburlaine uses Zenocrate in her mummified state to apostrophise his own eyes. He anticipates his soul regaining their power of sight despite the eyelessness of Death, so that he may see through the coffin with its internal sheet of gold, and “glut [his eyes] with a heaven of joy” (*II Tamb. 5.3.228*). After a final reminder about imperial charioteering:

Farewell, my boys! My dearest friends, farewell!
My body feels, my soul doth weep to see
Your sweet desires depriv’d my company.
Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die”.

(*II Tamb. 5.3.246-9*)

The capacity he wishes for his soul to see Zenocrate again in all her loveliness is erotically and stoically inspired, even if selfishly construed by this erstwhile Scythian shepherd.

Not all critics focus upon these emergent Ovidian and Epicurean influences. Tydemann and Thomas quote Cole as contending that:

Tamburlaine's history serves as a Christian *exemplum* on the theme of 'The wages of sin is death', and takes the finale of Part Two as evidence that the Scythian's blasphemies and defiance are responsible for his demise (23).

They contrast the view of Levin, in *The Overreacher* (1952), holding, as they put it, that:

Tamburlaine is one of Marlowe's heroes embodying "the innovatory Renaissance spirit through which humanity aspires heroically to achieve its loftiest ambitions, only to fall back as Icarian victims of their own insatiable aspirations" (23).

Marlowe actively encourages the derivation of multiple meanings. From the perspective of this chapter, there are no stars to be seen at the Scythian shepherd's dying, other than those to which the erotic illumination from Zenocrate's fantasized dead eyes is compared. There are no angels or Intelligences, no Christian panoply around a majestic illuminated divinity in Heaven such as Tamburlaine strove to see at Zenocrate's deathbed. And of the stellar influence which dominated his life, there is nothing left at all.

C. Faustian Astrophysics

Doctor Faustus continues the discourse of the *Tamburlaine* plays upon stars and their relationship to immortality. Marlowe, morphing the dramatic genre from epic, changes the form by which he addresses man's aspiration to godlike power, and I shall return to this important matter of the play's genre in Chapter Four. In this section, I shall consider how he maintains continuity with the transhistorical discourse upon the eternal stars while changing its emphases. Though some elements persist, the discourse leaves behind astrological belief structures proper to an exotic Turko-Muslim world, saturated as they are with Marlowe's interpretation of Greek stellar influence and Ovidian poetics. *Doctor Faustus* departs markedly from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays in downplaying stellification and stellar influence, although Faustus has just this astrology in mind when he addresses "You stars that reigned at my nativity, / Whose influence hath allotted death and hell" (5.2.89-90).

To abstract Marlowe's framings in *Doctor Faustus*, and to attempt to identify the conceptual issues they contain, is to participate in a complexification of Marlowe's engagement in a cosmological stellar discourse common to early modern culture, including revived interest in a physical astronomy, in which he addresses immortality issues contained within contemporary theological frameworks. These frameworks blur their mutual boundaries, sometimes snagging each other into unresolved, and often hot, conflict. Sometimes, surprisingly, they reinforce each other, like antagonists who discover in each other a mutual interest in the stars. Meeting the critical task requires appreciation of certain deeply historic problems surfacing within Elizabethan theology, especially as it followed the humanist programme of revising old scriptural texts. Chapter Four will focus on the close reading of *Doctor Faustus* which must be conducted to

consider Marlowe's signifiers in this regard. This section, however, will be a discrete exercise.

Sixteenth-century understandings of the nature of the physical universe will be examined as they are presented in *Doctor Faustus*, together with their relationships to supposed entities such as heaven and hell. Of course it is the case that a proto-scientific revolution in astronomy was taking place in the late sixteenth century. As part of this paradigm shift, practitioners of "natural philosophy" were, often unwittingly and/or unwillingly, opening an interrogation of traditionally-held theological constructs of the afterlife. To others, this seemed to threaten an attack upon their religious beliefs. The interest Faustus takes in astronomical phenomena must be considered for his position as a natural philosopher, especially in that he directly catechises Mephistophilis in this domain of knowledge, and flies twice over the earth. It is important to ask what he knows, what he finds out, and perhaps what he thinks. My close reading in this section will make that attempt. Appendix A: *On Sixteenth-Century Cosmology* is offered to support it. The structure of my close reading of *Doctor Faustus* in Chapter Four will then, I hope, be from its beginning more clearly delineated by the attention paid here to the significance of stellar realms for immortality. For further clarity, I restate that the question proposed for research in this thesis is "How do Marlowe's texts function (a) to represent late sixteenth-century understandings of concepts of immortality, and (b) to address conflicts arising between them?"

Before beginning to consider how Marlowe discusses astronomy in *Doctor Faustus*, it is right to acknowledge that, as Gardner puts it, "We are unfortunate in possessing Marlowe's greatest play only in an obviously mutilated form" (Farnham 38). Or, as Levin says, "Large allowances should be made for the mangled and encrusted form in

which *Doctor Faustus* has survived” (Farnham 43). The textual relationship between the A-text of 1604 and the B-text of 1616 is complicated. Bevington and Rasmussen have produced a recent review (1993), in which their textual analysis, supported by word-frequency testing, provides significant restrictions upon Marlowe’s authorship of sections of both texts, yielding support for arguments about collaboration in the A-text and revision in the B-text. As it happens, with the possible exception of a part of the Chorus’s speech before Act Three, all references to stars and immortality I have uncovered arise within those sections of the texts which they attribute to Marlowe himself. Perhaps this observation supports their claims.

Stars and immortality are common elements of discourse constructed in these three plays of Marlowe to serve his dramatic ends for his dramatic protagonists, Tamburlaine and Faustus. Neither of these characters consistently seeks immortality—I shall argue the case for Faustus—but immortality lurks nevertheless at the boundaries of their endeavours towards a godlike condition through astral activity. Tamburlaine, as I have explained above, wants to conquer the earth, fulfilling what he, his friends and enemies alike, deem to be his awful stellar destiny: “For *will* and *shall* best fitteth Tamburlaine, / Whose smiling stars give him assured hope / Of martial triumph ere he meets his foes” (*I Tamb.*3.3.41-43). His excess is inspired by a generally Jovian model in an archaic world. Stellification is consequential to his mortal death. A fluidly-conceived conflation of Jove and “powers” will then transport his soul in a simple process of stellification along the Milky Way into his proper place in a starry heaven. The text of the *Tamburlaine* plays is simplified by holding no suggestion of Ovidian bodily metamorphosis, nor any hint of Pythagorean rebirth. Body and soul, joined in life, separate into different elements at death—except as suggested by Zenocrate on her deathbed. Tamburlaine’s soul shall

rise to the stars only after the curtain falls on the epic of his life, beyond the conclusion of the second play.

Faustus, in contrast, wants to know. He wants to know how to transcend physical limits by incarnating spiritual essences; how to fly among the stars; how to consult the Intelligences of the celestial spheres; *how* to do godlike things, like view “the face of heaven, of earth, and hell” (3.1.69). Satiation of his pride is apparently to be achieved on Earth in the power that comes from knowledge, and he appears no more concerned than Tamburlaine to become a god in heaven. He does not aspire to be an immortal God, despite the Tamburlaine-style Jovian referencing of his Evil Angel:

Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art,
Wherein all nature's treasure is contained.
Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky,
Lord and commander of these elements (1.1.73-4).

Faustus instead appears willing to trade what he may or may not believe at different times to be his immortal soul for a limited career of sensation, power, and knowledge, through a magic astrology.

Read in terms of a stellar discourse, the internal structure of *Doctor Faustus* is centrally focused upon Faustus's interrogation of Mephistophilis, in which Marlowe foregrounds an early-modern debate on the physical structure of the heavens without departing from a central proposition of spiritual entities, including, but not limited to, the human soul. Faustus wants to know how the system works in practice. To find out, he has to get up close, which he then does by arranging to fly upwards to view “the faces of heaven, earth and hell” (3.2.70). In this twice-accomplished feat, he is not especially an Icarus-figure, despite the Chorus's introduction of him as such to establish (successfully) his *hubris*, for he does not fall. He simply lands in Rome and continues his adventures around Europe. The fall

he makes at his end is decidedly that of Lucifer, into Hell. The Chorus, changing his ground, says “Faustus is gone. Regard his hellish fall” (*Ep.*23)—no one, so far as I know, suggests that Icarus went to hell. I suggest that with his magical flights and final fall Faustus mirrors most clearly an antecedent magus, Simon. These three are all allegorical antecedents, about whom I shall have more to say in Chapter Four. I mention them here to draw attention first to the blurring of boundaries presented by the play’s omnipresent internal polysemy, misdirections, and unexamined contradictions, and second to the context common to all; the geocentric, concentric, multi-spherical Ptolemaic semantic field through which they travel.

At the conclusion of the first Act of *Doctor Faustus*, pact concluded, Mephistophilis gives the doctor a book. Faustus, primed to learn, wants more: “Now would I have a book where I might see / All characters and planets of the heavens, that I might / Know their motions and dispositions” (1.5.172-4). Gatti makes an unwarranted assertion here when she says “The book in question was Copernicus’s *De Revolutionibus orbium caelestium*” (Wilson 254). There is no evidence for it, and what there is, is against it. From this beginning, though, it is evident that for Faustus the heavens are populated. He expects there to be “characters” as well as “planets”. His stated purpose is to learn how they move. The word “disposition” refers to how they move with respect to other entities, i.e. their dynamic interactions. Faustus wants also to find out how they are disposed to act upon each other as “characters” in a heavenly drama. With one physical reference and a corresponding beginning cosmogony, Marlowe marks out a boundary zone between two colliding semantic territories.

Faustus’s mysterious exclamation “O, thou art deceived” (1.5.180), whatever other dramatic function it may have, is a true

prognostication directed to the individuals in his audience. Mephistophilis's bluff reply, "Tut, I warrant thee" (1.5.181) as they and we should expect, is truly empty of true content. Faustus is about to be comprehensively baffled in his attempt to learn more about the astrological mechanisms by which divine Intelligences exert influences upon stars, planets and people. Who the subject and what the object of deception are left enigmatically obscure by Marlowe, but Mephistophilis's reply can be read as an attempt at this juncture to disarm Faustus's opening critique, an aspect of their interchange which continues and strengthens.

As Act Two gets under way, Faustus, having presumably studied his books and putting despair aside for the nonce, begins his catechism of Mephistophilis. He rallies himself with "Let us dispute again, / And reason of divine astrology" (2.1.33-34). For Bevington:

Faustus's inquiries into astronomy are at the heart of the play and of any sceptical interpretation of it. His questioning of the universe goes into far more detail than is suggested in Marlowe's chief source, the *Damnable Life*, and examines issues on which Renaissance thinkers were sharply divided (27).

As previously remarked, Marlowe's use of words is precise; his words (e.g. "characters" above) may be polysemic, but they are not vague without good reason. Clark asserts that astronomers of the sixteenth century called themselves astrologers (322). Marlowe distinguishes their practices, as is further evidenced by the Chorus, when he says that Faustus's purpose is "To find the secrets of astronomy, / Graven in the book of Jove's high firmament" (3.Ch.2-3). This current and central disputation is to be of astrology, *not* astronomy, and the subject is divine.

The critical but ultimately unsatisfactory interrogation by Faustus of Mephistophilis directly concerns planets, stars, the substance and mutual influences of spheres, and also the intelligences

governing their influences. The scholar first demands two answers of this servant of the Father of Lies: “Speak, are there many spheres above the moon? / Are all celestial bodies but one globe, / As is the substance of this centric earth? (2.1.35-37). Whether Faustus acquired a sense of the relevance of these questions at the University of Wittenberg, or alternatively at Tübingen (in Württemberg) is a matter of some interest. A distinction is made between these two universities as sites of Faustus’s scholarship in the A-text of 1604 (Wertenberg) and the B-text of 1616 (Wittenberg).

Sugar holds that this difference is significant in part because of the relative strengths of Calvinism and Lutheranism in each respectively. Also, she suggests that if Faustus’s activities are sited at Wittenberg, it is because of an attempted suppression of the Copernican theory of cosmology, by 1616 more widely known and therefore supposedly more dangerous. According to Sugar, both are: “sites of unconventional astronomical thought” (143). Wittenberg, Luther’s stronghold, where Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) studied, was “a critical site for the acceptance of Copernicus’ text by academic astronomers” but not by physical cosmologists there (143). A contemporary Faustus at Tübingen would have been a fellow-student with Johannes Kepler, who in 1593 wrote a dissertation supporting Copernicus’s vision of the universe:

a thesis so unconventional he was not permitted to defend it...

The more radical components of Copernicus’s sun-centred universe came to be held there, as they were not at Wittenberg, to represent directly the physical reality of our universe (143).

No mechanism in any form of Ptolemaic or Copernican cosmology explains supernovae, which manifest an impossible novelty in the firmament to all who care to look up at night. Two supernovae occurred around this time. The first (SN 1572) occurred in 1572, to be named after Tycho Brahe, who recorded the brightness of its original

explosion. Another, named after Johannes Kepler (SN 1604), lit the night sky in 1604. Marlowe was long dead by then, but the A-text was printed in that year, and the B-text lay twelve years in the future. *It is speculation to suppose that the first supernova bears any relation to Tamburlaine's impossible star; or to suppose that Marlowe saw it as an eight-year-old boy— though why would he not, a bright lad like that, with an interest in the stars?* In regard to the second supernova, so Sugar's argument goes, Faustus's questioning may have been read by B-text revisionists as promoting the dreaded Copernican revolution, around something odd taking place in God's heaven that was really very difficult to explain. It might be better (she argues they perhaps thought) to advocate strengthened adherence to a Calvinist position, putting it all in God's mysterious hands, and not dangerously to promote any kind of physical explanation. The revised Faustus could then, in her view, be more comprehensively damned, in Augustinian terms everyone could understand from the morality play traditions, with the doctor torn apart for good measure.

Faustus's dissatisfaction with Mephistophilis's answers grows as the latter progresses a campaign of evasion. Lucifer's servant does not answer the questions Faustus poses. Instead, he expounds (one feels unctuously, his hands mutually folded within Franciscan sleeves and rocking on the balls of his sandalled feet, as secure within his schoolman role as in his friar's habit) that:

As are the elements, such are the heavens,
Even from the moon until the empyrial orb,
Mutually folded in each other's spheres,
And jointly move upon one axle-tree,
Whose termine is termed the world's wide pole.

(2.1.38-42)

He adds gratuitously: "Nor are the names of Saturn, Mars or Jupiter / Feigned, but are erring stars" (2.1.43-4). The superogatory nature of

this response, answering nothing and achieving nothing more than a nomenclature review of not even all the planets, can only be read as designed to bamboozle or annoy his catechist.

Irritation inclines the impatient Faustus to neglect important supplementary questions to Mephistophilis's non-answers. What, for example, *could* have been a straightforward reply to the first question, "Are there many spheres above the moon?". Whatever the number, be it seven, eight, or nine, it is not provided in Mephistophilis's reply. The second question posed of him is "Are all celestial bodies but one globe, / As is the substance of this centric earth?" A remote possibility that the way this question is constructed intimates a challenge to the centricity of the earth, I think can reasonably be set aside, in favour of the more probable positing of geocentrism as an axiom. It would otherwise be a most veiled approach to a central matter. This overall analysis militates against Faustus's possession of a Copernican theory.

What his question does demonstrate is that Faustus's particular interest is indeed in the links between bodies in the *celestium*; that which includes the superlunary, heavenly, but inferior spheres of the planets, and the firmament, the sphere of the true stars. He seems interested in the materiality of the substance of these spheres. This stuff, were it to exist, would be sometime referred to as the "ether", but not here, where it is Aristotle's "quintessence", the fifth element, that is described. Tamburlaine is one who knows about the relationship of quintessence to immortality. Immediately after ordering the slaughter of the virgins of Damascus, in the brilliant and weirdly contrasting speech beginning "What is beauty, saith my sufferings then?" (*I Tamb.5.2.97*), he conflates Aristotle and Ovid in a unifying conceit: "If all the heavenly quintessence they still / From their immortal flowers of poesy" (*I Tamb.5.2.102-3*). But Mephistophilis is not to be drawn, instead keeping up his programme

of evasion, indirectly affirming that there is no fifth element beyond the moon, while allowing ambiguously that the answer to the question “Are all celestial bodies but one globe, / As is the substance of this centric earth?” is “Yes”.

Mephistophilis is master of rhetoric, which he employs for a purpose in his prosy talk about movement upon one axle-tree, insulting Faustus’s learning, offending with “Whose termine is named the world’s wide pole”, setting up the doctor’s subsequent response of scorn for “slender trifles [which] Wagner can decide” (2.1.49) and successfully deflecting Faustus from a rational line of questioning. Faustus is not as acute at disputation as his own account of himself suggests. He is easily misdirected in this argument. Though it is open to him to do so, he does not confront Mephistophilis’s evasive tactics with reason. Instead, he plunges hastily forward with “But have they all one motion, both *situ et tempore*?” (2.1.45). He continues to pursue with this good physical question the matter of quintessence and its dynamic effects, receiving in response an account he must regard as “freshmen’s suppositions” (2.1.55).

Johnson remarks that Faustus, who parades his own knowledge in showing his scorn, is actually wrong about Mars, whose period is two years, not four. This is a curious error about which Johnson says:

I have never come across an astronomical work of the Renaissance that assigned a period of other than two years to Mars and can think of no reason which would lead a writer of the time to give the period of four years. Therefore I believe that *four* must be an error of the printer, or of a copyist. Marlowe would not be likely to have Faustus make an incorrect reply to “freshmen’s questions” on astronomy (250).

Johnson’s belief may not be well-founded on the evidence. It remains an open possibility that Marlowe *did* have Faustus make an incorrect

reply, that is, deliberately put him in error. There are other instances in the play to undermine confidence in Faustus's scholarship. In an Elizabethan context of latent theological debate between Aristotelian and Platonic views of matter and spirit, Faustus's question itself was otherwise a keen one, fully representative of an heterodox quest for physical knowledge. It remains unanswered by the devil's servant, who either does not know or will not say what he knows.

Faustus continues to manifest heretical aspirations by continuing his astrological questioning into control mechanisms. He asks "Hath every / sphere a dominion or *intelligentia*?" (2.1.55-56), to which question Mephistophilis's reply is cautiously monosyllabic. "Ay" he says. Faustus asks "How many heavens or spheres are there?" (2.1.59). His equation of the two concepts receives at last one unequivocal burst of information: "Nine, the seven planets, the firmament, and the empyreal heaven" (2.1.59-60). Faustus leaps upon this datum of difference within rival models: "But is there not *coelum igneum et crystallinum* [heavenly spheres of fire and crystal outside the empyrean]?" (2.1.61), to obtain the insignificant confirmation that "they be but fables" (2.1.62). Johnson's opinion is that "the answers provided by Mephistophilis accord with the doctrine espoused by the unconventional rather than the more orthodox authorities" (241). If Marlowe does have Mephistophilis present a somewhat heterodox sixteenth-century modification of the current model of Ptolemaic astronomy (as is by no means certain) what matters dramatically is that Faustus is again deflected in his search for knowledge. Marlowe suggests nothing here of Copernican heliocentrism. As noted, Faustus posits a "centric earth". The heavens remain above the earth, with Intelligences guiding an Aristotelian arrangement of spheres, of some number or other.

Faustus then asks his best question. No current or earlier model (discounting Democritus) could address it. In its form, the question has both dramatic and scientific power, in that it demonstrates an empirical need for better theory. He asks “Why are not conjunctions, oppositions, aspects, eclipses, all at one time, but in some years we have more, in some less?” (2.1.63-65). The answer that Mephistophilis avoids need not in fact be Copernican, but his tactic is to respond with “*Per inequalum motum respectu totius / By an unequal movement in respect to the whole*” (2.1.68). This gibberish, for all it is cloaked in Latinity, means nothing at all. The response is delivered *ore rotundo* [with rounded mouth], which, as Brown notes, is effectual in silencing discussion but never settles a problem (85). Mephistophilis is providing a lesson in blocking. Faustus, fully aware that he is not answered, says otherwise in heavy irony: “Well, I am answered” (2.1.69). And he leaves it at that. No *sic probo* is to be had here. Demonically-induced disgust attenuating his reasoning power, he gives up on his interviewee, so far as physical cosmology is concerned.

He could have pursued the matter socratically, “and how does that work, exactly? Explain the mechanism of which I am ignorant, and do so to my satisfaction”. A cooperative devil “full of obedience and humility” (1.3.30), not intent on blocking the discussion from going anywhere other than towards his own ends, might for example have anticipated the explanation of Tycho Brahe (1546-1601). Brahe, who never accepted the Copernican theory, suggested that the planets revolved around the sun, while the whole conglomerate orbited the earth (Erikson 472). At most in this interchange, Faustus has had confirmed for him that Intelligences manage the spheres, that the cosmos does engage guiding spirits in its governance. Astrology lives on, but Faustus realises he will not obtain useful astrological answers from this obstinately obtuse devil, and so shifts his ground to

theology, where I shall not follow him until the next chapter. Faustus is not yet done with divine astrology, but I think it fair to conclude that no hint of evidence exists in this central interchange to reveal any use of Copernican astronomical theory in Marlowe's text so far. On the contrary, Mephistophilis frustrates Faustus's questioning, and none of these questions requires a post-Ptolemaic cosmology to be answered more or less inadequately.

The play returns to discussion of the stars with the Chorus presenting Act Three (Wagner in the A-text). There are more lines in the B-text version of this speech than in that of the A-text, a fact which has drawn some critical interest and supposition of no relevance here. Briefly, the first six lines and the last five in each are essentially identical, with the B-text adding (or the A-text subtracting) a middle section. Faustus's purpose, says the Chorus, (returning *in medias res*, unusually for Marlowe) is "To find the secrets of astronomy, / Graven in the book of Jove's high firmament" (3.Ch.2-3). Not truths of astrology, as in his intercourse with Mephistophilis, absent during this speech, but astronomical facts to be decoded from their material inscription in the firmament. Here they are Jove's stars, not God's, viewed from "Olympus' top" (3.Ch.4). The corresponding form of the B-text choric speech is that of high Homeric epic, launching Faustus into two journeys, the first the more heavenly:

He views the clouds, the planets and the stars,
The tropics, zones and quarters of the sky,
From the bright circle of the hornèd moon
Even to the height of the *Primum Mobile*;
And, whirling round with this circumference
Within the concave compass of the pole,
From east to west his dragons swiftly glide
And in eight days did bring him home again.

3.Ch.7-13

An attempt is made to envision a circumferential journey, an earth orbit, viewing objects from an Olympian vantage, again enacting Faustus's Icarian, hubristic quest for god-like knowledge. I cannot myself tell from the first, ambiguous, "from" in this quotation whether Faustus penetrates the lunar sphere, so as to move between it and the unmoving outermost sphere, to penetrate planetary spheres and firmament in turn "even to the height of the *Primum Mobile*", or whether he simply views those spheres from the closer vantage of the sphere of the hornèd moon. There is, in the Chorus's speech, an honourable attempt to describe seasonal and climatological variations in strictly Aristotelian terms; but the doctrine of the *Primum Mobile* alluded to here was added in the Middle Ages to the Ptolemaic system (Clark 354), and is not proper to a purely Aristotelian cosmology.

After resting at home, Faustus's second journey is "to prove Cosmography" (20); that is, to test out what is defined by the Chorus as that which "measures coasts and kingdoms of the earth" (21), in effect a science-laden low earth orbit and re-entry to a landing in Rome, the location of the Act's true beginning. Back on the *terra infirma* of his stage, Faustus recapitulates his travels, only partly validating the account of the Chorus. He speaks to Mephistophilis (they seem back on good terms) and is finally done with astrology: "We viewed the face of heaven, of earth, and hell" (3.1.69), he says complacently, detailing a European tour. Of these three faces, the Chorus account mentions only that of earth, and not those of heaven *per se* or of hell. Both are admittedly awkward to view from an Olympian perspective. Faustus's review functions to allow the text to revert to a more conventional religious imagery than the Chorus's Homeric poetic permits. It also differentiates Faustus as a hero from Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine would have viewed the earth from this vantage with a military eye, bent on future conquest. After all, he

“mean(s) to travel to th’antarctic pole, [an Aristotelian idea] / Conquering the people underneath our feet” (*I Tamb.*4.4.145-6), and evinces no desire to get to heaven, only to threaten it from time to time.

Faustus, after these flights, is bathetically degenerated into a distractable sensualist whom Tamburlaine would likely have put directly to the sword. No longer remotely scholarly, Faustus says nothing astronomic of these unique sightings of heaven or hell, lusting instead only for “what might please my eye” (3.2.75) and to “do what e’er I please unseen of any” (3.3.13). In physical terms Faustus exceeds Icarus. There is no plunging out of control, unless his bathetic trajectory is implied, as it may be. There is no suggestion of immediate punishment for *hubris* unless it be this increase in folly. He flies high, and returns safely to Earth, twice. This miracle of magical experience has nothing to do with attainment of immortality, even if Faustus is facilitated in his efforts to understand divine astrology. What it does is to mirror the flight of Simon Magus, until brought down by the early Church Fathers. I shall return to this allegorical treatment of Simon’s magic, rooted as it is in a radically alternative approach to Christian ideas of divine astrology and immortality.

Faustus’s astronomical conceptualisations are not quite concluded. In the terror of his penultimate half-hour he attempts another, radically different, strategy of control:

Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease and midnight never come!
Fair nature’s eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente currite noctis equi! (5.2.141-7).

Marlowe is engaging the idea of the manipulation of time to ensure it does not end with damnation. Faustus is rephrasing Ovid: “that time may cease” (*Amores* 1.13.40), thereby demonstrating his awareness of a possibility inherent in what Poole describes as an “Ovidian physics”, an “understanding of the world in which matter and space are perceived as fluid and plastic” (202). She concludes:

Ovidian physics offers an alternative to teleology and provides an analytical mode that is not driven by etiology or genealogy. It is the study of flux, not stasis, transformations rather than formations (213).

This is an interesting line of thought, given that metamorphoses abound in *Doctor Faustus*.

Encased is a conception that time need not run at one constant speed. This is not a Copernican idea, and plays no part in standard versions of a Renaissance revolution in cosmological thinking, but it does stand well with Bruno’s conception of an infinite universe of multiple worlds. (A background on this conception, and its Epicurean origins, is provided in Appendix A). Bruno writes:

It is then unnecessary to investigate whether there be beyond the heaven Space, Void or Time. For there is a single general space, a single vast immensity which we may freely call Void; in it are innumerable globes like this on which we live and grow...Beyond the imaginary convex circumference of the universe is Time. For there is the measure and nature of motion (*De l’infinito universo et mond, Dial. V p.154* in Singer 59).

Bruno’s statement recalls arguments of St Augustine about God pre-existing time and nature with which Marlowe is likely to have been familiar. “What Augustine argued...is that God himself is timeless and lives outside time. Time, indeed, can only exist after God has created

material things, such as astronomical bodies, and set them moving in space” (Chapman 213). It is not unchristian of Faustus to imagine that time can stand still and create for him a form of immortality.

The question of time, couched poetically by Faustus in his borrowing from Ovid, bears necessarily on immortality, through the direct influence of mutually interacting Pythagorean and Hermetic traditions. Bruno says further:

Every production, of whatever sort it is, is an alteration, in which the substance remains the same; for it is only one, there is only one divine and immortal being. This is what Pythagoras meant, who does not fear death but expects a process of change (*Dial.ital.*, I, 324).

For Marlowe’s Zabina, Tamburlaine’s star possesses precisely this quality of ending time. Anippe also, comforting Zenocrate, says “Your love hath Fortune so at his command, / That she shall stay, and turn her wheel no more / As long as life maintains his mighty arm” (1.5.2.312-314). Pythagoras, Ovid, Bruno, Zabina (unhappy empress) and Anippe her slave-mistress share an understanding of immortality as eternal Change beyond generative Time within a boundless Universe. Marlowe denies this to Faustus.

Faustus is not saved, immortalised, or even well informed by what little astrological or astronomical knowledge he gains in *Doctor Faustus*. His rational Aristotelianism is weakened by the seductions his magic induces. In the next chapter I shall explore how in the dominant Christian context of the play, Faustus, unjustified and damned like Lucifer, is forever barred from God’s neo-Platonic heaven.

Chapter Four

Helen and Hell

*Farewell, vaine covetous foole, thou wilt repent,
That for the love of dross thou has despised
Wisdom's divine embrace, she would have borne thee
On the rich wings of immortality.*

Thomas Dekker
"The Pleasant Commedia of Old Fortunatus"
(1600) [Sig. B 3^v]

My main focus in this chapter is upon Marlowe's presentation of ideas of immortality in *Doctor Faustus* operative at the interface between changing orthodoxies of Christian belief and an implied gnostic belief structure. I do not intend fully to tease out Marlowe's putative references to differences in expression of Christian belief in an immortal afterlife, leaving to others such matters as, for example, the timeliness of repentance for redemption in such statements as that of the Good Angel: "Never too late, if Faustus will repent" (2.1.82). My focus will adhere to my claim, *contra* Keefer below, that Marlowe allegorises the history of Simon Magus and his partner Helen in order to present a "secure alternative" to Christian doctrines of salvation and eternal damnation foregrounded in the play. As Cox puts it, "The dramaturgical appearance of [Christian] conformity may in fact have been a stalking horse for defiance" (47). I hope to demonstrate that gnostic forms of immortality intimated within *Doctor Faustus* are integral to the play's structure.

This chapter will concern itself mainly with a close reading of the play. As with the astronomical material, I have placed some essential supporting background material to gnosticism in an Appendix B: *On Simon, Helen and Gnostic belief*, which I hope may

be of some assistance. Before turning either to gnostic influence upon the play, or to a close reading of it, I shall argue for an allegorical reading of *Doctor Faustus*. Most pertinent to this thesis is that an allegorical interpretation facilitates reading Faustus as representing figures from Everyman to Simon, through Icarus and Lucifer; and for Helen as she of Troy, as Simon's partner in heresy, or as a figure for the abstraction Wisdom. Resolving the matter of this multiple figuration in *Doctor Faustus* is a task integral to resolution of its genre. It is also true that allegoresis allows the play to be read for its unified structure, making better sense of the central sections, so often condemned, and I shall consider this aspect. My principal focus, however, will continue to be upon Marlowe's presentations of ideas of immortality, largely absent in middle sections of the play, which have other allegorical fish to fry. My hope is that the plan of arguments supporting my principal claim will be clear before the text is read to support it.

The genre of *Doctor Faustus* has been the subject of much critical debate that I shall not survey. It may be helpful, though, to mention that Tydeman and Thomas produced in 1989 a *Guide through the Critical Maze* of Marlowe's works, which discusses the difficulty critics have found in settling upon a genre. They say "*Doctor Faustus*, like all Marlowe's plays, resists classification by genre. If it is a heroic tragedy, it is also a morality play" (47). Bevington and Rasmussen, to give a single example, suggest that:

In historical terms, the play can be seen as a Protestant Christian tragedy that makes a significant contribution to English Renaissance drama by discovering in the Protestant concept of damnation a genuinely aesthetic potential (36).

The idea that *Doctor Faustus* employs the form of a morality play is the origin of McQueen's inclusion of *Doctor Faustus* in a broader observation that:

The morality structure, with its frequent satiric and realistic overtones, and the general allegorical ambience of so many among [the plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson in their youth]—*The Jew of Malta, Doctor Faustus, As You Like It, Henry IV, Measure for Measure, Volpone*, to name no others—is perhaps the greatest single contribution of allegory to the literature of England (73).

The morality structure serves as an alchemical crucible within which is contained an allegorical “ambience” functioning to create a richness of additional meaning to figures and characters in these plays. No construct need be limited in its compiled figurations, and characters may have multiple referents, both overt and oblique.

Jump’s *Marlowe: Doctor Faustus: A Casebook*, published in 1969, brings together a collection of criticism from the earliest date to that of its own publication. In it, Smith’s 1939 critique concludes that “the play...is an allegory” (51), and Simkin (criticising a general view of the play as tragedy) remarks that “the ‘Everyman’ figure (the closest we get to a ‘hero’) is not an individual ‘character’, but an allegorical representation of sinful humankind” (109). Simkin does not call the play an allegory, but he does attribute allegorical representation to Faustus. As Tambling notes:

Until recently, modern study of literature paid little attention to allegory, unless specialist work was being done on a religious ‘serious’ writer like Spenser, or Langland, or Bunyan (1).

“Allegory”, Tambling adds, “has a broad set of meanings, but...there is now no consensus in how to approach it” (2). The *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* also observes that:

Because allegory is so various in its operations, turning from one sense to another in widely divergent texts and times, it resists any attempt at strict and comprehensive definition (Preminger and Brogan 31).

Respecting that resistance, I propose only that the dramatic trajectories traced by central characters, and their interactions in respect of ideas of immortality, work on multiple levels of allegorical figuration in *Doctor Faustus*.

The text of *Doctor Faustus*, viewed as a morality play, is one in which Calvinist redemptive issues are superimposed upon Augustinian neoplatonic conceptions of a superlunary heaven and subterranean hell. Marlowe's play includes more extensive and intense allegorical figuration than might a morality; the figuration is employed for different purposes, and to greater literary effect. Allegory allows him to present a variety of figures for immortality, for example, without necessarily deriving any moral lesson. The flexibility granted allows Marlowe to represent gnostic figures without promoting them; permits him to offer an oblique alternate view of immortality, as against the overt allegorisation in Christian terms of Faustus's salvation/damnation. Further, Marlowe is enabled to make choric presentation of allegorical references to classical figures and themes, such as Icarus and Acteon, and the divine punishment due to *hubris*.

Reading *Doctor Faustus* for its allegorical ambience provides unity to the diversity in Marlowe's play, in which scriptural, gnostic and classical allusions are alternated with scenes of satiric farce and robust comedy traditional to morality plays. Bevington says that "Most misunderstanding of the comedy in this play has arisen from an inadequate appreciation of the function of burlesque humor in christian homiletic tragedy" (252). The Luciferan prototype for Faustus, from which solemnly moral lessons might be drawn, can be regarded as arising within an allegorical frame containing also more comic scenes bathed in classical and medieval reference.

Allegory is not necessarily, or solely, religious in kind, and it is not necessary to follow the traditions of the scheme probably erroneously attributed to Dante (1265–1321), in which allegory is but one subset of religious typology. Clifford (casting doubt as to whether Dante was the author of the letter in question) says that it is “frequently quoted...seeming to claim for secular literary works the same four levels of meaning believed to exist in Scripture” (38). For Lutherans, Faustus’s relationship with Lucifer in *Doctor Faustus* predicts typologically a current activity of the devil within this allegorical dramatic frame, and accounts absolutely for the reported discovery on stage at Exeter, of a literal, real, devil “causing cast and audience to scatter” (Healy 181). Moralities always provide moral lessons, but allegory can work broadly, needing no religious or moral referent. Fables, for example, may fall into this category. For Mephistophilis, the “*coelum igneum et cristallinum*” of Faustus’s eager inquiry are “but fables”, of this kind (2.1.61-62). I can detect no moral in these fabulously fiery and crystalline spheres. Fables *may* deliver a moral lesson; while parables and fables are both allegories, only the former connotes a religiously moral lesson, explicitly delivered.

Marlowe, who was able to draw upon a complex intertextual history for Faustus, would almost certainly have been aware of one of his previous allegorical incarnations as a shepherd in the fifth of Barclay’s *Eclogues*, published about 1514 (Ward 63-65). The assertion can be so confidently made because that Faustus has for companion another shepherd, Amyntas—the same character depicted in Thomas Watson’s response to Tasso’s Italian pastoral play *Aminta* in a Latin poem entitled *Amyntas* (1585) and the subject again of *Amintae Gaudia*, the work which Marlowe saw to the press and to which he contributed a dedicatory epistle. Faustus the shepherd “suddenly turns ambitious and wants to become a great

man....Sometimes he is interrupted by Amyntas, who wonders whence he got all his knowledge, and charges him with exaggeration” (Ward 63). This seems familiar to Scythian shepherd and German scholar. The tone of renaissance eclogues, says Ward “is that of satires of their times, under the veil of allegory”. It was Barclay who translated Brant’s *Ship of Fools* (Basel 1494) into English verse in 1509, to which “there are frequent allusions in Elizabethan drama” (Ward 62). The early modern Renaissance taste, says Ward, was for bucolic poetry such as that of Petrarch, Mantuan and Boccaccio, “but beside these modern influences, we find throughout that of Virgil, who first introduced moral and satirical elements into bucolic poetry” (65). It is irresistible (though speculative) to envision Watson and Marlowe, young men, bosom companions, poets, figuring themselves within the frame of this “taste” as Amyntas and Faustus respectively. Peele certainly links them in his poem *The Honour of the Garter* (1593):

...To Watson, worthy of many epitaphs
 For his sweet poesy, for Amyntas’ tears
 And joys so well set down. And after thee
 Why hie they not, unhappy in thine end,
 Marley, the Muses darling, for thy verse
 Fit to write passions for the souls below.

Allegorically, the pair are both dead shepherds, to adapt the reference to Marlowe from Phoebe, Shakespeare’s shepherdess in *As You Like It* (3.5.80).

Viewed from a gnostic perspective, what matters of the characters in *Doctor Faustus* is their ignorance expressed in folly, not their sins. The Duchess of Vanholt, to take just one example, slight though her part is, is no exception. She is the only female to speak (twice), and her lines are prompted by Faustus. He will grant her a wish, no matter how foolish, she being “great-bellied” as Faustus puts it (4.7.12). She opts—in January—for a dish of ripe grapes. Gratified,

she says “And trust me, they are the sweetest grapes that e’er I tasted” (4.7.34), a comment immediately followed—in a stage direction—by the Clowns “bouncing at the gate within”, which I take to signal a laugh-line. Performance of this skit-like scene, which has the marks of having been written to deliver a gag-line, would help to clarify the matter, and it may be relevant that a Kenneth Branagh character in a 2009 film, *The Boat that Rocked*, talks of “crushing his testicles like grapes”.

Faustus himself is at least as foolish as he is sinful. There are many examples to draw upon; but, taking one more or less at random, Faustus says to the Emperor:

My gracious lord, not so much for injury done
To me, as to delight your majesty with some mirth,
Hath Faustus justly requited this injurious knight; which
Being all I desire, I am content to remove his horns.
Mephostophilis, transform him. And hereafter, sir,
Look you speak well of scholars (4.2.109-114).

To which Benvolio responds in an aside:

Speak well of ye? ‘Sblood, and
Scholars be such cuckold-makers to clap horns of
Honest men’s heads o’ this order, I’ll ne’er trust smooth
Faces and small ruffs more (4.2.115-118).

The Emperor, who has been with difficulty restraining his fingers from paddling in the neck of Alexander’s paramour Roxanne (a spirit raised for him by Faustus), in search of a supposed mole (or wart), then gets everyone offstage expeditiously by entrusting Faustus with command of the state of Germany. As allegory, it is true to morality *exempla*, drawing upon allusions to the Acteon myth. Faustus’s participation as a scholar/cuckolder is foreshadowed by his earlier confession that “I am wanton and lascivious, and cannot live without a wife” (1.5.144). Perhaps anyone’s wife will do. Faustus plays the

white-face clown in this and other comic scenes, so well-appreciated in the allegorical terms of MacQueen above. But by no stretch of the imagination is he a tragic hero in them, which must bitterly frustrate a Romantic view of Faustus as Prometheus, and a critical reading of the play as tragedy, such as that of Ellis-Fermor (*The Frontiers of Drama* 1945 141), to name but one.

These two examples illustrate Bevington's point that the popular comedic element of folly and its comeuppance is traditional to Christian homiletic plays. In contrast, humour seems altogether absent in scenes focusing on allegorised abstractions of Wisdom/Knowledge, setting aside other scenes reflective of Christian Sin and Redemption. Marlowe never uses the word "gnostic", but he does substantially extend Faustus's allegorical role of Everyman when gnosticism is understood as a referent. The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defines "gnostic" as "relating to knowledge; cognitive; intellectual". Faustus is often presented in such terms in the play. The *Oxford English Dictionary Online's* B1 historical definition is more specific:

The designation given to certain heretical sects among the early Christians who claimed to have superior knowledge of things spiritual, and interpreted the sacred writings by a mystic philosophy.

The only tangential, and dismissive, mention of gnostic influence in *Doctor Faustus* appearing in Jump's *Casebook* is that contained within Levin's essay "Science Without Conscience". Levin writes of

Simon Magus, a charlatan hovering on the fringes of early Christianity, who was accompanied by a certain Helen and was killed in a desperate effort to fly seems to have some bearing upon this story (135).

The pejorative term "charlatan" and the location on Christianity's fringe, show Levin to be faithful to a literary tradition despising Simon, whose significance is considered in Appendix B, wherein that

tradition can be seen to go back a long way. Brown claims (in 1939) that “an influence upon Marlowe from the legend of Simon Magus has not hitherto been suggested” (84) and finds that:

the careers of Simon and Faustus follow essentially the same pattern. An extraordinarily bold and powerful magician, defying God, performs a series of wonders, many of them before the Emperor and at Rome, “having the devil as his servant”, [which quotation is taken from the *Acts of Peter*] (97).

More recently, Keefer, otherwise studious in his 1991 footnotes on the play’s gnostic influences, notes their potential only to follow Levin in dismissing their overall significance. He says

Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* does not invite its audience to imagine any secure alternative to the orthodoxy which it questions. Indeed, it seems unlikely that Marlowe possessed such an alternative himself (xiv).

Keefer denies that textual links connecting Faustus to Simon, and thence to gnostic ideas, present a true alternative to orthodox Christianity.

In Act One Marlowe brings immediately to the foreground his allusion to Faustus as Lucifer, but he is nowhere explicit about the allusion which I will argue he draws with Simon’s flight and downfall. In Faustus’s interactions with Helen, however, as I shall shortly discuss, Marlowe constructs an oblique allegorisation alluding to the Simon/Helen partnership, and thus references gnosticism. Allegory does not require such referencing to be direct; it can be oblique even if a portion of the audience is thereby excluded from understanding the intimated meaning. Helen is presented as if she were Helen of Troy reincarnate, but her figuration also alludes to her being Simon’s partner. That this couple are scripturally linked to the heresy of gnosticism is evidenced in Appendix B: *On Simon, Helen, and Gnostic belief*. Allegory requires that the audience (sections of it at

least) recognises allusion, not that the protagonist does. Faustus's "Ignorance" is also a dramatic datum, sharing as it does an axis with the abstraction "Knowledge", personified in Helen's obliquely referenced gnostic formulation.

The Chorus's opening speech makes an obvious allusion to Faustus as Icarus: "His waxen wings did mount above his reach" (Ch.21). One supposes Icarus had undue confidence in them, despite his father's warning. Is there evidence to support a claim that Marlowe offers a plausible rationale for Faustus's confidence in taking flight, enough to justify it? If not, then the Chorus must be right; Faustus has a classically predestined fate, allegorically linked to Icarus by his *hubris*, but it must be observed that Faustus does *not* fall from the sky. His falling, as the Chorus later says, is "to a devilish exercise", one that links him with Lucifer, with whom his fate is also linked allegorically.

The Chorus discovers Faustus with "And this the man that in his study sits" (Ch.28). Faustus has been contemplating his books, and discarding professions. He exhorts himself: "Jerome's bible! Faustus, view it well" (1.1.38). He then constructs a conclusion to a syllogism conflated from a partial reading of two biblical texts, one from Romans and another from John. I shall shortly turn to an intriguing intertextual reading by Street that hinges upon Calvin's exegesis on the immediately subsequent verse from John, omitted from Marlowe's text. For the moment, it is enough to note that Faustus's conclusion is:

Ay, we must die, an everlasting death.

What doctrine call you this? *Che sera, sera.*

'What will be, shall be'. Divinity, adieu! (1.1.46-48).

He seems to reject a denial of effective agency for himself. This might be more positively expressed as asserting his free will. But the conclusion is made in respect of an eternity of death, which makes the

more odd his later willingness to bargain his soul away without prospect of immortality. He has an admitted interest in eternization. In considering medicine as a career, he proposes that, were he to “be a physician, Faustus would heap up gold / And be eternized for some wondrous cure” (1.1.14-15). Cheney remarks that Marlowe:

uses an Augustinian word [eternize] in a Lucretian or materialist fashion, collapsing the theological concept of Christian glory into a philosophical concept of earthly fame (1997 204).

Faustus dismisses the prospect of fame as insufficiently attractive. “Could thou make men to live eternally, / Or being dead, raise them to life again, / Then this profession were to be esteemed (1.1.24-6). Cheney’s gloss is that “Marlowe’s principle is one of incarnational resurrection, a materialist ‘immanence’” (1997 204), which principle I think the first Aristotelian banner planted upon a battleground Marlowe is about to construct on conceptual fields of immortality and resurrection.

Faustus is determined as to his preferred methodology, which is to be by way of the magic conjuration of spirits. Raised spirits, he thinks, will not only act powerfully on his behalf, but clarify disorder to yield knowledge. He says “Oh, what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence / Is promised to the studious artizan!” (1.1.52-54). Marlowe also allows Faustus an explicit aim. Faustus says “A sound magician is a demi-god; / Here tire my brains to get a deity!” (1.1.63-64). In the familiar convention of Genesis, man’s taking action to satisfy his lust for knowledge initiates practices directly inspired by Lucifer the fallen archangel, who is, later, frequently onstage, mostly as an observer. [Regrettably, it is necessary in all this argument to maintain such sexist language, rather than anachronistically repair it as it arises]. Brockbank, quoted in Jump’s *Casebook*, draws attention to Lucifer’s speech [and the flight motif] in Isaiah XIV: “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be

like the Most High” (Jump 175). Certainly Faustus wants to be godlike in knowledge, like his type Lucifer, though he does not himself make the comparison.

From a classical perspective, Faustus is perhaps trying the conclusion Marlowe arrives at in *Hero and Leander*:

And but that Learning, in despite of Fate,
Will mount aloft, and enter heaven gate
And to the seat of Jove itself advance,
Hermes had slept in hell with Ignorance (465-8).

Faustus asks himself “Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please / Resolve me of all ambiguities, / Perform what desperate enterprise I will?” (1.1.78-80). He anticipates success and satisfaction: “These necromantic books are heavenly, / Lines, circles, scenes, letters and characters: / Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires” (1.1.49-51). Marlowe can reasonably expect his audience to have graduated levels of knowledge of the occult and arcane to which Faustus aspires in his “magic and concealed arts” (1.1.101). Cornelius tells him, and the audience, that “he who is grounded in Astrology, / Enriched with tongues, well seen in minerals, / Hath all the principles magic doth require” (1.2.137-9).

Those better educated will appreciate a nod towards Aristotle as an underpinning philosophical base for the theory of magic. According to he whose *Analytics* ravished Faustus, every individual substance is a mixture of *matter* and *form*. “Form” is the universal aspect of a thing—an essential unity shared by all things of the same type; a quality which never changes. For Aristotle, unlike Plato, matter and form are inseparable aspects of the same individual thing. Form is eternal, like the Platonic idea, but instead of being outside of matter, it is in matter. Hence Jorge’s disgust at Aristotle’s “universe reconceived in terms of dull and slimy matter” (Eco 473). In magic theory, if a

form is conjured to be grossly material enough, it may materialise potentialities within the spirit form, as allowable by Aristotle, for whom the two are never separate in any dualistic sense.

In Act One Scene Three, Marlowe gives the audience a *frisson* with the oratory and spectacle of magic incantations. Lucifer and attendant devils looking on, he conjures Mephistophilis. At Faustus's order, the devil's servant obliges by re-presenting himself in the "holy shape [becoming] a devil best" (1.3.25), as a conservative Franciscan. The scene is set for a theological disputation on immortality between the two principals. Mephistophilis promptly denies Faustus effective agency in raising him. Rather, he says, "when we hear one rack the name of God, / Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ, we fly in hope to get his glorious soul" (1.3.47-49). His gambit is to pre-empt the terms of the discussion. Marlowe sets the ball rolling with Faustus yielding this ground *pro tem.*, preening himself, and launching a flanking movement:

This word 'damnation' terrifies not me,
For I confound hell in elysium.
My ghost be with the old philosophers.
But leaving aside these vain trifles of men's souls.

(1.3.58-61)

Faustus does not accept damnation or the soul as useful terms. Perhaps the phrase "this word 'damnation' terrifies not me" grants him confidence by the deconstruction of concept to construct, distancing Faustus from the "thingness" of damnation. Marlowe demonstrates once more with his speech a capacity to condense nested and conflicting concepts within a close frame.

Faustus does own to a "ghost" which he locates in the company of unspecified but ancient philosophers, non-Christian seekers of knowledge. This, the sole occurrence of the word in the play and

elsewhere sparingly employed by Marlowe, is placed deliberately here in lieu of terms such as “spirit” or “soul” which might otherwise loosely be considered suitable. Marlowe is again precise. Faustus is distinguishing and placing more significance upon his ghost than upon his soul. The word “ghost” is a reminder of Machiavel’s anti-religious claim to successive incarnations made as prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, pointing to the possibility of cyclic immortality. The crypticism of the line containing this word signals an elaboration which the text then refuses, rendering the reference to a link to ancient philosophers both intriguing and frustrating. Faustus may be referring, still, to Aristotle. Neither Marlowe nor he says directly here to whom else, or to which aspects of what philosophies.

Pythagoras receives explicit mention much later: “Ah, Pythagoras’ metempsychosis, were that true / This soul should fly from me, and I be chang’d / Unto some brutish beast” (5.2.99-101). It is possible that Faustus is here holding the Pythagorean doctrine to be conditional; he could be expressing regret at this late stage for a lost illusion. In either case, at both beginning and end of the play, he posits a potential for earthly resurrection at odds with Christian belief. At the commencement, he wishes to be understood to regard this conception of a “ghosting” form of immortality, as independent of, and superior to, that of the soul; which, following the Chorus, he may be thought hubristically to despise. Faustus’s “Elysium” is a reference to the pastoral paradise of the Greeks situated beyond the three rivers bordering the underworld, as all readers of the *Aeneid* would know. When he claims to confound hell with elysium, Faustus omits the Christian heaven as an option for an immortal afterlife.

Faustus does not recognise the parallels between his own career and that of Lucifer, although the audience is plainly expected to do so. He asks Mephistophilis “What is that Lucifer, thy Lord?” (1.3.62) and

“How comes it then that he is prince of devils?” (1.3.66), to receive the pointed reply “Oh, by aspiring pride and insolence, / For which God threw him from the face of heaven” (1.3.67-8). Of the two, Mephistophilis is the one who professes more interest in heaven:

Thinkst thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (1.3.79-82).

As Brooke notes, “this is the one passage of imaginative suggestion of heaven, and it comes from the devil” (Jump 117). Marlowe here juxtaposes an awkward pairing of cross-cultural afterlife partners, and has Faustus opt for the superiority of Greek myth, a choice consistent with his adherence to an Olympian worldview and hubristic Herculean ambition.

Marlowe begins Act One, Scene Five with Faustus bereft of confidence altogether. “Now, Faustus, must thou needs be damned? / And canst thou not be saved?” (1.5.1-2). He wavers, vacillates violently in converse with the plainly allegorical Good and Evil Angels—whose sudden presence causes no surprise—and finally binds his soul to Lucifer in his own reluctant blood. Faustus’s framing focus is ever upon his familiar spirit Mephistophilis, from first invocation to the final utterance of his name. Faustus, his mind delighted by a show of devils, asks a critical question of him: “But may I raise such spirits when I please?” to receive Mephistophilis’s answer “Ay, Faustus, and do greater things than these”. He responds in turn, “Then there’s enough for a thousand souls” (1.5.85-7). Faustus purports to place little significance upon the *value* of a soul, in the context of a play in which Marlowe places much significance upon the *concept* of a soul. Mephistophilis, in what has to be a fiendish aside to the audience, says “Oh what will not I do to obtain his soul!” (1.5.72).

Faustus's soul is a commodity upon which different values are placed by these protagonists.

The first serious question Faustus poses after his deal with the devil is to ask Mephistophilis "Where is the place that men call hell?" (1.5.119). The "hell" Faustus refers to is not that classical location by a damp Acherontic shore, upon the gods of which he has just called in his Latin incantation, but a Judeo-Christian construct he is keen to know more about from someone who has experienced it at first hand, as it were. Mephistophilis provides a disconcertingly succinct Calvinist account, to which I shall shortly turn, that presupposes a Reformist eschatology of Christian revelation. Mephistophilis's account raises questions urgent to Marlowe's society of election, grace and predestination within theology, as well as an internal locus for damnation.

Marlowe stacks the deck against Faustus, whose fate is doubly-assured by being located within the play's enwrapping morality frame. Street mounts an argument from Calvin's exegesis of the biblical verse 1 John 1:9 to make this point in purely Calvinist terms. The beginning is in the interchange between Faustus and Mephistophilis as they discuss the exact location of hell. Earlier, Mephistophilis threatens "If thou deny it, I will back to hell" (1.5.37), but now, in solemn self-contradiction, he explains that:

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place, for where we are is hell,
And where hell is must we ever be.
And, to conclude, when all the world dissolves,
And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be hell that is not heaven.

(1.5.124-29)

Street notes that “the presentation of hell here is remarkably similar to that forwarded by Calvin in his *Commentary on 1 John* and in particular to the biblical verse (1 John 1:9) that Faustus neglects to quote in his Act One soliloquy when he quotes only 1 John 1:8” (431). What Faustus actually says at that point in the text is “*Si pecasse negamus, fallimur / Et nulla est in nobis veritas*”, which he translates well enough as “If we say that we have no sin / We deceive ourselves, and there’s no truth in us” (1.1.41-44). The Geneva Bible’s direct continuation of the text is “If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Calvin’s exegesis of this second verse, that which is excluded from Faustus’s speech, reads:

It is very important to be quite sure that when we have sinned there is reconciliation with God ready and prepared for us. Otherwise we shall always carry hell about within us. Few consider how miserable and unhappy is a wavering conscience. But in fact, hell reigns where there is no peace with God.

(Parker 240)

Before returning to Street’s commentary on Calvin’s exegesis, it can be noted in passing that Calvin is not the author of the play’s “hellmouth”, he does not propose a physical hell “below”. Most probably, the Lord Admiral’s Men seized full theatrical advantage of “that popular but obsolete property which Marlowe resurrected from the mysteries” (Jump 159), known to have been in Henslowe’s possession. What better occasion for its use? When Mephistophilis, at Faustus’s insistence, locates hell “within the bowels of these elements” (1.5.122), he is indeed talking of a space “under the heavens” (1.5.120) but that space is *within*, not beneath, the four earthly elements. The dramatisation of hell in Act Five is not consistent with Mephistophilis’s Calvinism, but belongs to the earlier Augustinian tradition long associated with medieval morality plays.

Calvin's main assertion, worth repeating for its endorsement of John's generosity, and quite distinct from the grim determinism usually attributed to him, is that "It is very important to be quite sure that when we have sinned there is reconciliation with God ready and prepared for us". In Weil's view:

The theology of this play may be as fundamentally amiable as its hero is superficially appealing. 'Be of good comfort', wrote Richard Hooker in a sermon entitled, "A Learned Discourse of Justification, Works, and How the Foundation of Faith is Overthrown" (1585): 'We have to do with a merciful God, ready to make the best of a little which we hold well and not with a captious sophister, which gathereth the worst out of everything wherein we err' (72).

Calvin's exegesis does not challenge John's proposition that acknowledgment of sin will suffice to justify sinful man. Street says:

By having Faustus abjure 1 John 1:9 at the moment he also rejects theology, Marlowe not only has the magician offer a partial reading of the biblical text; he also condemns Faustus to suffer the very pains he attempts to occlude. In other words, a clear separation of verse and the Calvinist exegesis it commands is not possible. When Mephistophilis describes a Calvinist hell from the exegesis of the very passage that Faustus selectively ignores, Marlowe stacks both text and sub-text against Faustus in a movement that leads towards his ultimate destruction. ... It is an example of a writer utilizing his intertextual sources interactively in a movement that produces the conditions of the protagonist's damnation (431).

As Street demonstrates, in this play, Faustus cannot repent of his sins. The godlike author will not allow it. His damnation is assured.

Faustus abruptly wearies of the theological future, and calls for a wife to meet his present needs. He is "wanton and lascivious, and

cannot live without a wife” (1.5.114-5). This *volte-face* is lightning fast, but sex is always a ready drawcard for an audience’s attention, which might otherwise begin to flag at this juncture. Mephistophilis is prompt to recognise the change in mood, but reluctant, he says, to offer sanctified marriage. So he offers Faustus instead a devil-woman with fireworks. “A plague on her for a hot whore” (1.5.151-2), Faustus expostulates, backing up the audience’s delight in Marlowe’s spectacular fireworks with a topical reference to venereal disease.

Marlowe’s purpose in staging Helen’s first parade to the scholars in Act Five may be to establish her as natural successor to this devil-woman, building up in a generally misogynous fashion by way of the Nan Spit of Rafe’s more mundane fantasy in Act Two, and thence to Alexander’s paramour and the pregnant Duchess of Act Four. But beyond these sensory appeals, and more obliquely, Marlowe is referencing the Simon/Helen partnership with this “hot whore”, signposting Helen both as the strumpet of Troy and as the whore of Tyre whom Simon is supposed to have picked up there. [See Appendix]. He is laying a foundation for an allegorical representation of the single key figure in two alternate theogonies. Both Helens are cynically considered “hot” and whorish, but both also embody divine immortality and reincarnation. But, for now, Mephistophilis has to fuss over and cosset a petulant Faustus with “men in harness” (1.5.166) and other delights. Faustus will settle for a good book. Undeniably, it has been a stressful day. Much dramatic tension relieved with this comedy, Act One closes, leaving yet a chill in the air with Faustus’s dark conclusion: “Oh, thou art deceived” (1.5.180).

Writing in a broad vein during the *entre-acte*, as it were, in order to background Faustus’s dilemma, it may be remarked that no single summary of epistemology will be acceptable to all Christians, and that the search for knowledge is situated in Reformist Christianity as

largely antithetical to faith in God. As a minimum, the dialectic between the two is troubling, with any ambiguity to be resolved in favour of faith as the dominant value. It may also be helpful to summarise contemporary Christian redemption theory as holding that without man's acknowledgement of his sin, and sincere repentance for it, eternal damnation is inevitable, though God's will in any matter is not to be presumed by man's judgement. Justification of man, forgiveness of sins and redemption, is obtained through the grace of God. The relationship of man's will to grace is the subject of dispute in many centuries of debate. For all Christians, Christ as resurrected saviour has already interceded to deliver man to eternal life, but neither a positive outcome from his intervention nor God's grace in a particular case can ever be assumed. Mysteries of predestination are proper to God and perhaps improper for man to investigate. Man's soul, however, is always understood to be a spiritual essence that will be reunited with his body in the last days, whether he is saved or not. If not, then he faces a torment of eternal hellfire for body and soul alike, visions of which torment vary.

When Augustine converted to Christianity, he retained the Neoplatonic notion of the One as "easily identified with the Christian God" (Rivers 35) and incorporated a Neoplatonic spiritual hierarchy to explain Christ's intermediary position between Man and God as sacrificially redemptive of Man's loss of eternal life in Genesis.

Once sin, however, had widely separated the human race from God, it was necessary for a mediator, who alone was born, lived, and was put to death without sin, to reconcile us to God, and provide even for our bodies a resurrection to life eternal.

(Augustine xxviii in Rivers 35)

Petrarch in the *De Secretis*, written sometime from 1347 to 1353, imagined Augustine accusing him of *superbia* in the form of *honos et gloria*, warning him that "I greatly fear lest this pursuit of a false

immortality of fame may shut for you the way that leads to the true immortality of life” (Petrarcha 44). Quite what a man or woman *could* do, other than have faith, to be resurrected in the body to eternal life was a central question dominating religious debate in the sixteenth century. Who could be saved, and how?

Faustus is an allegorical Everyman denied crucial knowledge of his own referents. The audience, however, may make connections to a number of types, and through them obtain a variety of meanings for his actions. One set of meanings is governed by his allegorical resurrection as ghost of Simon to represent ideas of immortality in *two* historical collisions; making him aware only of the current one, in the frame of which he erroneously thinks he is free to choose. When Act Two begins, the protagonists are back in Faustus’s familiar study sometime later. A feature of these interchanges is the facility with which Marlowe induces sympathy with the devil’s agent. Mephistophilis, when Faustus says he thinks “hell’s a fable” (2.1.30), remarks and “corrects” the inherent doctrinal problem Faustus offers. He re-reifies the word “Hell” for an audience relieved to be returned by him to orthodoxy, with the empirical advice “Ay, think so till experience prove thee wrong” (2.1.31). Many heads are nodding in an audience content to be instructed in theology by a demon, servant of bright Lucifer, father of lies.

Faustus has been viewing the heavens morosely, and with renewed unease. Mephistophilis soothes him, smoothly contradicts himself about heaven, and downplays its value: “Thinkst thou that heaven is such a glorious thing? / I tell thee, Faustus, it is not half so fair / As thou or any man that breathes on earth” (2.1.5-7). Heaven is the theme thus introduced and stated as Faustus rouses himself, calling on Mephistophilis to “dispute again, and reason of divine astrology” (2.1.33-34). The whole audience will understand Faustus’s interest in

astrology to be an essential component of magical practices. I have discussed this aspect of the play in the previous chapter, and will here only note that the materialisation of a body with a soul is deemed to take place, even for ordinary mortals in orthodox neoplatonic Christian doctrine, as a result of angelic influences taking place within the celestial spheres. This is the origin of “guardian angels”.

Under the influence of his Good Angel, at a further time of doubt, Faustus calls “Christ my saviour / Seek to save distressed Faustus’ soul” (2.1.85-86), but is greeted instead by Lucifer himself, who at this fraught juncture speaks for the first time, reminding Faustus that “Thou call’st on Christ contrary to thy promise” (2.1.94). Marlowe has the timeliness of repentance here briefly under examination (and also Christ’s power to redeem brought into question) but Faustus himself is again easily distracted from theology, this time with a pastime show of the seven deadly sins. His attention as Everyman displaced, he thinks no more for now of Christ. In the celestial journeys that follow, also discussed in the previous chapter, Faustus encroaches upon those superlunary spheres whose governing Intelligences in Pythagorean tradition pass souls on their way to and from their temporary placement as stars.

I promised earlier to return to Faustus concluding his astrological catechism of Mephistophilis. He had given up asking questions of the evasive devil, and demanded instead “Now tell me who made the world” (2.3.69). This demand touches upon an axiom of Christian faith. What is Marlowe’s motivation in making it? Is any alternative conceivable within the frame of Christian theology? Mephistophilis flatly refuses to answer. Faustus first cajoles, then insults the “accursed spirit” (2.3.78), before answering himself to confirm the audience’s belief in an unexamined axiom they may never yet have considered challengeable: “Think, Faustus, upon God that

made the world!” (2.3.76). The relevance of this exchange does not lie in Mephistophilis’s evasion as one forbidden to speak God’s name, for he does this often elsewhere, for example, “Conspired against our God with Lucifer” (1.3.71), and note here his allegiance to “our” God. It may instead lie in an oblique allegorical representation by Marlowe of a possible alternative response; a Goddess, through a Demiurge, by mistake.

At the beginning of Act Five, Wagner signals that his master “means to die shortly” (5.2.1). At a valedictory banquet, Faustus accedes to the respectful request of the scholars he is entertaining, to “let them see that peerless dame of Greece” (5.1.17). With regard to Helen, and writing of the main sources for Marlowe’s play, Nuttall notes that:

in the ‘English Faust Book’ Faustus’s Helen is a ‘common concubine and bedfellow’ merely, and we find the same picture in the remoter source which lies behind the ‘English Faust Book’, the ‘German Faust Book’ of 1581 (42).

The scholars depart, to be replaced by an Old Man allegorising Faith. Helen’s appearance triggers the Old Man’s, and does so again, later in this scene. Her significance within the play is marked by the earnestness of his opposition. No common concubine she. Not even the appearance of Lucifer otherwise calls for his presence. He rebukes Faustus for “this magic that will charm thy soul to hell, / And quite bereave thee of salvation” (5.1.35-36). Faustus is straightway suicidal, ready to despair and die. Mephistophilis is as ready to give him a dagger. The Old Man stays him from sins of despair and suicide, saying to him that he sees “an angel hover o’er thy head / And with a vial full of precious grace / Offers to pour the same into thy soul” (5.1.59-61). Faustus is comforted in his “distressed soul” (5.1.64) and the Old Man leaves (shaking his white head) “fearing the ruin of [Faustus’s] hopeless soul” (5.1.67).

Faustus concedes that he is caught in a fearful quandary: “I do repent, and yet I do despair” (5.1.70). Mephistophilis is seriously annoyed by the turn of events, and threatens Faustus. Cravenly, Faustus asks him to torment instead the Old Man, who “durst dissuade me from thy Lucifer” (5.1.83), and returns, despicably to Christian Faith, to his lust for Helen. Faith has lost the contest for the magician’s soul. Faustus wishes now for Mephistophilis “to glut the longing of my heart’s desire / That I may have unto my paramour / That heavenly Helen which I saw of late” (5.21.89-91). Mephistophilis is ready now to comply, for (arguably) he knows that Faustus cannot win back his soul. Helen’s second appearance prompts Marlowe’s perhaps most famous lines:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies.
Come Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in those lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena (5.1.97-103).

Crucially within the play, Marlowe renders Helen apparently corporeal enough for Faustus to kiss, in the expressed belief that this kiss alone will make him immortal. The Old Man re-enters, pulled back by the presence of his bitterest enemy, but silent meantime.

Keefer reads Marlowe as giving a “*playful*” attribution to his demonic paramour of the power to confer one at least of the attributes of a god” (xvi) [my emphasis]. Keefer does recognise that when Faustus goes on to apostrophise Helen as “fairer than the evening air / Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars” (5.1.104-5), he is echoing the Wisdom of Solomon (8: 2, Geneva Bible), but reads this echo as “a parodic image of the figure of divine Wisdom” (xivi). Terms like

“playful” and “parodic” deny Faustus’s intent if Marlowe is indeed allegorising Helen as an abstraction of gnostic Knowledge with Simon as Faustus’s typological referent. Faustus’s apostrophe here provides the one strophe in *Doctor Faustus* in which Marlowe refers directly to a non-Greek past for Helen. In the fleeting embrace of Wisdom, Faustus as Everyman is enabled briefly to transcend his profound Ignorance. In my reading, Keefer misjudges when he asserts that Marlowe has no “secure alternative to orthodoxy”. He may be following Weil, who also deems Marlowe’s allusion to divine wisdom in Wisdom 7 to be parodic (73). She says:

As usual, Marlowe transforms the original text, which says: “For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the undefiled mirror of the majesty of God, and the image of his goodness (26). For she is more beautiful than the sun, and is above all the order of the starres, and the light is not to be compared unto her. For night cometh upon it, but wickedness cannot overcome wisdom” (29-30) . But if wisdom cannot be overcome, she can still be parodied by Magus-figures like Faustus and Tamburlaine who identify their mistresses with her. This allusion goes far to suggest the nature of the hero’s basic flaw. He praises Helen, historically a destructive wanton, and dramatically a demonic phantom, in terms appropriate for the female wisdom figure, retained in Christian theology as a created analogue for Christ, the second person of the Trinity (73).

This analysis allows Helen to be structured into Faustus’s *harmatia*, supporting an idea of him as a tragic hero, with the play read as a tragedy wrapped up in a morality, and all the problems such a reading creates. “Helen, the object of praise”, Weil adds, “is worthless” (73). Helen herself remains silent.

As a personification of gnostic knowledge, Helen’s is an allegorical figure who has no equivalent in Christian doctrine. I cannot

understand Weil's "created analogue for Christ" other than as an ideological *ore rotundo* formulation worthy of Mephistophilis; an attempt, as it were, to "get around" Marlowe's figuration. This should not surprise. As is clear from the patristic accounts, the Simon/Helen partnership arises within an historical belief structure deemed by Christians to be supremely heretical. Faustus, as "created analogue" of Simon, is an instrument in Marlowe's allegorisation of a resurrecting figure of Wisdom central to gnosticism and abhorred by Christianity. On Helen as a figure of Wisdom, Haar points out that:

In Jewish Sophia mythology "Wisdom" performs a demiurgic function that is analogous to the allegory of Athena/Helen as "creative thought". While knowledge as a feminine principle in the creation has been identified as belonging to the literary fibre of earliest Gnostic cosmic speculation, it should not be overlooked that there are similar conceptual connections already to be found in Jewish literature. In the Wisdom of Solomon, for example, Wisdom is the "mother" of all things (7:12) and God's "all powerful word" (18:15). In the book of Proverbs, Wisdom is said to have been born prior to the creation of the world, and was a "craftsman" alongside God when God created the world (267).

Haar suggests a further major broadening of scale. He adds:

It is noted with interest that Irenaeus claims the Simonians ascribed a demiurgic function to Simon's companion, Helen, and referred to her as the *mater omnium*, [the Great Mother, also known as Cybele, of Phrygia]. The cult of Cybele was described by Lucretius and grew into one of the most important of the Roman world (261).

This patristic account of a connection with Cybele opens up a possibility that the spirit of Helen can be attributed even larger abstractions than the Jewish Sophia account offers, beyond that proper to a Greek origin, and more than her supposed Jovian ancestry allows.

The Old Man once more enters and exits this climactic scene as a choric character commenting from the perspective of an allegorical upholder of Christian faith. The Old Man's "faith is great" according to Mephistophilis (5.2.85). For the Old Man, Faustus's allusion to Wisdom in this speech locates his desire as Luciferan in type, but arising as figured within the proscribed gnostic heresy. Faustus's choice to locate heaven in Helena's lips is that which finally separates his soul from the possibility of salvation through repentance. The Old Man says:

Accursed Faustus, miserable man,
That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of heaven,
And fliest the throne of his tribunal seat (5.1.117-119).

The Old Man, subsequently challenged by devils, flies unto his God. "My faith, vile hell, shall triumph over thee" (5.2.122). Marlowe closes the scene on an orthodox note of Christian piety, building towards his dramatic climax, a physical representation of damnation to an Augustinian hell.

Throughout the scene, Marlowe puts forward allegorically the idea that magic holds potential for Man's immortality through a gnostic agency attributed in hostile patristic literature to Helen as heresiarcha, and legitimated by Jewish scripture. With the principal protagonists conducting their battle otherwise upon plainly classical and Christian grounds, it is perhaps unsurprising that a gnostic view of Helen is dismissed by Keefer as a "secure alternative" to Christian salvation. Marlowe, in this alternate reading, represents Faustus's fusion of erotic passion and intellectual purpose as an allegorical portrayal of Simon's response to the ghost of Wisdom. Faustus is completely contained by Marlowe within a fragment of the Christianity he seeks to reject, a Christianity which allows a poetics of classical mythology in order to obliterate another more dangerous

theology. When Faustus cries out that Helen gives him immortality with a kiss, he is at the apotheosis of experimental magic as he understands it. The limits of his understanding exclude his own and Helen's gnostic nature as allegorically figured by Marlowe.

Gatti says, of the play's conclusion, as in his final moments Faustus pleads "Oh soul, be chang'd into little water drops / And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found" (5.2.196):

The search therefore is no longer for forms of salvation of his soul within a Christian or Hebraic universe, impossible for Faustus for whom such images are visions briefly conjured up but soon gone again. Here instead we have a metaphysical hypothesis which, if true, as Faustus lucidly realises, would allow him to die, even if he has failed in his heroic attempts to gain new forms of knowledge, in quite different terms. Above all to die without fear, as Bruno had claimed... It is such a vision of death that Faustus's mind longs to come to rest in the last poignant verses of his monologue, which brings him finally to a concept both Epicurean and Brunian of the soul as a drop of water (an image clearly related both to Epicurean and Brunian atomism) which resolves at the death-moment into the universal ocean (260).

Marlowe's play will not grant Faustus the dissolution he craves in Epicurean (actually non-metaphysical) terms which I discuss towards the end of Appendix A. Steggle says:

More remains to be done on Marlowe and Greek philosophical poetry, but this note would argue that in his Empedoclean vision of being rejected by element after element, Faustus is not merely, once again, demonstrating his classical learning: he is also, once again, using that learning to contaminate a Christian understanding of his soul's plight (547).

Marlowe shapes *Doctor Faustus* to dramatise and exploit many of these contrasts, confusions and countercharges. Watson, writing of a slightly later period, in conditions which *Doctor Faustus* could be argued to have brought forward, notes that:

Shrewd observers (such as Donne, Bacon and Hooker) could already see that the multiplying cross-accusations of heresy within Christianity inevitably bred skepticism toward the belief as a whole, that (as Heywood put it) ‘many from Schisme grow into Atheisme’ (7) (3-4).

The Heywood from whom Watson quotes is that same Thomas Heywood who was Marlowe’s long-lived contemporary at Cambridge, and reviver of *The Jew of Malta*. The work quoted, *A True Discourse of the Two Infamous Upstart Prophets*, was first published in London in 1636 towards the end of his long career.

Faustus’s allegorical trajectory as Everyman can be read as moving along a track parallel to three others in a closed non-Euclidean space; the classical hubristic flight of Icarus, the forever-cyclic rise and downfall of an aspirant gnostic magus, and a more linear passage as representative Luciferan reprobate doomed to eternal hellfire for an incapacity to repent. The prospect, Marlowe suggests, supporting Calvin, is bleak for all of us:

See, see, where Christ’s blood streams in the firmament.

One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!

Ah, rend not my heart for calling on my Christ!

Yet will I call on him. Oh, spare me, Lucifer! (5.2.156-158)

The last half-line in the same breath is a call for Lucifer to have mercy. No utterance could better indicate that nothing stands between Faustus and damnation, if it ever did.

The suggestible audience, so easily, so often, and so willingly fooled, is as easily, as often, and as willingly foolish. Its members are willing to pay to be told again that they are all irretrievably damned by their ineradicable desire to know, and they are willing to believe it. Their immortality will be in hell, not heaven, unless God, for his own unknowable reasons, should grant them grace. Fair enough, they might think. But, looking on the bright side in English fashion, they have purchased also an opportunity to experience vicariously some wonderfully scary stuff including Lucifer and the mouth of Hell, learn something more about their world, and have good rollicking fun along the way, with music, whores, clowns, fireworks and body-parts. Few may realise that they have had an opportunity also to observe in *Doctor Faustus* an allegory of Simon Magus's documented gnostic contest with early Christianity. Few understood the play's Latin, come to that. But it's *all* entertainment.

For those who need to seek it, the tripartite moral of *Doctor Faustus* is that: Wisdom will be offered to Everyman who seeks her, but she will always elude his grasp; without Faith, all will be damned in the bowels of hell; in the last Christian analysis, rational questions of Heaven remain irresoluble, and faith in God is the only available approach to its experience. Marlowe forces no-one to accept the conclusions he presents, but he warns that the cost of challenge will be as high as it presumably was for the country maid allegorised mythically in *Hero and Leander*. Just possibly, he hints, there might be a rational Empedoclean way out of this foolish obsession with immortality, but that would be the subject of another narrative in another genre; one that, unfortunately, Marlowe did not live to write.

Chapter Five

Conclusions: Conflict and Resolution

"It's interesting isn't it?" she said.

He waited.

"About men and immortality."

Don de Lillo. *Cosmopolis*.

This thesis has employed close reading of references in Marlowe's texts in relation to contemporary concepts of immortality in their intertextual environments, partly in order to address Deats's concern that "we need to encompass the complications of cultural contexts if we wish to advance to a more comprehensive understanding of the playwright and his works" (2). The main question for research has been "How do Marlowe's texts function to represent conflicts in the late sixteenth century among and between classical, Christian and gnostic concepts of immortality?"

In Chapter One: "Introduction", I provide a brief literary biography of Christopher Marlowe, beginning with his education from the age of fifteen at the King's School in Canterbury. He may have been able to make use of an extensive library, containing a wide variety of works, subjects, authors and genres. Whether or not this is the case, he demonstrates exactly such an eclectic range of literary interest and knowledge-bases in his own works. Marlowe lived at a time after the advent of widespread print technology, when scholars were able to take advantage of a plethora of texts becoming available. A great deal of printed translational work had already been done. Marlowe and his peers continued this process, identifying themselves as particularly interested in poetry, both ancient and modern. For

trainee theologians, like Marlowe, critical translation of biblical texts and their commentaries required fluency in written Latin. By means of the liberal arts curriculum, they were exposed to translations by classical Latin authors from the Greek, and to more original works in Latin. Marlowe participated with two translations, the first of which was probably *Ovid's Elegies*. This early concentration upon classicism is evident throughout Marlowe's work.

The particular influence of Ovid is the topic of Chapter Two: "On Immortal Fame and Love". Marlowe seems to have been theatrically inclined from early in his career, and *Dido, Queen of Carthage* definitely arises as an Ovid-inspired theatrical response to Virgil's *Aeneid*. He seems never less than completely comfortable with the pantheon of Greek gods and myths as interpreted by these two Latin authors in particular. As a consequence, he is able to participate authoritatively in the contemporary debate as to the relative values placed upon the poetic forms and genres associated with Apollo and Venus. This is established by later brief works of his, in which he acknowledges his commitment to the myrtle, rather than the laurel. I trace how his treatment of the immortality *topos* is influenced by and reflected in his translation of Ovid and subsequent Ovidian-influenced works; including those brief pieces, his epitaph upon Sir Roger Manwood and his dedicatory epistle addressed to Mary Sidney Herbert. In formal terms, his treatment is expressed in metamorphoses of genres, and shown in various values held for immortality in heroic and erotic verse, and in the blank verse Marlowe pioneered in English. In summary, Marlowe actively participates in what might be termed a prolonged and dynamic "intra-classical" debate having as one major focus who could be immortalised, and how. The price of entry to this debate is a deep immersion in the Greek pantheon, as interpreted throughout the ages. Classical allusions are manifest virtually everywhere in Marlowe's work.

I divide Chapter Three: “Stars, Stellification and Astrophysics” into three sections, linked by their common attention to the stars. I first discuss “stellification” as a classical process of immortalisation deployed in some of Marlowe’s works. The second section directs critical attention to the “stellar influence” so prominent in the epic *Tamburlaine* plays. The third deals with the particular interest Faustus takes in astrology and astronomy. In addition, I provide an Appendix to give a cosmographic background to the theological implications of *Doctor Faustus*. The result of this presentation is to display the variety of literary resources Marlowe was able to bring to bear when discussing immortality in terms of a stellar discourse.

His knowledge is both broadly-based and deeply-considered, and he applies it acutely to contemporary conditions as mirrored in other times and places. It seems to me that he has chosen to avoid polemic. His presentations of debates around immortality, as expressed in this discourse, adopt no authorial position. His characters enact their positions with appropriate levels of feeling, whether poetic or dramatic in expression. Marlowe dramatises the collision of ideas, but the positions are often ambiguously expressed, and his characters’ words polysemic. Throughout, his use of words is precise, delicate and as poetic as needed at the time. The overall effect is to allow for an infinity of critical readings and performance, which I suppose to be a mark of a real literary accomplishment that no serious critic would deny him.

From a stellar perspective, the *Tamburlaine* plays are relatively simple. There is an uneasy shifting throughout between ideas of immortality through stellification and a more firmly held attachment to stellar influence dictating events. Tamburlaine, anticipating Zenocrate’s death, delivers a speech providing a grandly illuminated

poetic vision of Augustine's City of God, as conventional a pre-Reformation Christian image as might be imagined, but without labeling it Christian in any way. By the end of the second play, however, as his own death approaches, Tamburlaine abandons all of these rhetorical options in favour of a stoic, if solipsistic, cheerfulness. The topos of immortality by any stellar means effectively vanishes, taking with it not only any adherence to a fixed position, but also the entire ground for the stellar discourse that has pre-occupied him, his friends and his enemies. Marlowe takes it away, perhaps gesturing finally to the illusion of it all.

Dr. Faustus is more modern in his approach. His stellar discourse is firmly founded upon a Ptolemaic geocentric astronomy, and his discussion with Mephistophilis never challenges that paradigm. Faustus's Greek mentors are the philosophers, not the poets, and especially Aristotle himself. His main astrological challenge is to make magic application of an Aristotelian model of matter to explore details of a conventional Neoplatonic model of the celestial spheres, as adopted into Christian doctrine, such as the material nature of Intelligences and the physical dynamics involved. Summoning Mephistophilis is a self-consistent means to this end. Trading in a soul which he holds to be of little value, if any, is also Aristotelian. His strategy barely advances his knowledge. Though he seems satisfied with the flights he takes, by his own account and that of the Chorus, he has been more attentive in transit to matters of Planet Earth than those of the Cosmos. His remarks confirm an Aristotelian approach. Faustus's big problem in this regard is that Aristotelian materialism and cosmology is much out of fashion in a Reformist society bent on establishing the primacy of faith in spiritual matters, and uninterested in rational answers to cosmic questions.

I consider the possible influence of heliocentrism upon *Doctor Faustus* to find that there is none evident. This result raises further questions as to why it is not, and I address these in the third section of Chapter Three and also in Appendix A. The conclusion I reach is that Marlowe's dramatic purposes in *Doctor Faustus* would not be advanced by presenting any aspect of the Copernican debate, and so, by Occam's razor, it is unnecessary to enter into questions of Marlowe's putative knowledge of the heliocentric theory. So far as immortality goes, any wholesale overturn of Aristotelian geocentric cosmology would require Faustus to be radically repositioned in his scholarship. That repositioning would disable him from his attempt to establish an Aristotelian formal analysis of matter, so different from the Platonic dualism which at bottom informs the conventional Christian cosmology. His Aristotelianism is why he can afford to be indifferent to his Christian soul. The problems he would get into with the Old Man would be of an entirely different nature if he were unable to depend upon The Philosopher. Marlowe's lack of employment of a heliocentric cosmological model in *Doctor Faustus* does not disable him, however, from having his hero hint broadly at the existence of other models, and other ways of treating immortality. This is most evident when he traverses Pythagorean and Empedoclean models in his final speech. Marlowe touches upon his knowledge of the Pythagorean doctrine of cyclic rebirth, and of Empedoclean materialism, but he does not dwell upon them, or suggest that they will save Faustus from inevitable damnation in the Calvinist context within which he finds himself. The play has its own dramatic momentum, and it is enough that it does.

In Chapter Four: "Helen and Hell", I turn my attention first to the genre of *Doctor Faustus* in order to support the idea that Marlowe introduces a "gnostic alternative" by way of an allegorical figuring of Helen. I suggest also that reading the play allegorically facilitates a

unitary critique. I provide patristic literature recording Simon and Helen as gnostic figures in Appendix B, together with other evidence suggesting the likelihood of Marlowe's awareness of these heresiarchs as suitable for oblique allegorisation. What their figuring provides is, I suggest, another way of considering immortality, independent of any other model so far discussed. Their historical status in Christianity condemns them and their alternative model, but the parallels are obvious enough between Faustus and Simon, while the spirit of Helen is identified in the text as a reincarnated Wisdom-figure from a non-Greek past. The Old Man in *Doctor Faustus* is a choric figure of Faith, allegorically represented. His appearance always follows that of Helen, who represents for him that which will ultimately separate Faustus from salvation. I hope to have established that she is at her highest stature a figure for Wisdom, whatever else she may denote. Embracing Wisdom, Faustus thinks, will bring him immortality. The Old Man thinks it will bring eternal death.

Faustus is presented by Marlowe as recalling the *hubris* of Simon, Icarus and Lucifer, but he is also an allegorical Everyman, marked out in the play by his foolishness at least as much as by his sins. My reading of the play as allegory includes that foolishness, and the foolishness of others, as being for comedic purposes consistent with the morality play tradition. It is to the Company's old morality hellmouth prop that Faustus is conveyed at his end. Levin remarks that "Damnation is an unlooked-for way of transcending limits and approaching infinity; it is immortality with a vengeance" (158). Heaven, considered non-cosmologically, that is, doesn't get much coverage in *Doctor Faustus*, but Hell does. Marlowe demonstrates a subtle fluency with Calvinist interpretations and biblical exegeses of hell, as Street cleverly detects. The effective exclusion of Calvin's exegesis of a verse in John, by carefully authorially omitting that verse

from the text of *Doctor Faustus*, is in itself sufficient to ensure that Faustus destroys himself.

One aspect of Marlowe's peculiar genius, key to understanding the license and acclaim extended to him in his lifetime, is that he presents conflicting ideas economically and poetically, allowing others to derive meanings appropriate to the wide range of their taste, opinion, inclination and knowledge. I hope to have demonstrated that he applies that capacity to the idea of immortality, to which he returns in many forms, genres, models and guises which I traverse in these pages. The eclecticism which marks his breadth of general knowledge extends within particular specialist sets. The Olympian world-view of the classical authors he was raised upon in Canterbury is a case in point. It requires deep specialist knowledge successfully to make subtle allusions such as I think can be discerned in the Manwood epitaph. It requires a thorough mastery to be able to compose, in Latin, so elegant and erudite an address upon immortality and virtue as that to Mary Sidney Herbert. Marlowe's adoption of the Ovidian erotic myrtle in this piece is the sole evidence of his taking any particular position personally. His work is written upon this base, but the fact does not preclude his exploration of other forms and genres.

A certain circularity sets in. There are frequent returns in Marlowe to notions of cyclic systems within a potent but vague pastoral utterly incompatible with Christian teleology, an "Ovidian physics" perhaps best explored in *Hero and Leander*. Of course he is thoroughly educated in trends in current theology, its unending historical debates and its current upheavals, and able to present them in subtle dramatic form. That Marlowe is not convinced of any particular position in the Christian spectrum is perhaps best evidenced by his failure to take Holy Orders, or to defect to Rome when he had the chance. It would be stretching the textual evidence to suppose that

he believes in either Heaven or Hell, though he accepts the belief of others with equanimity, and makes use of it. Gnosticism presents for him perhaps an interesting and undervalued option for considering the notion of immortality, but Marlowe is prompt to discard Helen when she has served her dramatic purpose. She does not deflect Faustus from his fate.

Marlowe also returns to materialism. One of the cycles his work manifests is a continual return to hints of Epicurus and Empedocles, through Lucretius. His translation of Lucan is a case in point, precisely because it speaks so little, and then cynically, of prospects of epic immortality. He is attentive also to Ovid, whose employment of Greek mythology is essentially formal, poetic rather than that of a believer. Of the philosophers, Pythagoras serves as his exemplar for ideas of reincarnation, rather than Plato, while Aristotle plainly appeals to his sense of the value of rational enquiry. Marlowe's attention, prompted in this way, seems to me always briefly to return to the so-called pre-Socratics. His ghost stands arm-in-arm with Ovid and Lucan, looking towards these oldest of Greek philosophers, seeking always to know more.

Appendix A

On Sixteenth-Century Cosmology

Geocentrism, which puts Planet Earth at the centre of things, is a central construct to ideas of immortality in sixteenth-century Christian theology. The path taken to arrive at the Christian standard model is a complicated one, but from the beginning geocentrism is axiomatic to it. In this model, and variations of it, celestial spheres rotate coaxially around the central earth, their motions more or less agreeing with recordings of naked-eye observations. So far as the development of astronomy was concerned, says Singer:

The matter was essentially settled with the adoption of an “Aristotelian” system brought to highly complicated form by Claudius Ptolemy, the astronomer, geographer and mathematician who lived in Alexandria in the first half of the second Christian century. Ptolemy gave a complete and lucid compendium of the whole range of astronomical science in his time in his *Mathematical Syntaxis*, better known by the title of the Arabic version, as the *Almagest* (48).

This system provided the essential understanding of cosmology for 1500 years. The astronomical mathematics that initiated the Copernican revolution by proving geocentrism mathematically wrong were established long before Galileo trained his telescope on the moons of Jupiter in the early seventeenth century to confirm them by observation. The sun does not revolve around the Earth, and neither faith nor specious appeals to balance or doubt will make it do so.

The physical situation then was, as it is today, a subject of astonishing discovery. That which is under investigation in this thesis is not, generally, the *truth* of ideas. Under investigation, rather, is how Marlowe deals with a set of major common concepts surrounding immortality, in Christian and other systems of cosmological belief

built up over millenia. *Doctor Faustus* mines systems operative within a set of Christian doctrinal frameworks challenged by Reformism on other grounds. Late sixteenth-century formulations—authoritative, doctrinal, formal presentations of an afterlife—were indeed threatened by heliocentrism, the idea that the Earth (and, for Copernicus, everything else in the universe) goes around the sun. Copernicus was the first since the largely forgotten Pre-Socratic Greeks to advance a heliocentric cosmology; to create, that is, a conceptual space within which others might reasonably infer that “heavenly spheres”, concentric with the axis of the Earth, did not exist.

Heliocentrism requires a radical rethinking, to say the least, of ideas of immortality previously grounded upon a geocentric cosmology, ideas that required reformulation if they were to be presented in anything resembling rational terms. Thus “Renaissance astronomy, with its combination of observational discoveries and extraordinarily wide-ranging speculative hypotheses, was an important area of intellectual renewal” (Fowler 35). It is necessary to establish with some degree of surety whether Marlowe’s texts confront geocentrism, and also to read *Doctor Faustus* from a pre-Copernican perspective, acknowledging the primacy of the texts’s focus upon disputes contained within an unchallenged geocentric paradigm, especially when it came to models of immortality. If reference is made in Marlowe’s work to the consequences of Copernican thinking, it will be found in *Doctor Faustus*, for it cannot —so far as I have been able to determine—be read into lines elsewhere. In Chapter Three, I read *Doctor Faustus* closely for evidence to support the contention that Marlowe participates in a contemporary proto-scientific attack upon geocentrism, and find none. Faustus is evidently firm in his belief that the heavenly spheres surrounding Earth contain entities of a spiritual nature. Nor do I find any trace of authorial irony to suggest that he is misguided, not in this respect anyway. Gatti says “The fact that in *Dr.*

Faustus Marlowe makes no mention of Copernicanism does not necessarily mean that he was unaware of this revolutionary theory” (Wilson 255). This is true, though, as I say, she is wrong to assert that Mephistophilis puts Copernicus’s *magnum opus* into Faustus’s hands.

The problem here is that it is rather odd, peculiar even, that Marlowe does *not* express Copernican ideas in *Doctor Faustus*, given extratextual evidence I shall shortly consider appearing to support the claim that he was exposed to them. Two hypotheses present themselves. Either Marlowe was unaware of Copernicanism at the time he wrote the play, or he chose not to have Faustus (or Mephistophilis) hint at heliocentric theory, because it did not suit some aspect of his literary purpose for them to do so. If the first, although it is hard to establish any certainty in the matter, then there is nothing more to be said. If the second, then one possibility to be considered is that Faustus’s ignorance was authorially intended to be reflective of a general aspect of his character. I return to this argument, based on a gnostic allegoresis of his ignorance, in Chapter Four. It is this possibility that makes Faustus’s mistake concerning the periodicity of Mars particularly interesting.

The figure of Giordano Bruno looms large in the quest for evidence that Marlowe himself had knowledge of heliocentrism. There are two reasons for this. First, there is a character in the B-text of *Doctor Faustus* who is named Bruno. He is minor, he may be the result of revision by another author, but he is there. Bevington considers that:

These Bruno scenes are derived from John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, a source to which Rowley [whom Bevington considers the probable reviser paid for additions by Henslowe in 1602] turned in his scenes of London intrigue in *When You See Me* (72).

The Bruno character's words and the contexts of his actions have been scrutinised for evidence that might lay a trail to supposition of heliocentrist influence. (Bevington and Rasmussen, also Clark). If evidence of any truly Brunian thought is to be found in this character, neither they nor I have found it in his words, and only by accepting a considerably stretched argument, not involving Marlowe as author, and tracking Bruno as an heroic Lollard, is it to be found in the context of the B-text publication.

Second, and much more importantly, it might have been hard for Marlowe to have remained unaware of the considerable fuss surrounding Bruno's controversial 1583 defence of Copernicanism against the dons of Oxford, home of the most conservative Aristotelian study (Singer 29). Clark says that Bruno was "allowed to hold a disputation with some learned doctors on the rival merits of the Copernican and so-called Aristotelian systems of the universe" (340). There are documented Marlovian links to Bruno, who was entertained in England between 1583 and 1585, through intermediaries such as Raleigh and Harriott. Singer, who supplies references to the documentation, claims that "We have undoubted evidence that Bruno's work was known to Harriott" (378). According to Bevington:

Only three years after Marlowe's death, Thomas Nashe referred familiarly to Copernicus as the author "who held that the sun remains immovable in the centre of the world, and that the earth is moved about the sun" (27).

It may be that Marlowe and Bruno became acquainted, but there is no current evidence of this.

It needs to be borne in mind that post-Copernican paradigms also exist, and that Copernican heliocentrism is no more valid than Aristotelian geocentrism as a sustainable tenet of cosmology. Of greater physical, if not theological, consequence is a cosmology that

displaces the sun as centre, to locate it instead as one of very many stars. This foundation of modern cosmology, so strongly supported by evidence, is also at least in theory available to Marlowe through his putative knowledge of the thinking of Bruno, whose developed cosmology goes beyond Copernicanism, or even that of Epicurus (341 BCE- 270 BCE). It is possible that Marlowe might refer in *Doctor Faustus* or elsewhere to the far more radical multiple-worlds ideas developed by Bruno himself, following Epicurus. Singer says that:

The universe conceived by Bruno was not merely of a different structure but of a completely different order to that pictured by Copernicus. To Bruno and Bruno alone the suggestion of Copernicus entered into the pattern of a completely new cosmological order (49).

That encomium may not be entirely true. Erasmus, writing in *Against War*, has already commented upon “the innumerable worlds that Democritus fabricated” (37). I should make it clear here that the term “multi-world” is employed to label an entire cosmology. At point is that Marlowe would not have to place Brunian references in the mouth of the character Bruno. Faustus might enunciate them in some veiled form, projecting an alternative mode of immortality, or none at all.

The idea of extra-solar multiple worlds (confirmed in this last decade through advances in telescopic spectroscopy—“exoworlds” are now known in their hundreds) is consistent with the rational materialism of Epicurus, “hero of the Stoics” (Rouse 3), in which gods, souls and immortality have no place outside poetry. The question as to the extent to which Marlowe addresses a Brunian cosmology must consider also evidence for rational Epicureanism in the texts. There are possible implications for Marlowe’s presentation of ideas about souls, immortality, heaven, hell, gods and God in their relationship to the physical nature of the universe.

Lucretius was an Epicurean poet, whose *De Rerum Naturae*, as its title indicates, speaks of the nature of things. The poem, rediscovered in 1459, “exercised a great influence on late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century writers” (Singer 50). In Book III, Lucretius claims that “*nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum. Mors...immortalis* / death alone has immortality” (trans. Humphries 869-70). Singer says that he refers to an infinite universe and infinitely numerous worlds, and *contra* Bruno, who thought all his work followed Holy Writ, denied the validity of any theological or metaphysical thinking (50). Cheney says, quoting from Marlowe’s translation of Ovid, that:

Marlowe lets Ovid’s participation in Lucretian materialism represent his own ‘atheism’:

What, are there gods?...

God is a name, no substance, fear’d in vain

And doth the world in fond belief detain,

Or, if there be a God,

He loves fine wenches (Ovid’s *Elegies* 3.3.1.23-25).

The sentiment expressed in Ovid is reminiscent of Machiavel’s prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, equally dismissive of belief in God and sexually racy. I shall not need here to discuss the allegations of atheism that were made of Marlowe himself. Riggs suggests that *II Tamburlaine*:

offers a Lucretian meditation on the meaning of death.

Characters who imagine themselves in a conscious afterlife, rewarded and punished by the gods, are ridiculed and tormented; characters who take the Epicurean view that the soul perishes with the body, dissolving into the elements, achieve tranquillity.

Marlowe enforces this anti-Christian idea with satire and blasphemy (30).

Materialist references like these appear elusively in Marlowe’s work. In *Doctor Faustus*, they appear as a “forlorn hope” of concepts to

which Faustus turns unavailingly in despair, or so the spectacle of his end-drama would imply.

In the sixteenth century, an Aristotelian cosmology was certainly held more conventionally to be true, as is the case for the scholars of Oxford with whom Bruno tangled in debate. But Aristotle also made no case for immortality. In Marlowe's time, there were real problems in making an Aristotelian cosmology fit with Christian eschatology, and these are the problems Faustus most obviously explores. In the changing orthodoxies of Elizabethan times, established ideas were already fermenting in a broth of Reformist re-conceptualisations of faith, of grace; of election, pre-destination and the mechanisms of redemption and damnation. Marlowe invests Faustus's cosmological concerns with the influence of Aristotle, whose formal philosophy uncompromisingly opposes Christian dualistic belief before the fact of it; so that Aristotle's part in conceiving the cosmology adopted by Christianity remains a distinct embarrassment to the Church. Erasmus complains that "we endeavour ourselves to glue fast together the decrees of this man [Aristotle] and the doctrine of Christ—which is as likely a thing as to mingle fire and water together" (40). Marlowe's principal audacity in *Doctor Faustus* is to have the scholar stir this resultant brew in a magic cauldron and spill it onto the public stage; poke through the mess, and see what comes up.

Bevington considers Faustus's scholarship to be sloppy (16)—another instance of this—giving him to be in error in attributing to Aristotle the axiom of Ramus [actually of Cicero] that "*bene disserere est finis logices* / the end of logic is to dispute well" (1.1.7). Marlowe may compress a discussion of logic by having Faustus conflate these authors, developing a not atypical behaviour for the impatient doctor; or Bevington may yet be right, with Faustus showing himself not the scholar he is presented as being. Marlowe certainly knew enough of

Ramus, whose end he dramatises in *The Massacre at Paris*, to provide a brutal dissection of his scholarship, and body, by the Guise. However, “As Ramus pointed out, Aristotle has nothing to say about Providence, Divine Justice, the Creation, and the Immortality of the Soul” (Battenhouse 28-9). Faustus is surely infected by at least the last of these absences.

This point about Aristotle is taken up appositely in *The Name of the Rose*, an erudite fiction of the fourteenth century written by Umberto Eco. His blind Jorge is here justifying his suppression of a quasi-fictional Aristotelian work on comedy (it may have existed) as defending the faith against assault:

Because it was by the Philosopher. Every book by that man has destroyed a part of the learning that Christianity had accumulated over the centuries... The book of Genesis says what has to be known about the composition of the cosmos, but it sufficed to rediscover the *Physics* of the Philosopher to have the universe reconceived in terms of dull and slimy matter... Every word of the Philosopher, by whom now even saints and prophets swear, has overturned the image of the world (473).

Jorge is upset by Aristotle’s pagan disregard for foundational Christian ideas and faith. He regards the Aristotelian cosmology presented by way of Ptolemy as nakedly heretical, being deficient of any spiritual essence including God and immortal souls. His conservative Christian stance, not unlike the Old Man’s, (both of course are fictional characters) provides a background against which the full heterodoxy of Faustian enquiry is projected.

The Church believed it had answers to these vexing questions from doctrines that had institutionalised metamorphosed Platonic

dualism into Neoplatonic Christian forms. (See Rivers and Fowler for an introduction to discussion of an involved process which took place over many centuries). Both of these systems have the virtue of bypassing Aristotle's inconvenient atheism to facilitate the discussion of "divine astrology", but, unfortunately for the Church, the cosmology itself remained obstinately founded in an Aristotelian geocentric origin. Ptolemy's mathematics were not readily ignored, though Jorge proposes to get around them by appealing directly to the cosmology of Genesis. The Church's less fundamentalist starting point is that there is no impiety in asking astronomical questions, because rational answers have already been constructed based on Plato, and [without attribution] on an Hermetic tradition, but precisely *not* via Aristotle, who presents such aggravating problems.

Man's mortal influence is thus considered in conventional sixteenth-century Christian eschatology to be confined to a mutable, "sensible" (a Platonic term), sublunary sphere. God's necessarily spiritually immortal heaven is deemed to be above the "intelligible" (another Platonic term) superlunary spheres, in an empyrean beyond the celestial sphere of the fixed stars and the matter of some debate which Faustus enters into with Mephistophilis. The adoption by the early Church of the dualism of Plato permitted the ideal heavenly state to arise of Augustine's "City of God", suggested in Tamburlaine's vision at Zenocrate's deathbed. Then again, Plato too was pagan, requiring amendment if only to reframe the logistics of immortalisation to avoid his stated support for ideas of cyclic reincarnation. Rivers says "In neo-Platonism, souls link the worlds of intelligible and sensible" (9). Ficino, whose *Platonic Theology* "probably played a role in the Lateran Council's promulgation of the immortality of the soul as a dogma in 1512" was:

profoundly influenced by the rational mysticism of Plotinus (third century A.D.) the founder of the Neoplatonic

interpretation of Plato and by the later Neoplatonism of the fifth century Proclus and his disciple, Dionysius the Areopagite.

(Ficino, *trans.* Allen, vii)

By a logistic thus complexly derived and here brutally summarised, the soul *en route* to heaven is translated upwards with likely assistance from intermediary beings, angels, able to assist souls negotiating transitions between spheres, themselves governed by Intelligences of one kind or another, including the “dominions” of which Faustus speaks (2.1.56), beings higher than the angels and archangels, until it arrives in Heaven.

Degrees of spirituality are marked by vertical location, which is what makes Faustus’s flights so important. These doctrines were validated into orthodoxy by due process of the Church. The physical, actually spiritual, correlate of the Neoplatonic “intelligible” realm is deemed in this scheme to exist in those spheres which rotate above that containing the Moon; i.e. the superlunary spheres, varying in number according to contemporary theories attempting to solve astronomical and theological problems of which Faustus is plainly aware. In which sphere is God’s heaven to be found?

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin attempted to declare questions such as this off-limits. Farnham says he:

went so far as to posit two different understandings in man, one of terrestrial things, and another of celestial ones. The latter concerned the knowledge of God, his Divine Will, and man’s conformity to it; but without the aid of God’s grace, man’s reason when directed towards these objects was totally blind and stupid (75).

This might seem merely a way of bypassing awkward rational questions, and no doubt did, to some. So far as the Catholic Church was concerned, the astronomical questions had been posed and largely

dealt with in an adequately rational manner centuries earlier. Aristotelian cosmology continued to rule the skies, metamorphosed by Neoplatonism to locate God's heaven in one or other outermost sphere. For all that, the Aristotelian bent of Faustus's questions constitutes a challenge to both retained Catholic ideas, such as those of the Oxford scholars, and the reformed Calvinism of the Elizabethan Settlement. Reformers might choose simply to consider the question of location an improper one to ask, citing the primacy of faith. Reason and faith stand in an uneasy relationship at the heart of theological and physical debate.

Metaphysical vagueness in these models is perhaps a contributory reason for unchristian poetic reference to the influence of stars being commonplace in Marlowe's work, as it is in that of other Renaissance authors. I suppose such classically expressed ideas created little fuss in an audience whose education, when they had it, consisted largely of the classics. I discuss stellar influence upon the *Tamburlaine* plays in Chapter Three. Astrological thinking of this kind is neither Aristotelian nor Neoplatonic, incorporating Pythagorean and more obscure Hermetic doctrines, and supposing a cyclic passage for immortal souls moving between their celestial habitations (Fowler 62 *et. seq.*). For example, when the *Metamorphoses* leaves early Roman legends for the Doctrines of Pythagoras in Book XV, Ovid has Pythagoras say of metempsychosis, "My soul rejoices / To journey on the highways of the stars" (44-5). He adds:

Our souls
Are deathless; when they leave their former home,
Always new habitations welcome them,
To live afresh (57-60).

Ovid refers to ideas of repeated cyclic stellar journeys, uninhibited by any notion of Judaic eschatology. According to theory, Fowler says:

the soul accomplishes a cosmic journey through gestation, life, and death. It descends through the spheres, receiving en route various planetary endowments, which are implanted in the embryo as potentialities or seeds of virtue. Then, during the seven ages of life, the soul reascends through the planetary spheres in reverse order, until at last, if it has achieved “gnosis”, after death it completes its journey in the unchanging stellar sphere (62).

Preparing to speak his key incantation summoning Mephistophilis, Faustus firms his resolve, noting that his magic circle contains “Figures of every adjunct to the heavens, / And characters of signs and erring stars / By which the spirits are enforc’d to rise” (1.3.11-13). But by this stage of the hermeneutic proceedings, Christianity has as it were taken exception to admitting agency to stars, as an heretical usurpation of God’s function—that which the *Tamburlaine* plays hold up to question.

A line has been crossed in the sand from merely indulging a poetic classicism. Battenhouse notes that in Elizabethan times:

In theory, the hierarchical subordination of classical culture to Christian revelation still holds; but in practice the importance of the classical is magnified, and fundamental Christian concepts tend to be defined from the standpoint of Seneca and Plato (49).

Blind Jorge is quite right to blame Aristotle’s cosmology, it has encouraged this future boundary transgression. The real problem remains in the sharing of a cosmology. Unadapted Platonic theory, I have suggested, could be just as tricky for Christian theology as that of Aristotle. One specific example will serve. As Fowler puts it:

Plato speaks of the Creator as having “alloted souls equal in number to the stars, inserting each in each, and he appears to have thought of the virtuous as returning after life on earth to their ‘associate’ stars, to spend a blessed existence” (64).

Faustus is thus Platonic when he says “Had I as many souls as there be stars, / I’d give them all for Mephistophilis” (1.3.104-5). Stars are no more acceptable to orthodox Christianity as Platonic placeholders for souls than they are as agents of astrological influence. Platonic stellification also proposes an immortality one sphere short of being with God; a problem resolved by the invention by Neoplatonists in the Middle Ages of an empyrean heaven.

My effort in this Appendix has been to encompass concisely a finite set of realms of theological discourse current in the sixteenth century, delineating their boundaries by tracing problems arising from a corresponding and interpenetrative set of cosmological constructs treating upon immortality, and evolved over millenia. Neither set, however, is complete, and I do not pretend that the treatments above are other than cursory. Every element is deserving of expansion, which none has received here. I trust the limitations of my presentation will be excused on the basis of the bewilderingly large ramifications of its subject. The exercise has only a limited purpose, being to situate my reading of *Doctor Faustus* in relation to astronomical and astrological frameworks of reference current in sixteenth-century ideas of immortality.

Appendix B

On Simon, Helen, and Gnostic Belief

The first account among many of Simon in records of the early Christian church is that of Luke in Acts 8, with which it is surely reasonable to assume Marlowe was familiar. Haar notes that “The only surviving accounts have been written by Simon’s opponents and critics” (1) and this one is no exception. The passage depicts a competitive encounter whose reported result is biased in favour of the other Simon, Peter. The original Greek text records Simon as a μαγος, *magos*, translated here as practitioner of sorcery; that he is alleged to be held by his numerous followers as a “great power of God”; and that his detractors accuse him of desiring the power of God. Thus Simon enters the record, as Ferreiro puts it:

converted at the hands of the Church Fathers into a perpetual anti-apostle/magician who was immensely popular as is confirmed by his presence in literature and art spanning the entire patristic-medieval eras and well beyond (32).

The account in Acts is followed in the course of early Church history by extant works of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, the latter being the first to label Simon gnostic, and famously to condemn him, Haar says, as “the father of all heresies” (2). Haar usefully adds that:

It is not critical to Marlowe’s employment of the Simon/Helen conjunction that it be historically verifiable, only that it be consistently reported as such by the early Church fathers. In this respect, it is proper to regard the account of Irenaeus as a datum, providing scriptural authenticity and therefore internal plausibility (92).

Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons (c.180 C.E.), in his work *Exposure and refutation of knowledge falsely so called*, is “intent on establishing a connection between Simon Magus and Gnosticism” (Ferreiro 135).

Despite his agenda, he seems objective when he records that, for the gnostics:

Simon is the first god (*super omnia pater*- the father of all), called “great” Power, and Helen his “Ennoia” (First Thought) is the mother of all, who created the angels and in turn they created the world. Out of envy the angels, who did not want to be considered descendants of anyone and were unaware of a God superior to them, prevented “Ennoia” from returning to the “Father of all”, and caused her every kind of suffering. Imprisoned by the powers she once had generated, enclosed by a human body, she continues across the centuries, passing from one woman’s body to another, until finally she appears as a prostitute in a brothel in Tyre. The pre-existing God then assumed the body of Simon to find and release Helen, in order to bring salvation to others. In liberating Helen, Simon frees the soul dispersed in matter and saves all human beings who not only recognise themselves in the fall and liberation of the “Ennoia”, but acknowledge Simon. (*Adv. Haer.* I 23, 1-4, quoted in Haar 92).

Haar quotes also from Fragment 2 of Justin Martyr’s *Apology* I 26,3(b), “and a certain Helen, who travelled around with him in those days, and had formerly been a prostitute, they say was the first thought produced from him” (262). Haar notes that:

Justin’s claim that many acknowledge Simon as *πρωτος θεος* [*protos theos*/ First God], and worshipped him, does not in itself identify Simon as a Gnostic. However, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that this public acclaim of Simon must always be read in connection with Helen’s identification as *πρωτη εννοια* [*prote ennoia*/ First Thought] and understood within the broader context of Justin’s appeal to the Emperor regarding the distinctiveness of true Christian worship (244).

Ferreiro says “It is a well known fact that Simon Magus’s aerial flight and subsequent fall—the result of apostolic intervention—is the most frequently recalled apocryphal New Testament event in the art and literature of the Middle Ages” (133). Simon’s flight and fall recall those of Icarus and Lucifer, both of whom are referenced in *Doctor Faustus*. Ferreiro says that:

Any discussion of Simon Magus in the patristic era must begin with Justin Martyr and his contemporaries of the second century. Justin says nothing about Simon Magus and [Simon] Peter engaging in an all or nothing confrontation in the presence of Nero. He does, however, place Simon Magus in Rome where Simon astonished the crowds, the sacred [Roman] senate, and presumably the emperor, too, by his magic (133).

Simon, that is, was a magician who found his way to fame in Rome. These and other Simonian references in the patristic literature help to make sense of the third act of *Doctor Faustus*, in which events recorded as having taken place in Rome are mirrored at a deliberately vague Papal court in the sixteenth century.

Artistic representations of the Simonian theme are apparently multiple. Ferreiro remarks that:

As patristic writers attempted to create typological bridges between the canonical Simon Magus and Gnosticism they did not all create an identical ‘type’. To date [2005], there has never been a study that fully unfolds the various portraits of Simon Magus and his female companion Helena who also occupies a significant place in these sources. Equally instructive is the proliferation of their images beyond the third century, especially in the tantalizing portrayal of Helena as heresiarcha and companion of Simon Magus (12).

It is the sheer scale of attention paid to Simon and Helen in patristic and medieval times, he suggests, which renders it probable that

Marlowe, though never referring to Simon, conceived this pair as precursors to his own pairing of Faustus and Helen.

Perhaps the best definition of “gnosis”, suggests Moore (129), lies in the often-quoted formula recorded by Clement of Alexandria in *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Alexandria*:

The knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth (Clement 78.2).

Brown skirts discussion of “the esoteric core of Gnosticism”, claiming that “a complete and trustworthy reconstruction of the system is impossible, inasmuch as few direct records of its earlier and presumptively purer state remain” (86). Consideration of Gnosticism as a belief structure carries complexities beyond the scope of this thesis to explore, but its relevance to *Doctor Faustus* as a “secure alternative” to Christian orthodoxy is demonstrated by a working definition suggested at an international conference at Messina, Italy, in 1966. This in part reads:

a coherent series of characteristics that can be summarised in the idea of a divine spark in man, deriving from the divine realm, fallen into this world of fate, birth and death, and needing to be awakened by the divine counterpart of the self in order to be fully re-integrated. Compared with other conceptions of a “devolution” of the divine, this idea is based ontologically on the conception of a downward movement of the divine whose periphery (often called Sophia [Wisdom] or Ennoia [Thought]) had to submit to the fate of entering into a crisis and producing—even if only indirectly—this world, upon which it cannot turn its back, since it is necessary for it to recover the *pneuma*—a dualistic conception on a monistic background,

expressed in a double movement of devolution and reintegration (Haar 238).

It is readily apparent that gnosticism, by this definition, contests orthodox Christian ideas in significant ways. The suppressed gnostic concept of knowledge is decked out with a distinct and powerful cosmogonical myth of origin that separates it quite from Greek-based epistemologies such as those of Aristotle, humanism, or any of the forms of neoplatonism or scepticism generally available to medieval and Renaissance scholars.

A form of gnosticism apparently had a following in Marlowe's day, in his own home environs. Moore claims that:

The Gnostic issues being debated at this time were most clearly articulated in England by the Family of Love. Founded in the Low Countries by Hendrik Niclaes in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Family of Love was an elitist, mystical religious sect that preached the primacy of the inner light...Regarded as a menace to society because of their elitism and their willingness to lie under oath before magistrates the Family was persecuted in the late 1570's and was anathematized in a royal proclamation of 1580. According to the Queen's proclamation (3 October 1580), the Family of Love believed "as many as shall be allowed by them to be elect and saved, and all others, of which church soever they be, to be rejected and damned"... Marlowe could hardly have failed to know of the Family of Love, especially since the Family were most active in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. ...An examination of Familists at Wisbeck, only a few miles from Cambridge itself, was conducted by the Bishop of Ely on October 3-5, 1580" (139-143).

Considering sources for *Doctor Faustus*, Nuttall says there are:

clear signs that Marlowe got hold of the Simonian material not only from the play's principal source, the 'English Faust Book',

but also from the apocryphal Acts of Peter and Paul (second century A.D.) and the *Recognitions*, attributed to Clement of Rome (fourth century A.D.) (42).

It is evident that there are multiple sources available to Marlowe from which he might have drawn for the analogy between Faustus and Simon including the 'English Faust Book'. Although the only extant early copy of this work is of an edition published in 1592, according to Nuttall, there were probably earlier publications.

I hope to have demonstrated conclusively in this Appendix that there are substantial overlaps in the stories of these two pairs of partners. By extension it is legitimate to read Marlowe's play as firstly figuring {Simon and Helen} as {Faustus and Helen}; and secondly, as allegorising a relationship to the divine quite other than Christianity or classicism do in speaking of immortality.

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