

Title	Beyond the binary : a re-examination of the Christian framework of Doctor Faustus
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Abstract	<p>Daring and dissolute, the figure of Doctor Faustus is responsible for much of the great appeal Christopher Marlowe's play has held. Marlowe, who was himself a man involved in sundry scandals, rushed headlong into a violent death at the age of twenty-nine; the enduring fascination with the character and the play, in part, has been due to the proximity between the protagonist and the playwright. William Prynne, in one of the earliest allusions to Doctor Faustus, juxtaposes a performance of the play with "the various tragicall ends of many, who.. .have been slaine in Playhouse, or upon quarrels there commenced ...;" although Marlowe died in a tavern instead of the theater, Prynne must have written this with the dire fate of the playwright in mind. Interest in Marlowe's works revived in the nineteenth century, and William Hazlitt compared the playwright's "lust of power in his writings," to Faustus's "tormenting desire to expand his knowledge to the utmost boundaries of nature and art, and to extend his power with his knowledge." This tradition culminated in Christopher Marlowe: the Overreacher, in which Harry Levin explains that Faustus "was no ordinary sinner; he was,like Marlowe himself, that impenitent and willful miscreant whom Elizabethan preachers termed a scorner." Stephen Greenblatt's influential and groundbreaking Renaissance Self-fashioning continues to endorse this view. Marlowe's characters, in their struggle against "the vacancy of theatrical space [that] suggest[s] his characters' homelessness," reject the moral tenets of the audience and assert their sometimes blasphemous individuality. Marlowe's characters demonstrate that the alienation created by social self-fashioning is as illusory as they themselves are; they become real only by asserting their existence. Marlowe invented "fictions only to create and not to serve God or the state, to fashion lines that echo in the void...;" his characters reflect this, for their "one true goal ...is to be characters in Marlowe's plays..... Greenblatt presents Marlowe and his characters as displaced rebels. One the other hand, interest in the Christian framework of the play has inspired an antithetical portrayal of Faustus. Leo Kirschbaum, in his essay, "Marlowe's Faustus: A Reconsideration," written during the 1940s, depicts Faustus as an inane character "who for lower values gives up higher values." This was one of the first critical works to present a perspective opposed to the romantic interest in Marlowe and Faustus's "lawless imagination." A. L. French's "The Philosophy of Doctor Faustus," argues even further that the play is not about the lackluster protagonist, but about "the working-out of a predestinate fall.- In a discussion that conversely attempts to purge the play from connections with the predestination theory, Malcolm Pittock reaches a similar conclusion about the Doctor by perceiving Faustus as a self-deluding fool who voluntarily relinquishes salvation for despair. Although radical in its aim, Jonathan Dollimore's "Subversion through Transgression" arrives at a similar understanding of Faustus. The protagonist's damnation is inevitable, not because he is aspiring, but because of "the limiting structure of Faustus's universe for what it is, namely `heavenly power.' Fautsus has</p>

to be destroyed since in a very real sense the credibility of that heavenly power depends upon it." Marlowe shapes Faustus as a victim who shows how the established norm is "far from justice." Emphasizing the Protestant aspects of the play even further, Alan Sinfield, in his *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, argues that "Faustus disrupts any complacent view of orthodox theology ..... But this view of the play, likewise, does not take into consideration the appeal of Faustus as a character; Christian issues become the main concern of the play and Faustus becomes a victim that struggles feebly and loses in this overbearing framework." There have been a number of studies defining the audacity of Faustus in connection to the Christian elements and ideas of the play. Johannes H. Birringer perceives the Doctor as a character who is attempting to establish and assert his identity by opposing the Christian framework. T. McAlidon identifies the main interests of the play as the Doctor's "psychic torment." Both arguments examine the theological aspects of the play while appropriating Greenblatt's concept of "self-fashioning," in order to return to the Romantic view of a daring yet doomed hero. Other critics have dismissed the religious debate as futile. In his introduction to the *Modern Interpretation Series*, Bloom scoffs "at the exegetes who debate the supposedly relevant theologies - Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran - and their presumed effect upon whether Faustus either will not or cannot repent." He believes that Marlowe does no more than mock each denomination for the sake of blasphemous laughter. Wilbur Sanders echoes this attitude towards the playwright in his *The Dramatist and the Received Idea*. In this comparison of Marlowe and Shakespeare, the former emerges as a barbaric brute who simply employs a jumble of Christian ideas for mercenary purposes: that is, to indulge the audience. Nonetheless, though Marlowe does parody and play with various Christian ideas, it is not possible to ignore them simply as the butt of his jokes. They are central issues of the play, for Faustus is a theologian and the play is, after all, about his damnation. G. K. Hunter is an example of a literary critic who ignores the religious aspects. In "Five-Act Structure in Doctor Faustus," he describes the descent of Faustus through the play not only as "backwards into evermore superficial shallows of knowledge and experience" but also "from the full pursuit of astronomy in act 3...to cosmography, from the heavens to the earth." The last act "is now confined to the enjoyment of some 'two or three' private friends ..... Faustus contracts into a private self. Bloom in the introduction says Faustus in the last scene goes of his own accord. He is acting by himself, for himself. The play could be thought of as a dwindling from the cosmic scale to the concerns of the petty individual. What seems to be the grandeur of Faustus at the beginning seems to diminish to the loneliness of Faustus at the end. However, the conclusion Hunter arrives at is that "Faustus has now fallen beneath the level of the clowns and horse-courser...." This is because he does not give the theological issues of the play the full consideration they deserve. Marlowe examines both the grandeur and the insignificance of the individual, through his references to theology. This paper returns to an old-fashioned "interpretive" study of Doctor Faustus, for one of the most enchanting aspects of Doctor Faustus and of the Faust legend itself, is the figure of Faustus. However, the purpose of this paper is, not to deny one aspect of the protagonist or the other, but to reconcile the two aspects, and to determine the nature of his ambition. An examination of the way Marlowe manipulates the reactions of the audience reveals how he is inviting the audience to reassess this familiar figure for themselves. This will reveal a Faustus alienated from a society embraced by a Christian framework. The play, then, presents an alternative order as an escape from such a society, which

	becomes the object of Faustus's ambition. In order to judge the nature of Faustus's ambition and of Faustus himself, the ensuing argument will examine ways in which the opening and ending of the play address and challenge both the scholarly and unlearned members of the audience.
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# Beyond the Binary: A Re-examination of the Christian Framework of *Doctor Faustus*

Tetsuhito Motoyama

## I

Daring and dissolute, the figure of Doctor Faustus is responsible for much of the great appeal Christopher Marlowe's play has held. Marlowe, who was himself a man involved in sundry scandals, rushed headlong into a violent death at the age of twenty-nine; the enduring fascination with the character and the play, in part, has been due to the proximity between the protagonist and the playwright. William Prynne, in one of the earliest allusions to *Doctor Faustus*, juxtaposes a performance of the play with "the various tragicall ends of many, who...have been slaine in Playhouse, or upon quarrels there commenced...;"<sup>1</sup> although Marlowe died in a tavern instead of the theater, Prynne must have written this with the dire fate of the playwright in mind. Interest in Marlowe's works revived in the nineteenth century, and William Hazlitt compared the playwright's "lust of power in his writings," to Faustus's "tormenting desire to expand his knowledge to the utmost boundaries of nature and art, and to extend his power with his knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

This tradition culminated in *Christopher Marlowe: the Overreacher*, in which Harry Levin explains that Faustus "was no ordinary sinner; he was,

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1. Millar Maclure ed, *Marlowe: the Critical Heritage 1588-1896* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) 48.

2. MacLure 78.

like Marlowe himself, that impenitent and willful miscreant whom Elizabethan preachers termed a scorner.”<sup>3</sup> Stephen Greenblatt’s influential and groundbreaking *Renaissance Self-fashioning* continues to endorse this view. Marlowe’s characters, in their struggle against “the vacancy of theatrical space [that] suggest[s] his characters’ homelessness,”<sup>4</sup> reject the moral tenets of the audience and assert their sometimes blasphemous individuality. Marlowe’s characters demonstrate that the alienation created by social self-fashioning is as illusory as they themselves are; they become real only by asserting their existence. Marlowe invented “fictions only to create and not to serve God or the state, to fashion lines that echo in the void...;” his characters reflect this, for their “one true goal...is to be characters in Marlowe’s plays....”<sup>5</sup> Greenblatt presents Marlowe and his characters as displaced rebels.

One the other hand, interest in the Christian framework of the play has inspired an antithetical portrayal of Faustus. Leo Kirschbaum, in his essay, “Marlowe’s *Faustus*: A Reconsideration,” written during the 1940s, depicts Faustus as an inane character “who for lower values gives up higher values.”<sup>6</sup> This was one of the first critical works to present a perspective opposed to the romantic interest in Marlowe and Faustus’s “lawless imagination.” A. L. French’s “The Philosophy of *Doctor Faustus*,” argues even further that the play is not about the lackluster protagonist, but about

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3. Harry Levin, *Christopher Marlowe: the Overreacher* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961) 156.
  4. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 200.
  5. Greenblatt 220-1.
  6. Leo Kirschbaum, “Marlowe and Faustus:A Reconsideration,” *The Review of English Studies* 1975 (July 1943): 229.

“the working-out of a predestinate fall.”<sup>7</sup> In a discussion that conversely attempts to purge the play from connections with the predestination theory, Malcolm Pittock reaches a similar conclusion about the Doctor by perceiving Faustus as a self-deluding fool who voluntarily relinquishes salvation for despair.<sup>8</sup> Although radical in its aim, Jonathan Dollimore’s “Subversion through Transgression” arrives at a similar understanding of Faustus. The protagonist’s damnation is inevitable, not because he is aspiring, but because of “the limiting structure of Faustus’s universe for what it is, namely ‘heavenly power.’ Faustus has to be destroyed since in a very real sense the credibility of that heavenly power depends upon it.”<sup>9</sup> Marlowe shapes Faustus as a victim who shows how the established norm is “far from justice.” Emphasizing the Protestant aspects of the play even further, Alan Sinfield, in his *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, argues that “Faustus disrupts any complacent view of orthodox theology....”<sup>10</sup> But this view of the play, likewise, does not take into consideration the appeal of Faustus as a character; Christian issues become the main concern of the play and Faustus becomes a victim that struggles feebly and loses in this overbearing framework.<sup>11</sup>

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7. A.L.French, “The Philosophy of *Dr. Faustus*,” *Essays in Criticism* 20.2 (April 1970): 139.
  8. Malcolm Pittock, “God’s Mercy Is Infinite:Faust’s Last Solidity,” *English Studies* 65 (August 1984): 302-3.
  9. Harold Bloom ed., *Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988)113.
  10. Alan Sinfield, “Tragedy, God, and Writing: Hamlet, Faustus, Tamburlaine,” *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (California: University of California Press, 1992) 237.
  11. Emily C. Bartels, *Spectacle of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) also presents Faustus as a

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Other critics have dismissed the religious debate as futile. In his introduction to the Modern Interpretation Series, Bloom scoffs "at the exegetes who debate the supposedly relevant theologies — Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran — and their presumed effect upon whether Faustus either will not or cannot repent."<sup>13</sup> He believes that Marlowe does no more than mock each denomination for the sake of blasphemous laughter. Wilbur Sanders echoes this attitude towards the playwright in his *The Dramatist and*

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victim, not of the religious attitudes, but of the political situation of the times. Elizabethan England contained various inner conflicts. People dismissed political incompetence by associating it with magic or other forms of heresy; it was caused by the "others" who were threatening "us." However, Marlowe reveals how "we" are the ones that create differences, not "them." Bartels sees Marlowe's plays as self-critical, presenting problems in the attitude of the English people and in their search for imperial power. Although Marlowe does seem to criticize people who distort the truth of things, the sense of microcosm that his plays have comes from more than simple criticism. In the process of revealing the alienation that is caused by society, he does not simply present a "spectacle of strangeness," but also tries to eliminate this alienation.

12. T. McAlidon, "Doctor Faustus: Predestination Theory," *English Studies* 3 (1995): 215.
13. Bloom 11.

*the Received Idea*.<sup>14</sup> In this comparison of Marlowe and Shakespeare, the former emerges as a barbaric brute who simply employs a jumble of Christian ideas for mercenary purposes: that is, to indulge the audience. Nonetheless, though Marlowe does parody and play with various Christian ideas, it is not possible to ignore them simply as the butt of his jokes. They are central issues of the play, for Faustus is a theologian and the play is, after all, about his damnation. G. K. Hunter is an example of a literary critic who ignores the religious aspects. In "Five-Act Structure in *Doctor Faustus*," he describes the descent of Faustus through the play not only as "backwards into evermore superficial shallows of knowledge and experience" but also "from the full pursuit of astronomy in act 3...to cosmography, from the heavens to the earth."<sup>15</sup> The last act "is now confined to the enjoyment of some 'two or three' private friends...."<sup>16</sup> Faustus contracts into a private self. Bloom in the introduction says Faustus in the last scene goes of his own accord. He is acting by himself, for himself. The play could be thought of as a dwindling from the cosmic scale to the concerns of the petty individual. What seems to be the grandeur of Faustus at the beginning seems to diminish to the loneliness of Faustus at the end. However, the conclusion Hunter arrives at is that "Faustus has now fallen beneath the level of the clowns and horse-courser...."<sup>17</sup> This is because he does not give the theological issues of the play the full consideration they deserve. Marlowe examines both the grandeur and the insignificance of the individual, through

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14. Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies of the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

15. G. K. Hunter, "Five-Act Structure of *Doctor Faustus*," *Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus*, 19.

16. Bloom 22.

17. Bloom 25.



his references to theology.

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## II

The Prologue, by narrating Faustus’s transition from the study of divinity to necromancy, presents the audience with a perturbing picture of the Doctor’s damnation. A rich array of images and allusions introduces Faustus and presages his tragic fate.

Excelling all, whose sweet delight disputes/  
In heavenly matters of theology./ Till, swollen with cunning, of a self conceit,/ His waxen wings did mount above his reach,/ And melting heavens conspired his overthrow./ For falling to a devilish exercise,/...He surfeits upon cursed necromancy (Prologue 18-25)<sup>18</sup>

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18. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, The Revels Plays, David Bevington and

By appropriating the myth of Icarus as a means to illustrate the reason for Faustus's damnation, the Prologue elicits an equivocal response towards him. In Greek myth, Icarus incurs the ire of the gods and simply falls to his death. The cause for Icarus's fall, which applies to an extent to Faustus, is hubris. The Prologue, however, embellishes the myth with two confusing, additional elements. It is meddling in "matters of theology" that provokes the heavens to contrive Faustus's downfall. Moreover, what the heavens bring about is not Faustus's death nor simply his overthrow, but a trap set by Satan into which he falls. There is almost room for sympathy, towards this unfortunate character.

Faustus makes his appearance immediately after the Prologue to enhance this confusion; while enchanting the audience with his audacity, he also increases the ambiguity of his damnation. The play impresses upon the audience a Faustus different from the character of the popular *History of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*. The young scholar in the "Faust book" is of a "naughty mind" and although his uncle "labored to have Faustus apply his study of Divinity," "it is manifest that

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Eric Rasmussen ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). All quotations from the play are from the A-text of this edition. Although early bibliographers such as Boas and Greg have favored the B-text, many of their arguments "rest on considerations of taste" (Bevington, and Rasmussen 65). The editors of the Revels edition argue that 1) the A-text could not be a memorial reconstruction since "the A-text reporter would have had to suffer a 'complete blackout' in order to leave out the scenes that are entirely missing from the A-text" (63) 2) it "gives a more reliable account than does the B-text of...the *Damnable Life*" (65) 3) other plays of the 1590s immitate the language of the A-text (65) 4) false starts, stage directions, the composition and priting of the 1604 (A-text) quarto suggest that it is based on an authorial manuscript (67-8).

many virtuous parents have wicked children....”<sup>19</sup> The Faustus of the play is neither two-dimensional, nor inherently “naughty.” The Doctor enumerates the studies in which he has been involved, and considers the rewards of each study. Logic offers no other satisfaction than that of being able to “dispute well.” Physicians are able to “heap up gold,” yet their studies cannot aspire beyond “our body’s health.” What Faustus aims for, to “make men to live eternally,” transcends what human knowledge or abilities can attain. Furthermore, he dismisses law as “A petty case of paltry legacies” and thus as a study that “fits a mercenary drudge.” As the zenith to his quest for worthy studies, he reaches for divinity. The course of this speech, winding through various academic fields, indicates how Faustus seeks some grand lofty reward from knowledge. Logic offers no tangible reward, whereas medicine and law offer only material gains. On the other hand, salvation is a Christian idea which promises immortal stature. True, there were Christians who believed that disputes in religious doctrine did not necessarily lead to a pious life, but to conflicts that rose from vanity and impudence. Yet the aim of theological disputes is piety, or rather, to establish the nature of a pious life. At least that seems to have been Faustus’s aim, for divinity leaves him with the conclusion that “The reward of sin is death”(I i 41): his mind is on salvation.

The monologue thus clarifies the motive behind Faustus’s pursuit of transcendental powers as a striving for salvation; but in order to understand how this can result in damnation, it is necessary to touch on some aspects of eschatology. The idea that Faustus presents in this monologue, is a Calvinistic one. Although both Catholics and Protestants believed in

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19. Philip Mason Palmer, and Robert Pattison More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition: from Simon Magus to Lessing* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966) 135.

predestination, the Catholic view of the church and the sacraments meant that the doctrine had little practical meaning.<sup>20</sup> The Protestant emphasis upon 'salvation by faith alone,' however, meant that predestination and the signs of election had a central place in their doctrines. It would be very likely for a man predestined for damnation to feel that "The reward of sin is death." The pessimism which Faustus presents, "If we say that we have no sin,/ We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us./ Why then belike we must sin,/ And so consequently die" (I i 44-7) also seems to be from a man who feels he has not been one of the chosen. Of the numerous other references to Faustus's predestined damnation, throughout the play, another significant one comes from the Good Angel. In the A text, the Good Angel consoles Faustus, "Never too late, if Faustus can repent" (II iii 79). In the introduction to the Revels Play edition, there is a very perceptive reading of this line. "Much virtue in *if!*" "As Faustus himself put it, earlier in the same scene, 'My heart's so hardened I cannot repent' (II iii 18). What does Marlowe's play make of this critical problem of the unwilling will? Christian doctrine of course has an answer, especially as formulated by the Wittenberg reformers and Calvin: God hardens the hearts of those whom he rejects."<sup>21</sup> In other words, Faustus does not feel the presence of God within himself, as one who is 'saved' would. It is this insecurity that Calvinism creates, this

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20. One movement in recent historical studies is to emphasize the similarities between Catholicism and Protestantism during Elizabethan England. However, there was discordance, quite hostile discordance at times, between the two beliefs, which is proof for the fact that what would now seem a slight difference was a major issue in those days. Also, Arminianism, a form of Protestantism which accepted the idea of free will, prevailed during the seventeenth century. This also indicates how predestination was an issue the people questioned, and to some people a disturbing concept. (Turn to Sinfield 220 for a more detailed discussion on Arminianism.)

21. Bevington and Rasmussen 29.

sense of alienation from power and privilege, that drives the protagonist to hell. The words with which Faustus ends his monologue corroborate this view. “A sound magician is a mighty god./ Here Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity” (I ii 64-5). Faustus is unable to sense the power and the presence of the Christian God within himself. Instead, he turns to the devil for a surrogate god and tries at once to expand his potential power and to alleviate his alienation.<sup>22</sup>

Having established Faustus’s fixation on salvation, the play then presents him as caught in the dichotomy, not only between the “chosen” and the reprobate, but also between Catholicism and the Reformation. Ensuing Faustus’s monologue is the first appearance of the Good and Bad Angels. The Good Angel, by distinguishing the Scripture from other writings, raises one of the focal points of the religious debate. “O Faustus, lay that damned book aside/ And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul/ And heap God’s heavy wrath upon thy head!/ Read, read the Scriptures./ That is blasphemy” (I i 72-5). Both sides of the argument often attacked for mistaken uses of the Scriptures. The Angel mentions the Scriptures and the book of necromancy

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22. John Boswell in his *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) refers to a biblical passage that describes the “activity of God in saving the Gentiles: ‘For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?’ (Rom. 11:24, KJV)” (112). The epilogue of *Doctor Faustus* describes how “cut is the branch that might have grown full straight....” If the imagery of this line derives from the biblical passage, it would implicate that God has cut the branch without grafting it unto another tree; he has alienated Faustus and denied him salvation.

as opposites; yet by presenting them side by side, the lines cannot help but raise the question of how different they actually are; and how different the two religious positions are.

In reaction to the Reformation, the Catholic skeptics often criticized Protestants for their self-satisfied reliance on the Bible. The distribution of the vernacular Bible was of pivotal importance for the Reformation. By learning to read the Bible, the individual was to come into direct contact with God.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, for the Protestants, often associated the popular and the Catholic approaches to the Scriptures with superstitious thoughts and practices.<sup>24</sup> The Protestants opposed these traditions in order to impose a more rational view of the world. Furthermore, by appropriating pre-Reformation religious texts in creating Faustus's pact with Satan,<sup>25</sup> the play seems to reinforce this association between the Bible and dubious practices, and to reflect the Protestant renunciation of Catholic attitudes

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23. Patrick Collinson in *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) writes how the Puritans began prophesying in order to instruct the pastors in how to interpret the Scriptures for their sermons. "According to the progressive Protestant view.... There would be no security without subjection to the gospel, and understanding of the gospel without preaching" (p.191). This is proof that even the Puritans themselves began to realize how precarious their view of the power of the Bible was.

24. Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* mentions instances of scripture being read while concocting a magical potion, or when conducting an exorcism.

25. Faustus's contract with Satan derives the use of blood in writing the pact and the words "*Consummatum est*" from the Charter of Christ, a "late-medieval convention...." Andrew Galloway, "*Dr. Faustus* and the Charter of Christ," *Notes and Queries* 35 (March 1988) 36-8. Also, the twenty-four years that Satan grants the Doctor echoes the "twenty-four figures in the vision of the throne of God in Revelations 4...." Robert Coogan, "The Four and Twenty Years of Marlowe's

towards the Bible. In both cases, the Scriptures become a source of metaphysical power through which one may reach redemption.

While the play may tap upon the polemic concerns of the erudite audience, it is not certain to what extent such problems preoccupied the general public. To many Elizabethans, Christianity may have had more social than spiritual implications, and apprehension towards the supernatural may have been a much more immediate force in their lives. In *The Religion of Protestants*, Patrick Collinson argues how piety was a quality, not confined to certain social classes, but to people who required a show of respectability. The “‘excommunicate class’ was made up from this age-group [i.e., youths who had nothing to lose by committing fornication or other disgraceful acts], on which religion and its concomitant disciplines made comparatively little impression. Many would be removed from this class not so much by ‘discipline’ as by the normal process of aging and entry to the married state.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, when many Christians went to church, they were more concerned with business rather than with a genuine reverence to God. In addition, the idea that many people believed in the actual existence of Heaven and Hell, is open to question. Keith Thomas asserts that “there were innumerable men and women who chose to concentrate on the business of living and to let spiritual matters look after

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Faustus,” *Notes and Queries* 48 (September 2001) 265. There are subtle differences in each parallel, which may indicate the playwright’s intentions to emphasize the diabolical distortion of the originals; however, the contemporary concern with the Scriptures would rather have impressed upon the audience, the connection between these texts and Faustus’s contract with Satan.

26. Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) 228.

themselves....”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, people were concerned with the supernatural, as the frequent references to prophets and witches confirm. They showed interest in Christianity or superstitious beliefs as a means basically to alleviate their fear of the unknown, not necessarily as an expression of their faith in Christian morality. For instance, the Protestants discouraged any form of magic as being contrary to God’s omnipotence, for He should be inscrutable; yet when the English church abandoned confessionals, people did not hesitate to turn to magicians, astrologers, and prophets who could tell them how to avoid misfortunes. Therefore, though the audience probably would have been moved by Faustus’s damnation, their emotions would have risen from their awe of the supernatural, not necessarily from an adherence to Christian morality. It was most likely with a guarded interest towards the diabolical and an awareness towards social ostracization, rather than a desire to receive confirmation of their religious beliefs, that the audience watched the play.

To those in such a frame of mind, the first act of the play would be presenting arbitrary dichotomies that proscribe the protagonist. The Good and Bad Angels leave the audience with the feeling that the acceptability of one religious idea and the condemnation of another is not an absolute precept, but often rests upon the whim of individuals. *Doctor Faustus* achieves this by employing the Angels in an unusual way, and jostling the audience out of the allegorical “theatre of proof and example.”<sup>28</sup> Faustus,

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27. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971) 172.

28. Ruth Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition: Innovation in the English Drama before 1595* The Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002) 31.



unlike many protagonists before him, shows little awareness of the Angels in this scene. He is thus able to detach himself from the morality play paradigm of the “eternal contest between good and evil.” The Angels no longer have uncontested authority over the characters on stage, or on the reactions of the audience.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, to enforce this upheaval of the idea of absolute vice and virtue, the following scene presents human characters who parallel the Angels. Instead of the Bad Angel, Valdes and Cornelius persuade Faustus to conjure devils; and instead of the Good Angels, the two scholars try to win him back. By juxtaposing the two scenes, and making the scholars the ones that have true sway over Faustus, the play distorts the morality play structure; virtue and vice become precepts ruled, not by the heavens, but by humans. In this way, the first three scenes, with their innovative use of traditional material, advances the feeling that neither Faustus nor the course of his actions are “essentially” evil. Instead, the dichotomies that alienate the protagonist of the play are arbitrary and far from absolute.

### III

It is with the hope to arrive at an alternative to such Christian dichotomies that Faustus turns to necromancy. This reflects contemporary conceptions of magic, especially of the Humanist bent. Sem Dresden, though discussing France, offers a perceptive view of Humanism outside Italy in his essay, “The Profile of the Reception of the Italian Renaissance in France.” Erasmus transformed the fifteenth century passion for Antiquity into respect and subsequently, reverence “which ceased...to be outside

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29. Lunney 141.

everyday life and became part of it.”<sup>30</sup> The humanist outside Italy expressed his respect for ancient writers and thinkers by giving their words a place in a new context, that is in his own works. Dresden summarizes Montaigne’s idea of reading as “What I remember no longer belongs to the author but to me. The reader has absorbed the text.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, Dresden argues that Humanism had the power to free ancient ideas from a traditional framework, and to revive them in a new contemporary setting. Humanists felt the immediacy of the message of ancient intellectuals; they aim to eliminate distinctions and distances between the past and present, the pagan and the Christian, so as to unite such opposites.

One of the key figures for understanding *Doctor Faustus* is Giordano Bruno, an innovative thinker who detached the occult from a Christian framework. Magic, expanded the range of human possibilities and led to the advance of science. John Mebane asserts, that “philosophical occultism carried to its logical extreme the Humanists’ affirmation of the power of human beings to control both their own personalities and the world around them.”<sup>32</sup> John Charles Nelson, in his *Renaissance Theory of Love*, describes Bruno’s attempt to reconcile opposites: “The basis of Bruno’s

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30. Sem Dresden, “The Profile of the Reception of the Italian Renaissance in France,” *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations*, Heiko A. Oberman et al ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975)

125. Dresden relates an interesting account of how Machiavelli would dress up when he read ancient authors to give his experience ritualistic implications. This attitude disappears in the sixteenth century when “Reading was like a conversation” (141).

31. Dresden 144.

32. John S.Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golgen Age* (Lincoln University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 3.

philosophy is not contradiction, but duality and co-existence. There is one substance.... Ontologically, there are the transcendent and the immanent; the two modes of matter and form....”<sup>33</sup>

Frances A. Yates in her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, offers a more comprehensive survey of the intellectual climate and its changes, which underscores the individuality of Bruno’s ideas. The Hermetic tradition had its origins in the *Asclepius* and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, works which Roman Christian intellectuals thought contained pre-Christian Egyptian wisdom.<sup>34</sup> Augustine rejected these texts because of their idolatrous passages and their discussions of magic; yet, this was not enough to quell interest in the tradition, for Marcilio Ficino attempted to reconcile Hermeticism and Christian thought by distinguishing between “evil” magic and “natural magic which is the uniting or marrying of things in heaven with things on earth.”<sup>35</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola added Cabalist magic, magic created by evoking the Hebrew names of God, to the Hermetic tradition; this further emphasized its Christian as well as magical associations. The cosmological background of Heaven and Hell lies behind the ideas of both thinkers. “What had changed is Man, now no longer only the pious spectator of God’s wonders in the creation...but Man the operator, Man who seeks to draw power from the divine and natural order.”<sup>36</sup>

With Bruno, the background as well as the function of man had

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33. John Charles Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) 256.

34. For a detailed account of the origin of Hermeticism, turn to Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) 1-6.

35. Yates 89.

36. Yates 144.

changed, for he challenged the Christian idea of good and evil: “Giordano Bruno was to take the bolder course of maintaining that the magical Egyptian religion of the world as not only the most ancient but also the only true religion, which both Judaism and Christianity had obscured and corrupted.”<sup>37</sup> To him the intermediaries for transcendent power, for man’s communication with the divine, could not be divided into virtuous angels and evil demons. Bruno’s aim was religious toleration and social unity, for “All the failures of the Christian sects are to be healed by the return to the Egyptian religion and the kind of moral law which Bruno associates with it.”<sup>38</sup> In this way, Yates defines the originality of Bruno’s thought as its liberation from Christian dualism. From one point of view, Humanism and Bruno’s occultism are incompatible, for one embraced the Christian framework while the other abandoned it. However, it is also possible to perceive Bruno’s endeavor to search the past for an alternative order, as a product of Humanism. In other words, he endeavored to revive the past, free from contemporary fetters.

The prevalence of this Humanist attitude, especially through the influence of Bruno, surely indicates that Marlowe must have been exposed to such ideas. Not only did Bruno sojourn in England, at Oxford University, from 1583 to 1585, and publish some of his most influential books there, but he also makes an appearance in the B-text of *Doctor Faustus*; should this not have been by Marlowe’s hand, it is still proof of the strong tie between the play and figure of Bruno that existed in the public mind. Mephistophilis alludes to Bruno’s idea of the *summum bonum*, though in an ironical manner,

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37. Yates 11.

38. Yates 227.

“a troup of bald-pate friars,/ Whose *summum bonum* is in belly-cheer” (III i 53). For the Italian, this was “the supremely desirable, the supreme perfection and beatitude...in the unity which informs the all...”<sup>39</sup> an idea of an extended All with its varieties and contradictions, that are united into One. This is a denial of the “oppression and slaughter of the enemies of our faith as a pleasing sacrifice to the gods,” a “solution of the religious difficulties,” feelings that were the basis of Hermeticism.<sup>40</sup> Mephistophilis’s ironic words seem appropriate, for he is ridiculing the Catholic friars, people who encouraged religious persecution. Many of Marlowe’s plays, similarly seem to question the alienation of subversive characters. He often presents characters who would incur the suspicions of others, the Jewish Barabas, the over-ambitious Tamburlaine, the homosexual Edward the Second; yet he depicts the discriminating characters as no more virtuous than these protagonists.

The words which best express Faustus’s state of mind are: “he confounds hell in Elysium” (I iii 61). Elysium is the Greek and thus a pagan idea of a land for the dead. Mephistophilis explains why he answered Faustus’s summons, because Faustus “is in danger to be damned” (I iii 52). The Doctor’s words, to “confound hell in Elysium” are a reply to this; they deny the Christian idea of damnation. This allusion could carry the hint of a blasphemous belittling of heaven. There were those who associated pagan images and ideas to heresy; this means that Faustus could simply be rejoicing in his rejection of heaven by intensifying the heretical quality of Hell. However, it would most likely have been a rigid theologian, ardently bound to Christian doctrine, who would have confounded Hell and Elysium in this manner. The popularity of *Icones Illustrium* indicates a great demand

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39. Yates 248.

40. Yates 253.

for such tangible illustrations and representations of antiquity as Faustus continues to conjure in the play.<sup>41</sup> In general, allusions to the classical world carried connotations of artistic innovation.

Guillaume Rouille in one of the most well-received *Icones Illustrium*, justifies his work with a sacred purpose: as such ancient figures reflect “the wonderful and remarkable likeness of God, and in such a small place are to be seen engraven the clear marks of every virtue,” they serve “to renew the supreme dignity of worshipful antiquity, and to make it last forever, in these curious days.”<sup>42</sup> Edgar Wind analyzes the ideas of Pico Mirandella, in *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*: “Mutability, in Pico’s view, is the secret gate through which the universal invades the particular.” “All the particular gods, in the Orphic theology as outlined by Pico, seem animated by a law of self-contrariety, which is also a law of self-transcendence.”<sup>43</sup> The humanists and those interested in the occult believed that transformation which results from a fusion of various traditions, led to transcendent knowledge and beauty. In other words, they perceived the classics positively, as a key to the unification of the past and the present, and of ostentatiously conflicting forces in society.

Though the Humanists transmitted ancient and classical ideas into a Christian framework, Marlowe associates classical figures only with visions of hell, in *Doctor Faustus*. After Faustus “confounds hell in Elysium,” he has Homer sing to him. Mephistophilis offers him Penelope as a courtesan. Helen, who appears at the end of the play, seems to assemble the wonders of

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41. John Manning, “This Blessed Sight: Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* and the Conventions of the *Icones Illustrium*,” *Notes and Queries* (June 1993): 154.

42. Manning 155-6.

43. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 196.

Hell in her beautiful and mysterious, because silent and fleeting, figure. Marlowe employs such classical motifs in order to show how it is actually Hell that is able to contain the diversity of the pagan past. The context in which Faustus alludes to Elysium confirms this, for he is calling for a world in which “There is no chief but only Belzebub,/ To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself” (I iii 58-9). Thus, to “confound hell in Elysium” expresses Faustus’s hope for a unified world which does not belong to the alienating Christian order.

#### IV

While the learned audience may have perceived such significance in Faustus’s relationship with Mephistophilis, it is likely that this may have eluded the common man. Nonetheless, the play would still have intimated to them the idea of an alternative order.

In the popular imagination, witchcraft and devils were strongly associated with social outcasts. The disintegration of the community and the need to create an identity for people who did not fit traditional categories, generated the popular suspicion and hostility towards witchcraft, divination and the display of other forms of supernatural power. Keith Thomas describes how the sudden increase in the persecution of witches during the second half of the sixteenth century and the first three-quarters of the seventeenth coincided with the destruction of manorial courts and the abolition of laws to protect widows: “witch-beliefs helped to uphold the traditional obligations of charity and neighborliness at a time when other social and economic forces were conspiring to weaken them. The fear of retaliation by witchcraft was a powerful deterrent against breaking the old

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44. Wind 564.

moral code [of generosity]....”<sup>44</sup> This idea that the fear of witchcraft served as a substitute for social mores becomes increasingly persuasive when considering the people who were accused of practicing this diabolical art. Quite often, they were of the ‘weaker sex,’ widowed and possibly aged; they were also mostly displaced, destitute people.<sup>45</sup>

The wretched witches were not the only victims of this change in society, for there were also politically influential men and intellectuals who attracted similar accusations. These were magicians such as Doctor John Dee<sup>46</sup> and the friend of Sir Walter Raleigh, Thomas Harriot,<sup>47</sup> who were deeply involved in politics and were executed or prosecuted for political

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45. Thomas refers to James I who “estimated the ratio of female witches to male at twenty to one. Alexander Roberts put it as high as a hundred to one.” He also presents contemporary sources which state that only four of the six hundred persons accused on the Home Circuit, that is, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex, were “tradesmen, husbandmen and labourers...” (520), that is, people with proper jobs.
46. Mebane writes how Dee (1527-1608) meddled with the occult, believing that he could promote British imperialism. Elizabeth “allowed him to play an important role is [*sic*] building up the ‘Tudor myth’ which she used so skillfully in strengthening her ancestral claim to the British throne. For a detailed account of Dee’s career, turn to Francis Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).
47. John Bakeless, in *Christopher Marlowe: the Man in His Time* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964) reveals how it was his involvement in politics and sciences that gave Harriot a diabolical reputation. “...the diabolical Harriot turns out to have been a quiet, gentle scholar of marked piety. In 1616, when already afflicted with the incurable disease of which he died years later, he wrote to his physician: ‘I believe in God Almighty, I believe that medicine was ordained by him.... My faith is sure, my hope is firm.’ In Virginia,...he preached to the Indians with fervour...” (164-5).



reasons; it is not too difficult to imagine the scandals these men must have created. Scholars, such as Faustus, fared no better than political figures. The attitude of the common people towards scholars would also have been one of suspicion. Scholars who spent time arguing about the Scriptures and other esoteric forms of literature would have seemed closer to the witches who performed miracles by evoking passages from the Bible, than to the common man involved in physical labor. Keith Thomas reinforces this point: “all the evidence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggests that the common people never formulated a distinction between magic and science, certainly not between magic and medicine.”<sup>48</sup> Both were mysterious, yet effective techniques for allaying anxieties. “The practice of magic of any brand set the sorcerer a little apart from the rest of community, perched precariously on the brink of social isolation.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, by associating necromancy with the figure of a scholar, Marlowe emphasizes Faustus’s role as a social outcast.

The use of devils in plays also evoked ideas about communal ties. John D. Cox, in his analysis of pre- and early-modern English plays, identifies demons as figures who disrupt the idea of “sacramental community.”<sup>50</sup> Marlowe’s play presents two such “displaced” characters, forming a kind of alliance.

Mephistophilis alleviates Faustus’s alienation by undermining the un-accepting moral framework. Mephistophilis seems to be the one character who constantly reminds the audience of the Heaven and Hell dichotomy; yet

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48. Thomas 668.

49. Thomas 224.

50. John D. Cox, *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 39.

a look at the structure of morality plays, which *Doctor Faustus* closely parallels, will reveal how he is actually destroying such a dichotomy. The Chorus which would normally provide the framework for the play, rejects this dualism. While Mephistophilis is detached from the audience, at no point directly addressing them, the Chorus supplies the necessary narrative and suggests how they should watch the action on stage. The Prologue does refer to Faustus's fall from Heaven to Hell, yet its main concern is Faustus as a man. What it actually discusses is "heavenly matters of theology" (Prologue 19) and "devilish exercises"(Prologue 23), the interests that Faustus has: "the man that in his study sits"(Prologue 28). There is a clear contrast, for example, with the opening lines of *Mankind*: "The very Founder and Beginner of our fist creation,/ Among us sinful wretches he oweth to be magnified,/ That for our disobedience he had none indignation/ To send his own son to be torn and crucified..." (1-4). Even *Everyman*, which concentrates upon the plight of man more than the conflict between virtue and vice, nonetheless clearly states, "I pray you all give your audience/ And hear this matter with reverence,/ By figure a *moral* play!" (1-3 my italics).<sup>51</sup> *Doctor Faustus* does present "The form of Faustus' fortunes good or bad" (Prologue 8) but "To patient judgments we appeal our plaud..." (Prologue 9). Though this is a *clichéd* appeal for applause, it also seems to say that the play will offer no apparent guide to morals; the audience is asked not only to applaud the play, but also to decide whether Faustus's fate is good or bad, for themselves. The three Chorus intervals throughout the play (in the A-text) serve to clarify the situation, yet, likewise, do not touch on the idea of Christian dualism.

Instead, it is Mephistophilis that clearly presents the dualistic structure.

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51. All quotations from *Mankind* and *Everyman* are from G. A. Lester, ed., *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, New Mermaids (London: A & C Black, 1981).

In contrast to Faustus's attempt to "confound hell in Elysium," Heaven and Hell are a complete antithesis for Mephistophilis, to deny Heaven is to glorify Hell : Mephistophilis seems more sincere and sympathetic with his lines beginning, "Why this is hell, nor am I out of it" (I iii 78) than anywhere else in the play. This is a confession clearly stating that his damnation results from Christian dualism. He "saw the face of God,/ And tasted the eternal joys of heaven..." (I iii 80-1) and regarded these as signs of virtue.

However, Mephistophilis incorporates an inherent contradiction that challenges this dualism: he is both the Vice and the Virtue of morality plays. One of the basic characteristics of a morality play is Vice's distortion of Virtues words. One of the clearest examples, to which Robert Weimann also alludes, in *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, is from Mankind. Mercy explains what God will do when Last Judgment takes place, in an analogy of how "The corn shall be saved, the chaff shall be brent..." (43). Mischief cleverly picks up this idea and distorts its significance: "For a winter-corn thresher, sir, I have hired./ And ye said the corn should be saved and the chaff should be fired./ And he proveth nay...the corn shall serve to bread at the next baking;/...The chaff to horse shall be good provent;/ When a man is forcold the straw may be brent..." (53-62). At the basis of this "topsy-turvydom" is the role of "The Vice [as a character who is] impervious to the moral concepts of both aristocratic and Christian living...challenging accepted moral standards."<sup>52</sup>

Mephistophilis is, in a sense, both roles in one character. He should be promoting the splendors of Hell, yet there are moments when he suddenly

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52. Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, Robert Schwartz ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 146.

contradicts himself by enunciating the moral views of the audience. For instance, when Mephistophilis first appears, he asserts the predominant power of Lucifer, “I am a servant to great Lucifer,/ And may not follow thee without his leave;/ No more than he commands must we perform” (I iii 41-3) only to invert the effect he established and assert the morality structure, the very next moment: “For when we hear one rack the name of God,/ Abjure the Scriptures, and his savior Christ,/ We fly in hope to get his glorious soul,...he is in danger to be damned...” (I iii 48-52) Likewise, he glorifies the joy and splendor of devilish magic, “I’ll cull thee out the fairest courtesans/.../Be she as chaste as was Penelope,/ As wise as Saba,” (II i 156-60) only to contradict himself in the end, “or as beautiful/ As was bright Lucifer *before his fall*” (II i 160-1 my italics). This self-contradiction is inevitable, for Mephistophilis’s role in the play is to give the framework for Faustus’s actions. By giving this role to the character who should in principle challenge the order, Marlowe is disrupting the morality play structure, combining elements of Heaven and Hell.

The fact that Mephistophilis clearly describes himself as a fallen angel is also significant to this undermining of the morality structure. “Was not that Lucifer an angel once?/ Yes, Faustus, and most dearly loved of God” (I iii 66-7). Though it cannot be denied that Lucifer and his band of angels are now damned and have become demons, Mephistophilis seems, in the play, to retain an aspect of his angelic self: while he seduces Faustus into the wonders of necromancy, on the other hand, he warns the Doctor in words that would evoke the frailty of Mercy or Good Deeds, “O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,/ Which strike a terror to my fainting soul” (I iii 83-4). Mercy or Good Deeds remain with the protagonist whom the Vices or the Worldly Vanities abandon at the end of *Mankind* and *Everyman*; likewise, it is this ambiguous character that offers everlasting

companionship to Faustus. As Mercy and Good Deeds lead Man into the Christian utopia, Heaven, Mephistophilis joins the Doctor in destroying the structure of the play and in giving Hell a shocking physical immediacy, instead.

At the end, the play contains two surprises for the audience, in order to mangle its dualistic framework. First, a perceptive audience would have been confused by the distortions to the conventional morality structure. They would have expected a clear morality play structure, which the play acknowledges sardonically. Glynne Wickham, in his *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage*, writes how "Marlowe's public playhouses were still related to those of the religious drama and the banquet chamber..."<sup>53</sup> and "where Marlowe is concerned, I think we must make greater allowance than is usually admitted for the ritualistic quality of the theatre in which he worked."<sup>54</sup>

Marlowe intentionally depicts Faustus as the audience would expect him to be, a damned man who must look for salvation. The episode just before his monologue, his confession to his colleagues, suggests the playwright's intentions. "The serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, *but not Faustus*" (V ii 15-6 my italics) and "Ay, pray for me, pray for me; and what noise soever ye hear, come not unto me, for *nothing can rescue me*" (V ii 58-9 my italics) seem to say that the audience will have it no other way, that they will to see him suffer. "O would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book" (V ii 20-1) and wishing he were an animal so Satan would not want his soul almost sounds like Marlowe's complaint against people who condemn

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53. Glynne Wickham, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage: Collected Studies in Mediaeval, Tudor and Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) 130.

54. Wickham 131.

scholars as damned and evil; for the Clown, Robin and the Horse-Courser are characters with whom many in the audience may have identified the most; they are also characters concerned with petty profits and whom Mephistophilis transforms, “into an ape, and thee into a dog (III ii 39-40). The idea to burn books, the desperate act of a socially ostracized scholar who wishes to gain acceptance once again,<sup>55</sup> also gives voice to this complaint against preconceived prejudices. The play’s cynical tone transforms Faustus’s final monologue into more than a conventional response to damnation.

In Faustus’s final lines, God and Lucifer lose their defining delineations and seem almost to converge. He attempts to leap up to Heaven in order to escape Lucifer, “O, spare me, Lucifer” (V ii 81); but the next moment he tries to eschew God, just as he tries to flee from the horrible claws of Lucifer: “And hide me from the heavy wrath of God” (V ii 85). His pleadings to God, to accept him after a thousand years of penance, is immediately followed by his wish that he were a beast which would not have known God and would not have felt His alienation. As the monologue winds towards its end, once more there is the intermingling of his fear of Lucifer, “Come not, Lucifer!” (V ii 122) with his fear of God, “my God, look not so fierce on me” (V ii 120). Moreover, Mephistophilis, a character who combines the two extremes, appears to collect Faustus. Though Faustus’s last words before the demons carry him to Hell, “ah Mephistophilis” (xiii 115) may not be a sign of Faustus walking into hell willingly, as Boom writes,<sup>56</sup> it is significant that these words call to his former companion. Amid confusion and fear, he recognizes his companion,

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55. Roger Bacon and John Dee are examples of two scholars who actually did so. (Bevington 197).

56. Bloom 11.

Mephistophilis. This seems to give this last line a tone distinct from the terror expressed in the preceding monologue; he recognizes not only his companion, but also the fact that Mephistophilis is the one to offer him an alternative order, the one to “love” him.

This oscillation between his fear and love of God and his fear of Lucifer, from one point of view, is a sign of Faustus’s panic and terror. But this is one of the most beautiful passages in the play and Marlowe must deliberately have chosen the images and ideas to create the disconcerting effect that they have. Faustus seems to be voicing fear against the dichotomy with which the audience is viewing the play. He expresses what the audience would have expected, the idea of Heaven and Hell, and the fear of damnation; but his words express, at the same time, a fear of heaven and a longing to belong to heaven. In other words, he is looking for an escape from a sense of alienation, especially the alienation that results from this dualistic order.

The second shock will hit the audience at the end, as the play does not close with salvation, but hurls Faustus into damnation. By bringing damnation into a scene which would usually have shown salvation, the play seems to conjoin the two ideas. What appears to be damnation could actually be a form of salvation.

The integration of the alienated requires a framework which is able to contain deviations and conflicting elements. Wind writes of Ficino’s theory of love: “In reducing the confusions of the senses to reason, the intellect clarifies but it also contracts: for it clarifies by setting limits; and to transcend these limits we require a new and more lasting confusion, which is supplied by the blindness of love. Intellect excludes contradictions; love embraces them.”<sup>57</sup> Ficino and Pico were Neoplatonists, imbued in the

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57. Wind 55.

Christian tradition; thus, their idea of love referred to God. Marlowe is closer to Bruno who removed this from a Christian framework. Yates lists Bruno's opinions which lead to his execution: "that there are innumerable worlds; that magic is a good and licit thing; that the Holy Spirit is the *amina mundi*; that Moses did his miracles by magic in which he was more proficient than the Egyptians; that Christ was a Magus."<sup>58</sup> The last two points seem very close to what Richard Baines recorded from Marlowe's atheist lecture: "that Moses was but a juggler and that one Heriots, being Sir W. Raleigh's man, can do more than he."<sup>59</sup> However, there is a difference in tone and this indicates the difference between Marlowe and Bruno. The playwright repudiates the distinction between the privileged and the unprivileged. He brings Moses down to a human level, just as he demystifies the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. In addition to Bruno's rejection of the Christian tradition, the playwright emphasizes the importance of the physically tangible world.<sup>60</sup> This challenge to Christian dualism and sense of physical immanence can be seen in *Doctor Faustus*, especially in the last scene, the climax to Faustus's quest for belonging.

In *Doctor Faustus*, God is silent through the play and does not convey a loving impression. On the other hand, Mephistophilis, especially in the A-text, inspires "love" in Faustus and subsequently relieves his loneliness. Christian order does not affect Faustus with the feeling of love or belonging;

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58. Yates 354.

59. Pendry 513.

60. Yozo Yamada, in his discussion of Bruno and *Doctor Faustus*, explains that the Acteaon motif and the allusion to "metempsychosis" in the play may affect the nature of the final scene. There is the possibility that Faustus is not suffering "damnation in hell," but "perpetually transforms himself into some other being," possibly, meta-theatrical and corporal. "The New Acteaon's Fortune, A and B," *Shakespeare Studies* 29 (1991):13.



instead it is Mephistophilis who incorporates contradictions and belongs to an alternative order, that “embraces” the Doctor. He discards the Christian framework as a limit produced by the intellect.

The effect that Faustus’s monologue has against the final appearance of the devils, is significant for the ending of his isolation. The monologue is overflowing with images and ideas; but because they are presented in a sudden rush of desperation, they seem confused and fleeting. Individual images of salvation and damnation intertwine and challenge Christian dualism. Furthermore, it is the immediate presence of the demons that remain in the minds of the audience. The dichotomy of Heaven and Hell that the monologue presents is erased by the powerful presence of Hell as the only real existence. In contrast to all the scholarly and theological ideas of Heaven and Hell, and of the universe, this scene of Hell is physically much more immediate. It does not end with talk about the stars and the spheres, but actual devils appear to take Faustus away. In this play, he is giving the idea of damnation a powerful physical presence. In *Faustus*, the central motif is necromancy and its objective is to give actual form to Faustus’s desires, or rather his imagination. Throughout the play, he gives his imagination a physical shape, yet he and the audience are always left with a sense of transience. It is the final scene, the demons who come to fetch Faustus, that has the most physical presence. In the end, the audience is left shaken by the impact of the demons, not a sense of duality, but a powerful sense of the physical; and then they are morally suspended with the strangely ambiguous Epilogue: “Regard his hellish fall,/ Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise/ Only to wonder at unlawful things:/ Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits,/ To practice more than heavenly power permits” (Epilogue 4-8). It begins by “exhorting” the wise, yet ends by “enticing” them. Mephistophilis’s conflicting functions in the play and

the powerful presence of Hell to which he belongs, disrupts the morality framework.

There are moments throughout the play during which Faustus does have his moments of regrets for leaving this framework. However, it is not sudden pangs of conscience but reminders of the dualism, that trigger off these moments. For example, in Act Two Scene One, the long discussion on Christian cosmology leads into Faustus's brief illusion that God might reclaim him. The appearance of Lucifer, his overwhelming presence, and the immediacy of the Seven Deadly Sins resolves Faustus not to ponder about the Heavens again. In Act Five Scene One, an Old Man, without any prior or later development in the plot, suddenly enters the stage, almost as if Marlowe remembered, in a flurry, that he was appropriating the morality play structure. The pious Man, like the figure of Mercy in *Mankind*, conveys the idea of mercy taking precedence over justice. Though this moves Faustus to repentance, the presence of Mephistophilis and especially Helen, overshadow the idea of Heaven. It is significant that when Faustus implores Mephistophilis to torment the Old Man, the demon "cannot touch his soul,/ But what I may afflict his body with I will attempt..." (V i 79-80 *my italics*). It is as if he is a personification of Mercy, not a real character. Thus, only when Faustus is forced to encounter the *idea* of Christian duality, does he distinguish Heaven and Hell.

## V

Faustus's ambitions are formed in a society, founded upon such religious beliefs. The Prologue suggests that it is the Protestant idea of predestination that resolves Faustus to turn to the devil. Faustus is unable to sense the

presence of the Christian God within. Instead, he turns to the devil for a surrogate god and endeavors, at once, to alleviate his alienation. Not only did Christianity enforce a sense of isolation, it also created conflicts among the people. Marlowe would have been especially aware of this, for Cambridge was a “nest” of religious contention. Christianity, for Marlowe, was thus part of a social order which, far from consolidating society, enhanced the insecurity of man. Faustus’s interest in necromancy is a sign of his determination to belong to a stable and accepting world.

Mephistophilis destroys the dualistic structure of Heaven and Hell in the play, and with the physical impact of the damnation scene, he creates the alternative order that will relieve Faustus’s isolation. Faustus’s wish to belong to a less alienating order manifests in his final monologue which unconsciously confuses the distinction between Heaven and Hell; also, the overshadowing physical power of Hell in the last scene has the effect of eliminating the idea of Heaven and Hell of the monologue. Throughout the play, Faustus joins Christianity and Pagan images, Heaven and Hell, rather than denounce God, which would subsequently be a reinforcement of the moral dualism. Mephistophilis, Faustus’s “savior,” is a character who embodies a moral contradiction by being both the Virtue and the Vice of the morality play tradition. In addition, he undermines the structure of the play, for he is the one who provides its framework. The final scene thus has double significance, it is at once damnation and liberation.

Moreover, the final scene has the physical impact that all the realms Faustus searched, did not. Faustus’s quest for “belonging” is also a quest for a tangibility and both are fulfilled in the end. Furthermore, the physical impact of the scene seems to transform the appearance of Mephistophilis amid the confusion and horror, into a revelation of “love.” In a sense, it brings together the spirit and the body, and makes Faustus’s damnation seem

actually to be an attempt to break the boundaries of the theater and to obtain real life. From the perspective of the audience, the power of the scene sweeps the audience away from notions of their own order. Faustus also obtains a powerful physical presence, and he is able to break through the boundaries, not only of the established order, but also of the stage-world and the world of the audience. This eliminates alienation in a real sense.

Faustus does challenge the established order, but he does not try to replace it with an anarchic pursuit of his ego. Instead, he turns to an alternative order, an order which the audience would associate with chaos because of their tendency to alienate anything outside the established order. This is an order that, unlike the established order, incorporates all varieties and conflicts, and gives love a tangible shape. It looks back to a traditional order, the idea of a Golden Age, in hope for a society that reconciles variety and conflicts instead of asserting the force of one individual, one identity, one standard for morals. Faustus's ambition lies in his pursuit for this order until the very end.