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Misreading Faustus Misreading: The Question of Context

[*Faustus*]: Now would I have a booke where I might see al characters
and planets of the heavens, that I might knowe their motions and
dispositions.

[*Mephostophilis*]: Heere they are too. *Turne to them*

Fau: Nay let me have one booke more, and then I have done, wherein
I might see al plants, hearbes and trees that grow upon the earth.

Me: Heere they be.

Fau: O thou art deceived.

Me: Tut I warrant thee. *Turne to them*

(A: 618-27)

Marlowe's *Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus* opens with the spectacle of a man bending his mind to a strange task of self-transformation. Straining against the limits of humanity, Faustus aspires to be something more:

A sound Magician is a mighty god:
Here tire, my braines, to get a Deity!(A: 92, B: 89)¹

A god, then, and self-begotten. The notion is at once magnificent ("All things that moove betweene the quiet poles / Shalbe at my commaund" [A: 86-7]; desperate, in that it emerges as an alternative to the promise of everlasting death which Faustus finds in the New Testament; and faintly ridiculous. The intentions of this would-be god, once he descends to particulars, smell oddly of the study. He will overturn, for himself at least, that law of destiny concerning scholars that Marlowe enunciated in his *Hero and Leander*—"Grosse gold from them runs headlong to the boore";² his servile spirits will

flye to *India* for gold,
Ransacke the Ocean for orient pearle,
And search all corners of the new found world
For pleasant fruites and princely delicates

—but not before they have resolved him “of all ambiguities” (A: 114-17, 112). The academic manifests himself again in the slide from thoughts of “straunge philosophie” into the musings of an armchair strategist who will have his spirits “wall all *Germany* with brasse” and will “levy souldiers with the coyne they bring, / And chase the Prince of Parma from our land”—musings which are interrupted by the slightly puerile notion of filling “the publike schooles with [silk] / Wherewith the students shalbe bravely clad” (A: 118-25). The indirectness of all this is curious: Faustus will be a god, but by proxy; a god, perhaps, in academic robes.

These oddly unfocussed desires presuppose a capacity for self-determination that is, however, utterly denied by the structure of spiritual forces within which Faustus lives and by which he is permeated. Faustus’s is a career in which the false-heroic, the fatuous, and the farcical are mixed in approximately equal quantities with something that is less easily labelled, but which includes a pervasive fear of torture and of death, iridescent verbal barriers constructed to shut out that fear, and a corrosive self-awareness which dissolves them to re-state a debilitating terror in still stronger terms. At the end of this career, he is reduced to craving a different kind of transformation:

Ah *Pythagoras metemscossis* were that true,
This soule should flie from me, and I be change
Unto some brutish beast . . . (A: 1491-3)

But in a manner vaguely reminiscent of the paradoxes of Nicholas of Cusa’s *docta ignorantia*, a measure of dignity is extracted from its utter opposite. Thus for example, in his last hour Faustus’s desperate will to live finds voice in a line marvellously appropriated from the *Amores* of Ovid: “*O lente lente currite noctis equi*” (A: 1459).³ And, academic to the end, the last thing he can think of to abdicate is his necromantic scholarship: “Ugly hell gape not, come not *Lucifer*, / Ile burne my bookes, ah *Mephastophilis*” (A: 1507-8).

Over the past sixty or seventy years—a period, co-incidentally let us say, during which English studies have become professionalized as the almost exclusive domain of university teachers—this tragedy of a university teacher has risen from comparative obscurity to a position close to the centre of the literary canon.⁴ Edited and re-edited by modern scholars, mulled over by critics, reprinted in both the Norton and Oxford anthologies of English literature, *Doctor Faustus* has become one of a small number of almost inescapable objects in the humanities curricula of universities in the English-speaking world. Yet strangely enough, despite all this attention, despite a general convic-

tion that it is laden with significance, *Doctor Faustus* is a play which tends to be remembered in the barest outline, or in terms of a few anthology pieces—among them the dangerously playful speech to Helen and the splendid last soliloquy. Is the play really no more than an obscure setting for such brilliant fragments? Or does our forgetfulness—which contrasts oddly with the play's continued success on stage—suggest rather some defect in our understanding of the articulation of the whole? The principle of charity, together with whatever modesty one can muster, should incline us to the second alternative.

By what kind of scholarly necromancy of our own, then, can we re-animate this play with sufficient vigour to enable us to respond to it in its entirety? First, and most generally, how is one to receive this strange text which is apparently so simple in its dramatic action, yet so unforthcoming as to the meaning of that action? As an orthodox cautionary tale of one "Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise, / Onely to wonder at unlawful things, / whose deepenesse doth intise such forward wits, / To practise more then heavenly power permits" (A: 1514-17)? But a careful consideration of its syntactical ambiguity may suggest that this exhortation is subtly duplicitous.⁵ As a tragic outcry against the constricting force of this same orthodoxy, then, and a subversive exposure of its inhumanity? Or as a fool's progress laced with bitter absurdities, a sardonic comedy in the Marlovian mixed style? "Marlovian," one says—but how much of the mixture is Marlowe's work, and to what extent must we admit that a play which survives in two distinct versions, one bowdlerized and revised, both textually corrupt, and both structurally defective, is an indeterminate object, a kind of palimpsest the final blurred shape of which is far removed from the design of its first shaper?⁶

Doctor Faustus, one may confess, is all of these: palimpsest, black comedy, tragedy, dramatic homily. And to the extent that its text is genuinely indeterminate it is many other things as well. But to speak more immediately of what it offers us, this play, in both versions or any combination of the two, is ideological in a peculiarly insistent and intimate manner. Of course, all fictive discourse is ideological in the broad sense that it contributes in a historically specific manner to a society's self-representations. And the genre to which this play is traditionally attached is explicitly ideological to a high degree: Elizabethan tragedy typically reflects upon social codes and their natural, celestial and theological resonances through a many-voiced mimesis of power and erotic relations, of conflict, disorder and catastrophe. Yet "the dalliance of love, / In courts of Kings where state is overturn'd, / ... the pompe of proud audacious deedes" (A: 4-6), assassination, incest,

adultery, conquest and revenge—all these, the common stuff of Elizabethan tragedy, are largely if not wholly absent from *Doctor Faustus*. This play instead deals sensationally with the most private and insidious fear of Elizabethans: that of damnation, of unending torment in this life and the next. The crucial decisions of its protagonist, which involve in the first place a rejection of all orthodox modes of thought, are made in isolation from any human community; and Faustus is again alone in his final suffering. Whatever social context the play provides for him is curiously peripheral to this private trajectory. For Faustus struggles not with other humans, but with heaven, hell, and his own obdurately fearful self—all of which are in a related way ideological constructs.

The ideological qualities of *Doctor Faustus* are further testified to by the early non-authorial deformations of its text, which in some instances were clearly prompted by a desire to limit the anxieties which it provokes—and also by the extraordinary diversity of the modern receptions of the play, many of which reveal a similar motivation. Accordingly, one might well ask whether any critical interpretation is likely to reveal as much about the play's complex genesis as a product and reflection of the form and pressure of its age, or about the subsequent unfoldings of its meaning, as it does about the critic's own ideological prejudices.

Or would it be more honest to aim this question in a different direction? What, then, are our motives, as readers, in returning to this play? Delight, most obviously, in its wit, its grotesque ironies, its uneven depths and resonant terrors. Who, after all, will turn with any eagerness to something that does not provoke delight? The question is St Augustine's—who also pertinently wondered what the hidden processes are that govern our erratic fixations of delight.⁷ To what in us, then, does this play respond? Perhaps, on the most naive level (but one that is well represented in modern criticism), to a desire for reassurance as to certain certainties: among them our possession of free-will (does Faustus not wilfully choose his own damnation?) and the existence, for other ages if not for us, of objective powers of good and evil. And at the same time, possibly, to a desire to enjoy, without the effort of being saved, the most dubious of all the privileges of the blessed: that of witnessing from a safe distance the terrors of the damned. The large ironic inversions of *Doctor Faustus* can thus answer to its readers' submission to ideological circumscription—or indeed, to a more complex attitude of scepticism as to the very possibility of escape from one or another form of such enclosure. But the play also responds, with equal if not greater directness, to the contrary experience of resistance. Those who are disinclined to approve the permeating orthodoxies of

their own age (which, like Faustus, they will find it easier to reject than to expel) may see their difficulties prefigured in this play's interrogation of a theological orthodoxy which it cannot openly challenge, but whose harsh outlines it can nonetheless expose.

The dominant rhetorical mode of the play, however, is *self-interrogation* and *second-person self-prediction*. This peculiarity may make it of particular interest to readers engaged in the self-reflexive labyrinths of contemporary literary theory. It is his habitual mode of self-address—"Settle thy studies *Faustus*" (A: 30); "what art thou Faustus but a man condemned to die?" (A: 1169); "Accursed Faustus, where is mercie now?" (A: 1329)—which in large part constitutes the dramatic identity of Faustus, and which does so in terms of an increasingly powerful recognition of the end that is in store for him. At the same time as they enact a split between a perverse wilfulness and the strangely passive self which is addressed, his self-reflections construct a trap of self-authenticating predication, a dialogue of one voice in which the self identifies, and names as its own destiny, an eschatologically defined Other within the self. Whether this uncentred self that is constituted and betrayed by its own discourse be related to a Heraclitean equation of *ethos* and *daimon*, to its obvious context in sixteenth-century theology, or to the theories of Lacan, Foucault, or Derrida, its contemporary appeal is evident.⁸

But does Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* not also answer to a certain apocalyptic mood in late twentieth-century culture? To the degree that we accept, with whatever ironic reservations, one or another form of alignment with Faustus as a figure who carries meaning for our own age, are we not, almost unavoidably, remaking the play as an allegorical apocalypse, prophetic of some fatal imbalance in a culture which modern writers have with some frequency described as "Faustian"?⁹

And is this remaking perhaps one sign of a vertigo in our culture analogous to that which informs the 'tragicall history' of Faustus—a vertigo which (as the conflation of obscene jargon and pious hopes in what are euphemistically termed 'arms control' negotiations may suggest) combines an unspeakable desire for the erasure of our own collective history with a shuddering recoil from that desire?¹⁰

Such motives for returning to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* have in common a firm anchorage in present-day concerns. (The same would also be true of any more adequate list.) It might be an exaggeration to claim that the overlap, real or illusory, between these concerns and those of Marlowe's play is what enables us to recuperate and re-imagine it. But this overlap is certainly the basis of what makes us want to do so. In each instance, then, the play is being encountered not in isolation, but rather through the mediation of more recent texts. This

mediation is obvious enough when these are works of interpretation—literary-historical, New Critical, post-structuralist—or of literary theory. It is perhaps less easy to tell when one's responses are being molded—when, that is, the play as one receives it is being re-shaped—by prior readings in cultural and intellectual history, theology, or philosophy. Less obvious still is the mediating effect of post-Marlovian versions of the Faustus legend. One may suspect a certain unconscious Goethean influence in the work of a critic who consistently gives Goethe's spelling ("Mephistopheles") to the name of the attendant spirit in Marlowe's play.¹¹ It might then be asked how much of one's own appreciation of the play's lucid ironies and solipsistic overtones is perhaps due to an awareness of the dramatic fragments published by Paul Valéry under the title *Mon Faust*, or to what degree one's perception of it as implicitly apocalyptic may be derived from a reading of Thomas Mann's allegorical reworking of the legend, or from another superb Faustian novel published in the same year, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. The word "Faustian" itself has a curious history extending from nineteenth-century interpretations of Goethe's *Faust*, through the vaguely Nietzschean allegories of *Faust* in Spengler's *Decline of the West*, to an increasingly pessimistic modern usage that seems to refer less often to Goethe than to the Marlovian and pre-Marlovian versions of the legend.¹² The confused history of this term may thus be emblematic of the more subtle conflation of critical, dramatic, novelistic—and perhaps also operatic and cinematic—reinterpretations of the Faustus legend which is arguably at work in our approaches to Marlowe's play.

Finally, what of the actual editions through which we experience this play? Are their choices between textual alternatives (not to mention their introductions and annotations) so purely objective as to be uncontaminated by modern needs and prejudices? Are these edited texts, then, not also theory-laden forms of interpretative mediation? And even if, for critical purposes, we make use of facsimile or parallel-text editions, is our sense of the play's shape not influenced by the conflated reading-texts in which we first encountered it?

Any modern reading of *Doctor Faustus* may therefore be expected to differ from the play as received by Marlowe's contemporaries by at least as much as the *Don Quixote* of Pierre Menard, in Jorge Luis Borges's story,¹³ differed from those textually identical chapters of the novel by Cervantes which is so pain-stakingly reconstituted—but with such a wealth of new meanings! If this amounts to saying that all readings of the play are misreadings—even the most careful and scholarly ones—it is a wholly appropriate result. For misreading, in one form or another, seems to be a recurrent feature of the legend of

Faustus. Thus, for example, in the third scene of Goethe's *Faust*, its protagonist, wrestling with the biblical Greek, concludes by rendering the first words of the Gospel of St John as "Im Anfang war die Tat!" This eccentric translation has been taken as setting the thematic tone of the whole work, which might indeed be described as an epic comedy of translation, in all the manifold senses of that word.¹⁴ In a less complicated but equally instructive sense, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* could be called a tragedy of misreading.

II

Faustus's first gesture on stage, it would seem, is to take up a book:—"Sweet *Analitikes* tis thou hast ravisht me"—and to read from it: "*Bene disserere est finis logices*" (A: 36-7). But this definition is not from "*Aristoteles workes*" (A: 35); rather, as any university-educated Elizabethan would at once have recognized, it is the Ciceronian definition made famous by the innumerable editions of Peter Ramus's works on dialectic.¹⁵ Faustus is not reading Aristotle at all, but rather Aristotle as distorted by Ramus—who, as Marlowe has that pedagogue say himself in *The Massacre at Paris*, has reduced Aristotle's logic "into better forme." A dissenting view as to this "better" is provided in the same scene of that play by the Duke of Guise, who in ordering the murder of Ramus, informs him that his offense lay

in having a smack in all,
And yet didst never sound anything to the depth.
Was it not thou that scoftes the Organon,
And said it was a heape of vanities?
He that will be a flat dicotamest,
And seen in nothing but Epitomies:
Is in your judgment thought a learned man.
And he forsooth must goe and preach in Germany. . . .¹⁶

Faustus, who has clearly attended to this Ramist 'preaching', is off to a rocky start in his own project of beginning "To sound the deapth of that thou wilt professe" (A: 32). His dismissal of logic—

Is to dispute well Logickes chiefest end?
Affoords this Art no greater miracle?
Then read no more, thou hast attain'd that end (B: 37-9)

—is a transparent sophism. Fittingly enough, when he tells himself to "Bid *Oncaymaeon* farewell" (A: 42), the formula is again not Aristotelian: its author is the sophist Gorgias, who in the course of arguing that nothing exists, or if anything does it is inapprehensible, or if apprehensible it is incommunicable, maintained that both the existent and the non-existent (*on kai mē on*) do not exist.¹⁷

The intertextual density of Faustus's first misreading is surely surprising. Marlowe is of course recycling tags remembered from his six years of study at Cambridge, and one can only guess whether he is doing so carelessly or with an arrogant precision. But his deployment of them may suggest that the mildly satirical characterization of Faustus in these lines is more exact than the modern playgoer (or the vast majority of Elizabethans) would be likely to suspect. In quoting Ramus (who was controversial at Cambridge in the 1580s, and whom the author of *The Massacre at Paris* would hardly himself have confused with Aristotle), Faustus is alluding to a logic already subverted by rhetoric,¹⁸ and the manner in which he does so may provide a measure of his own unscrupulousness as a rhetorician. To offer a modern equivalent, it is as though one brandished what appeared to be a copy of one of Husserl's works, and then, reading from it one of the deconstructive formulas of Jacques Derrida, rejected Husserl on the basis of that sample of his thought. Faustus's misreading can of course be taken as a simple error (and, given his pretensions, a most revealing one): however, it may also be read as one symptom of a more complicated and deliberate kind of folly.

Having dismissed medicine and law with equal facility, Faustus turns to the one remaining scholastic discipline, theology. His prompt misreading of two key New Testament passages is no longer merely an academic joke, however. It indicates with syllogistic clarity the form of his self-entrapment:

Jeromes Bible. Faustus, view it well.
Stipendium peccati mors est: ha, Stipendium, &c.
 The reward of sinne is death: thats hard.
Si peccasse negamus, fallimur, & nulla est in nobis veritas.
 If we say that we have no sinne,
 We deceive our selves, and theres no truth in us.
 Why then belike we must sinne,
 And so consequently die.
 I, we must die an everlasting death . . . (A: 68-76)

Faustus misreads the words of St Paul (Romans 6:23) and St John (1 John 1:8) because he has lifted them out of their contexts, failing in each case to notice that the words he quotes form only the first half of an antithetical construction. The second clause of Romans 6:23—“*Gratia autem Dei, vita aeterna in Christo Jesu Domino nostro*” (“but the gifte of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”)—and the next verse in the epistle of John—“*Si confiteamur peccata nostra: fidelis est, et justus, ut remittat nobis peccata nostra, et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate*” (“If we acknowledge our sinnes, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sinnes, & to clense us from all unrighteousnes”)—

conditionally withdraw the condemnations which are all that Faustus sees.¹⁹

It will be observed that only by re-contextualizing these biblical passages can one begin to explain how Faustus has misread them. We are already embarked upon this process once we have identified and completed the passages which he quotes. It is only a small second step to suppose that a fair proportion of the people in any Elizabethan audience would have been able to do the same from memory (or, at the very least, to recognize the specific nature of Faustus's error).²⁰ How much further should we go re-contextualizing Faustus's misreading? Or rather, since some of the factors of interpretative prejudice which I have mentioned begin at this point to make themselves felt, how much further do we want to go? Faustus's misreading of theology, like his dismissal of the other academic disciplines, is clearly motivated. His initial decision to 'settle his studies' includes the intention to "be a Divine in shew, / Yet levell at the end of every Art" (A: 33-4). He will profess theology only as a hypocritical cover for what is quickly revealed as an aggressive project of taking aim at the end (which is also to say the final purpose and the corresponding limit) of every discipline.²¹ But are our readings—or misreadings—of his words not also motivated?

We need go no further in restoring the context of this passage if we wish to see this play as a morality, and Faustus as a proud incompetent, a fool in the line of Moros, the witless protagonist of W. Wager's homiletic play *The Longer Thou Livest The More Fool Thou Art* (1569). Yet a contextual examination of Faustus's first misreading has raised the possibility that his folly may be of a more interesting kind, more akin perhaps to the *Moriae Encomium* of Erasmus than to Wager's Moros. And a further consideration of context may incite us to wonder how adequate a scoffing analysis of Faustus's folly is as a response to the implications of this passage. It is indeed ironically appropriate that a scholar who has arrogantly dismissed logic and law should restrict himself, in Pauline terms, to the condemnation of the Law—and with a syllogism, too. But a more suitable reaction to this might be the proverbial "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Marlowe scholars have long been aware of two striking sixteenth-century parallels to Faustus's syllogism. As Douglas Cole observed, "Faustus is blinded here by precisely the same flash of 'logic' which the devil in Thomas Becon's *Dialogue Between the Christian Knight and Satan* (1564) employs (also in a syllogism) to tempt the knight to despair, and which in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* Despair uses to tempt Red Cross to spiritual death."²² Both knights, unlike Faustus, escape this diabolical logic in the only possible way, by transcending it

through an appeal to grace. Becon's knight is able to defend himself: he accuses Satan "of calumniating and depraving the scripture For where my God hath spoken and taught those things that do agree and ought to be joined together, these thou dost partly allege, and partly omit or leave out." And he appeals from the Law to the Gospel, "that is to say, grace, favour, and remission of sins, promised in Christ."²³ But Spenser's Redcrosse Knight is saved only by the intervention of Una:

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight,
 Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
 No divelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.
 In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part?
 Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?
 Where justice growes, there grows eke greater grace. . . .²⁴

Two crucial differences between these texts and Marlowe's version of what Luther called "the devil's syllogism"²⁵ are immediately apparent. The first is that Faustus is tempted by no-one but himself. The parallels adduced by Douglas Cole may suggest that an Elizabethan audience could have identified Faustus's syllogism as a diabolical temptation to despair. But where, in this case, is the demonic tempter? This question receives an alarming answer in lines which were probably added to the play in 1602—and which therefore constitute the earliest interpretation of this scene which we possess.²⁶ In the 1616 text, in his last words to Faustus, Mephostophilis claims:

'Twas I, that when thou wer't i' the way to heaven,
 Damb'd up thy passage, when thou took'st the booke,
 To view the Scriptures, then I turn'd the leaves
 And led thine eye.
 What weep'st thou? 'tis too late, despaire, farewell,
 Fooles that will laugh on earth, most weepe in hell.

(B: 1989-94)

It appears to have been Marlowe's heavy-handed revisers, not Marlowe himself, who chose to make inescapable a possibility that is at best no more than implicit in the first scene of the play. (But the possibility *is* there.)

The second difference between Marlowe's and his predecessors' treatment of the devil's syllogism lies in the fact that while Becon's knight is able, "through the grace that [*he has*] received,"²⁷ to appeal to God's mercy, and while Una is there to remind Redcrosse of this same grace and mercy, the notion of divine mercy is no more than hinted at in *Doctor Faustus* until after Faustus has committed apostasy and signed his pact with the devil, and it is strikingly absent from this first

scene. Faustus is reminded by his Good Angel of a quite different aspect of the divine nature:

O *Faustus*, lay that damned booke aside,
 And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soule,
 And heape Gods heavy wrath upon thy head,
 Reade, reade the scriptures, that is blasphemy. (A: 102-5)

This may seem very much the sort of thing that a Good Angel ought to say, but it certainly offers no escape from the syllogism which Faustus has just propounded. Indeed, these words, addressed to a man whose soul has evidently already been tempted by the necromantic book he is holding, are perhaps less akin to the intervention of Spenser's Una than to the persuasions of Despaire:

Is not the measure of thy sinful hire
 High heaped up with huge iniquitie,
 Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?²⁸

Is it appropriate to wonder why the Good Angel neither suggests to Faustus the sort of question that George Herbert asks—"Art thou all justice, Lord? / Shows not thy word / More attributes?"—nor tries to prompt him to the request which follows from it: "Let not thy wrathfull power / Afflict my houre, / My inch of life. . . ."²⁹

Liberal Christian readers who wish to understand this play in the light of their own convictions—who wish, that is, to think of Faustus as sharing the autonomy and free-will which they believe themselves to possess—may feel that this conjectural restoration of context has already gone too far for comfort. To which one can only reply that it is not evident that Marlowe wrote this play—or any of his plays—with the intention of providing solace for troubled minds. We are of course free to break off our inquiries at any point that pleases us, even to the point of receiving the play in the spirit of that reviser who altered Faustus' cry in his last speech from

Oh God, if thou wilt not have mercy on my soule,
 Yet for Christs sake, whose bloud hath ransomd me,
 Impose some end to my incessant paine (A: 1483-85)

to the safer, if less interesting

O, if my soule must suffer for my sinne,
 Impose some end to my incessant paine (B: 2067-68)

Yet we cannot at the same time lay claim to critical openmindedness.

The implications of unfreedom in Faustus's syllogism and in his Good Angel's failure to mention the essential notion of mercy may be further strengthened if one remembers the drift of St Paul's words in

the passage from which Faustus lifted the major premise of his syllogism. The apostle, in contrasting a state of bondage to sin with one of bondage to God, speaks of freedom in a sense which seems to exclude any overtone either of autonomy or of free-will:

For when ye were the servants of sinne [*δουλοι ητε της αμαρτιας*], ye were freed from righteousness.

What frute had yet then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death.

But now being freed from sinne, and made servants unto God [*δουλωθευτες δε τω θεω*], ye have your frute in holines and the end, everlasting life.

For the wages of sinne is death: but the gifte of God *is* eternal life. . . . (Romans 6:20-23)

(I have interpolated St Paul's Greek as a reminder that "servant" has lost much of its sixteenth-century force: the Revised Standard Version (1952) translates these words as "slaves of sin" and "slaves of God.") Faustus's misguided use of the words of St Paul and of St John results in a perverse response to Christian teachings: he concludes (to borrow the wording of Romans 6:21) that "the end of those things *is* death." And in reducing Christian theology to a doctrine of necessity, he goes one step further:

What doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera*,
What wil be, shall be? Divinitie, adieu (A:77-8)

This sounds oddly like a parodic reduction of the Calvinistic teachings on predestination which were the official doctrine of the Anglican Church throughout the reign of Elizabeth I (and which rested primarily upon the common Protestant understanding of Romans 8:28-9:24). The possibility is thus raised in this first scene that Faustus may not be one of those chosen by God to have a part in heavenly mercies. Douglas Cole, in a passage from which I have already quoted, has suggested precisely this: "Faustus' desperation will be a torment to him in the future; now it spurs him to indulge in his own dreams of power. His attitude and decision are exact replicas of the thoughts of the reprobate described by Wolfgang Musculus, whose theological works were read and esteemed in the schools of Reformation England: 'Why shoulde I trouble and travell my selfe in vaine? and doe those things which doe like my mind, seeyng that I do know I am determined to destruction?' "³⁰

Given this possibility, is there a sense in which Faustus's handling of scriptural texts, in addition to being a gross misreading, may also be the appropriate, indeed inevitable, response for someone in a state of bondage to sin? The Bible came to sixteenth-century Protestants

equipped with a theory of reading (and of misreading). Thus Elizabethan Anglicans prayed to God for “grace to love thy holie word fervently, to search the Scriptures diligently, to reade them humbly, to understand them truly, to live after them effectually.” The operative word is “grace”—lacking which, scriptural study could only result in misinterpretation and mortal sin. For (to quote from another of the “Godly Prayers” printed with many editions of the Prayer Book), “the infirmitie and weaknesse of man” are such that we “can nothing doe without thy godly helpe. If man trust to himselfe, it cannot bee avoyded, but that hee must headlong runne and fall into a thousand undoings and mischiefs.”³¹ But this insistence upon divine grace, and upon human weakness and perversity, would seem to have produced a tendency to separate, if only for purposes of emphasis, the two halves of the very texts from which Faustus quotes. Roma Gill has observed that Faustus’ English rendering of 1 John 1:8 repeats the wording of *The Booke of Common Praier* (1559), where in the order for Morning Prayer this verse is quoted without the following one—the sense of which is fully conveyed, however, by the ensuing exhortation to general confession.³² A more radical truncation of this text occurs in Article XV of the Church of England, which ends with these words: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Full stop. Nothing remotely like 1 John 1:9 appears in the following articles, or indeed anywhere among the Thirty-Nine Articles. In Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* there occurs a similar truncation, this time of the words of St Paul. Calvin is here fulminating against the Roman Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins:

... if God has revealed his will in the law, whatever is contrary to the law displeases him. Do they fancy God’s wrath so feeble that the death penalty will not immediately follow? And he has clearly declared this. . . . He says: “The soul that sins shall surely die.” [Ezek. 18:4, 20, Vg.] Likewise the passage just cited: “The wages of sin is death” [Rom: 6.23]. What they confess to be sin because they cannot deny it they nevertheless contend is not mortal sin. . . . But if they persist in their ravings, we bid them farewell. Let the children of God hold that all sin is mortal. For it is rebellion against the will of God, which of necessity provokes God’s wrath, and it is a violation of the law, upon which God’s judgement is pronounced without exception. The sins of the saints are pardonable, not because of their nature as saints, but because they obtain pardon from God’s mercy.³³

And so Calvin ends his chapter. The strong family resemblance between this argument and Faustus’s syllogism can hardly escape notice. Calvin does supply, in the last sentence of this passage (which reads oddly like an afterthought), a loose approximation of the mean-

ing of the latter half of Romans 6:23. This sentence, moreover, has scriptural authority: it echoes Romans 9:15-16 (which in turn quotes Exodus 33:19). But he has chosen to emphasize the tautological nature of the Pauline doctrine: all sins without exception are mortal, he says, except those of the saints, which are forgiven not because they are saints but because they are forgiven. One can imagine a graceless reader asking, "What doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera?*"

III

I have suggested that when we read *Doctor Faustus* we are, inevitably, misreading it: the play has been effectively decontextualized by the passage of nearly four centuries; it comes to us mediated (which is also to say re-contextualized) by concepts of which its first shapers had no inkling; and we turn to it with motivations that differ in many respects from those of its Elizabethan audiences. In reading this first scene, then, we are also misreading Faustus misreading. Our act of misreading can be said to parallel the parodic enactment of scholarly misreading which is its object, and in which the same elements of de-contextualizing, mediation, and motivation are more blatantly evident.

The parallel is not, perhaps, very exact. If only because of our situation in time, our readings of the play are always in some sense misreadings—yet they are not consciously so. To take two prominent examples, the misreadings of Sir Walter Greg and Leo Kirschbaum were obviously motivated—in both cases by a desire to have the play reflect a mid-twentieth-century Christian orthodoxy.³⁴ Although this error obliges us to define this aspect of their work as more ideological than critical, to call it deliberate would be absurd. In contrast, Faustus's misreadings do seem to be deliberate. He makes his hypocrisy clear when he sets out to "be a Divine in shew, / Yet levell at the end of every Art" (A: 33-4). And the aggressive intention suggested by "levell at" is fully realized in what follows. Aristotle, so stripped of context (and of content) as to be no more than a name, is mediated by Ramus and Gorgias; the tags lifted from St Paul and St John are filtered through a reprobate's version of Elizabethan Anglicanism; and the whole rhetorical performance points towards the praise of magic into which it devolves. Yet something appears to be missing—and this lack may restore the parallel between Faustus's misreadings and our own. A deliberate misreading is, necessarily, a duplicitous, a *double* reading: the very notion implies some awareness of an authentic or subjectively correct interpretation which is overlain by a second, false one. But is such a structure present in Faustus's speech? Its inadvertent

ironies suggest otherwise. The question of eternal life is displaced into medicine—"Couldst thou make men to live eternally, / . . . Then this profession were to be esteem'd" (B: 51, 53)—while in its proper realm, theology, Faustus can find only the promise of "everlasting death" (A: 76). And he is deaf to the ominous theological overtones of the fragment he quotes from Justinian: "*Exhereditari filium non potest pater, nisi—*" (B: 58). Any authentic understanding which his words may convey is imbedded in them at a level inaccessible to Faustus himself.

Clearly, it can still be said of him in this scene that he is foolish, or comically incompetent: there is no need for Marlowe critics to abandon one of their favourite judgements of his character.³⁵ But the same reconstruction of context that makes this judgement possible also alters the terms in which it can meaningfully be pronounced. For if Faustus's misreadings apparently lack the conscious duplicity that their deliberateness would imply, the manner in which he de-contextualizes and re-contextualizes scriptural passages, composing them into a recognizable "hard" doctrine (A:70) that for him amounts to a necessary condemnation, seems to reveal the hidden presence in this scene of another will, distinct from his, external to him, and yet operating through him. Here already, is a first hint of that eschatologically defined Other within the self which becomes explicit in Faustus's subsequent despairing self-definitions. From a modern perspective, as I have suggested, there seems to be something odd about a univocal hypocrisy, a practice of misreading that appears deliberate, but not duplicitous.³⁶ In sixteenth-century terms, however, this kind of hypocrisy, and the psychic overdetermination which it implies, are immediately intelligible. I am thinking, again, of Calvin's *Institutes*. There the term 'hypocrite' is reserved for those among the reprobate who, though condemned from all eternity by God's inscrutable will, are given enough grace to have some insight into his Word—yet not enough to enable them faithfully to persevere in the truth.³⁷ Faustus, though "grac't with Doctors name, / Excelling all, whose sweete delight disputes / In heavenly matters of *Theologie*" (A: 18-20), has become blind to the obvious meaning of the scriptural text—but blind in a manner that reveals him as a hypocrite in precisely this sense.

The cause of the "blinding of the impious," Calvin insists, is "not to be sought outside man's will, from which the root of evil springs up...." But as he quickly goes on to show, man's will, though culpable because it is a will, is permeated by external causes, and by one cause in particular: "Very often God is said to blind and harden the reprobate ... For after his light is removed, nothing but darkness and blindness remains. When his Spirit is taken away, our hearts harden into

stones.”³⁸ As Faustus himself confesses, after signing his blood-pact: “My hearts so hardned I cannot repent” (A: 647). What, then, of our response to his follies? The laughter which they provoke cannot, I think, be wholly light-hearted.

How does this recognition of a double misreading, operating both within the text and in our receptions of it, affect what we make of *Doctor Faustus*? My question, at the beginning of this essay, as to what kind of scholarly necromancy might enable us to respond to this play in its entirety may have raised hopes (since moderated, no doubt) of a new interpretation of the whole. But I have not attempted here to offer a complete new (mis-)reading which the unwary reader, appropriating Faustus’s words, might expect would be “a greater helpe to me? Then all my labours, plodde I nere so fast” (A: 99-100). My concern has been rather to point out ways in which the play itself seems to guide us towards interpretive principles that may serve to limit the errors of our future misreadings.

From my claims about misreading it does not follow that there are no distinctions to be made between more and less competent misreadings, or that, as Harold Bloom has proposed, the difference between better and worse is simply a matter of “the strength of imposition.”³⁹ This Panglossian neo-pragmatism—whatever imposes itself upon the tribe of critics, for whatever reasons, is ‘strong’—erases any distinction between the critic and the ideologue. Bloom’s understanding of misreading as a kind of Freudian family romance, in which the ‘strong’ writer imposes himself by overthrowing his precursors, is ideologically empty. And applied to this play, it would obscure the most important lesson of the parallel between our own and Faustus’ misreadings.

That Faustus is misreading is quickly apparent. But it is only through a differential awareness of the ideological and historical distances between Aristotle, the system-builder. Gorgias, whose sceptical tropes he refuted, and Ramus, who dichotomized Aristotle—or between the New Testament writers, the Reformers, and Faustus’s own reprobate reductionism—that we are able to say *how* he is misreading, and what therefore the act may mean. A similar differential awareness of the distance between our own age and Marlowe’s is what shows us that our own readings are misreadings. (Modesty aside, is there anything else that prevents us from assuming that our own interpretations are, quite simply, right?)

Insofar as this second form of awareness remains abstract, it is useless. For unless cynicism is a virtue, there is no more merit in knowing one is wrong, without trying to remedy the error, than there would be in an obstinate persuasion that one’s critical intuitions were the gospel truth. But in this case the same factors which condition a

in the 1560s). As early as 1518, "Agrippa Stygianus" was represented by a hostile polemicist as exchanging sinister letters with one "Georgius Subbunculator."⁴² This name, if it is indeed a derisive modification of "Sabellicus", is a telling one—for Faustus was, in effect, a 'botcher-up of old clothes': he was already notorious for his wildly eclectic heterodoxy.⁴³ Agrippa's brief association with the court of Charles V was absorbed, within several decades, into the legend of Faustus: both magicians were rumoured to have won victories for the emperor by magic.⁴⁴ And the libel, first printed in 1546, that Agrippa's black dog was a devil, was echoed two years later by the claim that Faustus's dog, and his horse as well, were devils.⁴⁵ It seems to have become almost a convention to associate Faustus, as Melancthon did, with "iste nebulo qui scripsit *De vanitate artium*"⁴⁶—that "scoundrel" Agrippa whose *De vanitate* (1530) was widely read and translated into several languages, and whose other major work, *De occulta philosophia* (1533), made him the most notorious sixteenth-century exponent of Hermetic and Cabalistic magic.

Marlowe does more than just associate the two: his Faustus, in the first scene at least, is a close parody of the Agrippan magus. Agrippa's brilliant deconstruction, in the declamatory invective of *De vanitate*,⁴⁷ of all of the orthodox forms of knowledge—from logic to dicing, and from whore-mongering to scholastic theology—was widely believed, despite its evangelical orientation, to have been designed to clear the ground for his fusion of magic with Christianity in *De occulta philosophia*: though Agrippa (in the words of his English translator) was "Professing Divinitee," he was doing so hypocritically.⁴⁸ This is precisely the pattern of Faustus's own *declamatio invectiva*, which concludes with a rhapsodic praise of magic for which there are close parallels in *De occulta philosophia*.⁴⁹

Behind Faustus's misreadings, then, there lies another one: Marlowe's misreading of Agrippa. Let us superimpose these misreadings: Marlowe's parodic misconstrual of Agrippa, whom Calvin in his *De scandalis* (1550) denounced as an atheist;⁵⁰ and Faustus's parodic misreading of a Calvinistic theology, which is undertaken in the service of an Agrippan commitment to magic. The effect is not quite dialectical: the balance is not even. Yet neither can this pattern be reduced to a static structure of ironies. For Marlowe is not merely re-writing, with whatever increase in sophistication, the legend of Faustus; he is exploring its historical and ideological roots.

Where does this leave the modern interpreter, the perpetual third party in this dance of misreadings? Midway, perhaps, between the exasperated refusal of Faustus, in those lines which I cited as an epigraph to this essay, to believe that the book he has been given has

pre-empted the demands he wants to make of it—"O thou art deceived"—and the pat Mephostophilian reply: "Tut I warrant thee" (A: 626-7). Our thirst for knowledge, our continuing itch to write one more work of interpretation, will continue to result in parodies of what is there to be reconstructed and understood, just as those exchanges, in which Faustus pleads with Mephostophilis to "let me have one booke more, and then I have done" (A: 622), are themselves a parody of that resonant passage from the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon which ends, in the Vulgate text, with these words: "omnium enim artifex docuit me sapientia"—"for Wisdom, the artificer of all things, taught me."⁵¹

As though to point the moral, Agrippa quotes this passage in the peroration to *De vanitate*—but at the same time he parodies it. Adding one letter, he writes "sapientiam"—and wisdom becomes, not his teacher, but the content of what he now knows; not a category of the sacred, but an instrument of his own thirst for knowledge and for power. More decisively than Agrippa or any of his contemporaries, we have turned away from the constricting notion of Wisdom as a hypostatized agent or artificer. But to transpose wisdom into the accusative case, to treat the text—any text—as endlessly vulnerable to whatever uncontrolled remakings our own needs may dictate, is to accept a different kind of ideological closure—one which a historically alert criticism will want to avoid.

NOTES

1. All quotations from the play are from W.W. Greg, ed., *Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" 1604-1616: Parallel Texts* (1950; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). Quotations are identified by the text from which they are drawn (A refers to the edition of 1604 and its reprints in 1609 and 1611, B to the substantially revised edition of 1616), and by their line numbers in Greg's parallel-text edition. Where the 1609 or 1611 editions correct misprints in the 1604 text, I have felt free to substitute their readings without comment. Words enclosed in square brackets are my emendations. U/v and i/j have been silently altered throughout to conform with modern practice, and errors in Latin passages are silently corrected. The punctuation given to B:89 here is that of John D. Jump's Revels Plays edition (London: Methuen, 1962).
2. *Hero and Leander*, First Sestiyad, line 472, from C.F. Tucker Brooke, ed., *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (1910; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 503.
3. Ovid, *Amores*, I. xiii.40: "clamares: 'lente currite, noctis equi!'"—a line rather flatly rendered by Marlowe in his translation of *All Ovids Elegies* as "Then wouldst thou cry, stay night and runne not thus" (*Works*, ed. Tucker Brooke, p. 577).
4. I have examined certain aspects of this process in another article, "History and the Canon: The Case of *Doctor Faustus*," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, forthcoming.
5. The reader or listener who initially attaches the second of these syntactically parallel clauses to the same subject as the first (to Faustus, that is, rather than to "things") commits a momentary misconstruing of the sense which may seem scarcely possible for anyone who

already knows the lines—but which, if made on first acquaintance with them, can only be corrected by the ensuing recognition that “such forward wits” are not to be identified with “the wise”. To conflate the two, even momentarily, would be to find oneself stumbling between the two poles which these lines emphatically distinguish—or, in terms of one’s response, between a dangerous empathy with one forward wit (encouraged, surely, by his final soliloquy) and the negation of that empathy in a complacent self-identification as one of the wise. The possibility of such a conflation, however remote it may seem, and however dependent upon such intangibles as the length of the actor’s pause at the line ending after the first clause, is nonetheless a risk built into the syntax of these lines, and thus, at whatever level, a part of what they mean.

6. On the two texts of *Doctor Faustus*, see Fredson Bowers, “Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*: The 1602 Additions,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 26 (1973), 1-18; Constance Brown Kuriyama, “Dr. Greg and *Doctor Faustus*: The Supposed Originality of the 1616 Text,” *ELR*, 5 (1975), 171-97; Michael J. Warren, “*Doctor Faustus*: The Old Man and the Text,” *ELR*, 11 (1981), 111-47; and Michael H. Keefer, “Verbal Magic and the Problem of the A and B Texts of *Doctor Faustus*,” *JEGP*, 82 (1983), 324-46.
7. Augustine. *Ad Simplicianum de diversis quaestionibus*, I, qu. ii, 21; cf. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (1967; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 155.
8. I intend to deal with the first and third of these possibilities in a future study; in this article (and in its companion piece forthcoming in *University of Toronto Quarterly*) I am concerned only with the second.
9. This tendency comes close to the surface in Charles Marowitz’s literal remaking of the play, which opens with a “Conversation in Purgatory” between Faustus and J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist and director of the Manhattan Project. See *The Marowitz Hamlet and The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).
10. See Robert Jay Lifton, *Imagining the Real*, chapters 8 and 9, in Lifton and Richard Falk, *Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism* (Toronto: CBC, 1982), pp. 66-99, for a suggestive analysis of various forms of vertigo induced by the threat of nuclear extinction.
11. See M.C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1935; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 150-55; on pp. 36 and 118 Faustus becomes Faust. The edition from which Bradbrook is quoting, that of F.S. Boas (London: Methuen, 1932), gives the spelling “Mephistophilis,” which also suggests a Goethean influence. In the 1604 text the name of “Mephistophilis” or “Mephistophilus” (and once “Mephistophilis”); in the 1616 text it is “Mephistophilis” (and in several instances “Mephistophilis”).
12. Symptomatic of this is the greater force of Marlovian than of Goethean echoes in Lowry’s novel, and the fact that Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* goes back to the Faustbook of 1587, an English translation of which was Marlowe’s main source.
13. Jorge Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*,” in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. D.A. Yates and J.E. Irby (1964; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) pp. 62-71.
14. These include translations in time and space, of one culture and its forms of expression into another, and a translation, finally, into a higher realm of being. Some of these senses are analyzed by Marc Shell in “Money and the Mind: The Economics of Translation in Goethe’s *Faust*,” *MLN*, 95:3 (April 1980), 516-62.
15. See Walter J. Ong, S.J., *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 160 (and 347-8 n. 41, 42), 178 (and 350 n. 39).
16. *The Massacre at Paris*, lines 390-97, in Tucker Brooke, ed., *Works*, p. 457. Both in the Guise’s words and in Ramus’s defence of his teachings, Marlowe shows himself to be well informed about Ramus. Ramus ‘preached’ in Swiss and German universities from 1568 to 1570 (Ong, p. 28), and the improbably named “Shekius” of line 410 is one Jacob Schegk (Schegkius, Schecius), author of *De demonstratione libri XV* (Basle, 1564), which contains an attack on Ramus (Ong, pp. 15, 388).
17. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, 1.66 (*Adversus Mathematicos*, VII.66), in R.G. Bury, ed. and tr., *Sextus Empiricus* (4 vols.; Loeb Classical Library; London: Heinemann, and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933-1949), vol. 2, p. 34. This work, which was most likely Marlowe’s source for the Gorgian expression, was printed in a Latin translation in Paris in 1569.
18. See Ong, *Ramus*, p. 49 (“The story of Ramism, in fact, is largely the story of unresolved tensions between the logical and the rhetorical traditions”), and p. 188; and for a reference to the Cambridge Ramist controversies, see p. 91.
19. I have quoted from the Vulgate text (“*Jeromes Bible*”), as Faustus says he is doing; the English translation is that of the Geneva Bible of 1560. Marlowe’s Latin here in fact deviates

- from the Vulgate text of these verses ("Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est"; "Stipendium enim peccati, mors"). It may be significant that his re-translation into Latin of 1 John 1:8 avoids any direct implication of responsibility: compare Faustus's passive "fallimur" with the Greek *εαυτους πλαυαμεν* and the Vulgate's "ipsi nos seducimus".
20. These passages were regularly expounded in sermons, and also recur with some frequency in the daily readings prescribed for Anglican services during Elizabeth's reign: Romans vi on the day after Epiphany, on Easter morning, the seventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday, and again in early September; 1 John I in late April, late August, and in the third week of December. In the order for Morning Prayer, 1 John 1:8 is quoted immediately before the exhortation to general confession; and the sense of 1 John 1:9 is conveyed by the wording of the Communion against Sinners. See *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth, 1559* (London, 1890), pp. 42, 144.
 21. The primary sense of "levell at" is military, as in *King Henry IV, Part II*, ed. A.R. Humphreys (Arden Shakespeare; London: Methuen, 1971), II.ii.261-2: "the foeman may with as great aim level at the edge of a penknife." A secondary sense of "guess at" is combined with this in *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. M.R. Ridley (Arden Shakespeare; London: Methuen, 1966), V.ii.334, and is dominant in *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. J.R. Brown (Arden Shakespeare; London: Methuen, 1971), I.ii.37. In an OED citation from 1604 ("There can be no man, who works by right reason but . . . he ayemeth at some end, he levels at some good"), any aggressive implication is forgotten. But Faustus does not work by right reason, and the expression as he uses it is antithetical even to the appearance of being a theologian ("Yet levell at"). His meaning, then, may be compared to that of a later OED citation, from Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742): "This fellow's writings . . . are levelled at the clergy."
 22. Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (1962; rpt. New York: Gordian, 1972), p. 199. The date which Cole gives for Becon's *Dialogue* is that of a reprint; the work was written in the reign of Edward VI.
 23. *The Catechism of Thomas Becon, with other pieces written by him in the reign of King Edward the Sixth*, ed. J. Ayre (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1844), pp. 628-9.
 24. *The Faerie Queene*, I. ix. 53, in *Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (1912; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 50.
 25. See Susan Snyder, "The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 30-31.
 26. The question of the 1602 additions to the play (which constitute a large part of the 1616 text), and the related question of the relative authenticity of the 1604 and 1616 texts, are discussed in the articles listed in note 6 above.
 27. Becon, p. 636.
 28. *The Faerie Queene*, I.ix.46; *Spenser: Poetical Works*, p. 49.
 29. *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. C.A. Patrides (1974; rpt. London: Dent, 1977), "Complaining," lines 11-13, 16-18, p. 153.
 30. Cole, pp. 199-200.
 31. *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth, 1559*, pp. 150, 148.
 32. Roma Gill, "The Christian Ideology of *Dr. Faustus*," in M.T. Jones-Davies, ed., *Théâtre et ideologies: Marlowe, Shakespeare* (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1982), p. 186; *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth*, p. 42.
 33. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J.T. McNeill, tr. F.L. Battles (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II.ix.59, vol. 1, pp. 422-3.
 34. Kirschbaum is tiresomely dogmatic, writing, for example, that "the viable eschatology of the play is so rigid that ambivalence in interpretation is ruled out. If the modern mind . . . sees Marlowe's main character as the noble victim of a tyrannical Deity, it is simply being blind. . . . No, there is no ambiguity on the main issues in the play." Kirschbaum, ed., *The Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1962), p. 103. See also his influential articles, "Marlowe's *Faustus*: A Reconsideration," *Review of English Studies*, 19, no. 75 (1943), 225-41; and "The Good and Bad Quartos of *Doctor Faustus*," *The Library*, 26 (1946), 272-94. Greg's much more interesting misreadings are studied in the articles of Kuriyama and Warren listed in note 6 above, and in my forthcoming article, "History and the Canon: The Case of *Doctor Faustus*."
 35. See, for example, Gerald Morgan, "Harlequin Faustus: Marlowe's Comedy of Hell," *Humanities Association Bulletin*, 18 (1967), 22-34; and A.N. Okerlund, "The Intellectual Folly of *Dr. Faustus*," *Studies in Philology*, 74 (1977) 258-78.
 36. From a 'post-modern' perspective, one that takes into account recent developments in Marxist and post-structuralist literary theory, such a phenomenon is much less surprising.

- See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977); David C. Hoy, *The Critical Circle* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978); Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982); and Robert Weimann, *Structure and Society in Literary History* (2nd ed.; Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1984).
37. Calvin, *Institutes*, III.ii.10-12.
 38. *Institutes*, II.iv.1, vol. 1, p. 310; II.iv.3, pp. 311-12.
 39. Harold Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 125.
 40. J.P. Brockbank, for example, tries to save his argument that while Doctor Faustus may be a Calvinist, *Doctor Faustus* is Augustinian in orientation, by ascribing the alarming response to Faustus's prayer in Act II (he calls on Christ, but is answered by the appearance of a demonic trinity) to Marlowe's "characteristic love of excess." See Brockbank, *Marlowe: "Dr. Faustus"* (Studies in English Literature, No. 6; London: Arnold, 1962), pp. 41-2. Other critics have often simply not understood what is at issue. Thus Paul Kocher, declaring that "*Faustus* is the only one of Marlowe's plays in which the pivotal issue is strictly religious and the whole design rests upon Protestant doctrines," promptly contradicts his second clause: "This issue, stated simply, is whether Faustus shall choose God or the evil delights of witchcraft" (*Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character* [1946; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1962], p. 104). The objection of some critics that a Calvinist structure would make superfluous the interventions of the Good Angel and the Old Man, as well as the threats of the devils (cf. Kocher, p. 108; Cole, p. 219; Michael Hattaway, "The Theology of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," *Renaissance Drama*, n.s. 3 [1970], 76), is sufficiently refuted by a reading of Calvin's *Institutes*, I.xiv.9, 19; II.v.4; and III.xx.46. Kocher's attempt to separate the Old Man's lines at A: 1319-23 from their dramatic context and use them as a theological proof-text is misguided: the Old Man episode in its entirety might also be taken as making Faustus inexcusable (cf. *Institutes*, II.v.4-5). Finally, the suggestion that a Calvinist structure would destroy suspense or alienate the sympathies of the audience (cf. Lily B. Campbell, "*Doctor Faustus: A Case of Conscience*," *PMLA* 67, [1952], 219, 239; Pauline Honderich, "John Calvin and Doctor Faustus," *Modern Language Review*, 68, [1973], 2, 10) is no more relevant to this play than analogous suggestions would be to the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. Two exceptions to the tendency to assert Faustus's freedom (many further examples of which might have been cited) are Clifford Davidson, "Doctor Faustus of Wittenberg," *Studies in Philology*, 59 (1962), 514-23; and Arieh Sachs, "The Religious Despair of Doctor Faustus," *JEGP*, 63 (1964), 625-47. A more recent tendency to insist that the play be read within the context of the dominant theology of Marlowe's England is evident in Alan Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England 1560-1660* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 16-20; and Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 109-19.
 41. Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 297-9.
 42. The text in question is Ortwin Gratius's *Lamentationes obscurorum virorum* (1518); see Paola Zambelli, "Agrippa von Nettesheim in den neueren kritischen Studien und in den Handschriften," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 51 (1969), 280; and "Magic and Radical Reformation in Agrippa von Nettesheim," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 39 (1976), 69-103.
 43. A letter from the Abbot Trithemius to a friend who taught at Heidelberg (of which university both Trithemius and Faustus were graduates) records Faustus's activities in Gelnhausen, Würzburg, and Kreuznach in 1506-7: these include boasts that he could perform all the miracles of Christ, claims of an occult art of memory, and titles which suggest an eclectic awareness of several magical traditions. See Frank Baron, *Doctor Faustus from History to Legend* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1978), pp. 11-39.
 44. "Idem Faustus magus . . . vane gloriabatur de se omnes victorias, quas habuerunt Caesariani exercitus in Italia, esse partas per ipsam sua magia. idque fuit mendacium vanissimum." Johannes Manlius, *Locorum communium collectanea* (1563), quoted in P. M. Palmer and R. P. More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition: from Simon Magus to Lessing* (1936; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1965), p. 103. The story that Agrippa was responsible for the victories of Charles V is refuted by André Thevet, *Les vrais pourtraits et vies des hommes illustres* (2 vols.; Paris, 1584), fol. 542v-543.
 45. The claim that Agrippa's dog was a devil was first made by Paolo Giovio, *Elogia doctorum virorum* (1546); see Charles G. Nauert, Jr., *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 327. The expanded claim about Faustus was made

by Johannes Gast in his *Sermones convivales* (1548); see Palmer and More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition*, p. 98.

46. Manlius, *Locorum communium collectanea*; in Palmer and More, p. 102.
47. The full title of the first edition of 1530 is *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium atque excellentia verbi dei declamatio*; according to Barbara C. Bowen, "Cornelius Agrippa's *De vanitate*: Polemic or Paradox?", *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, 34 (1972), 250, this was expanded in the 1531 Cologne edition to "*declamatio invectiva*".
48. Catherine M. Dunn, ed., *Of the Vanitie and Uncertainie of Artes and Sciences* (Northridge: California State Univ. Press, 1974), cap. 1, p. 12. This translation was first published in 1569, and reprinted in 1575. A suspicion that Agrippa's evangelical claims were hypocritical is evident in André Thevet's *Les vrais pourtraits et vies*, vol. 2, fol. 544r-v. I have studied the problem of Agrippa's orientation in an article, "Agrippa's Dilemma: Hermetic 'Rebirth' and the Ambivalences of *De vanitate* and *De occulta philosophia*," forthcoming in *Renaissance Quarterly*.
49. Cf. *De occulta philosophia*, III, "Epistola nuncupatoria"; III.vi; in Agrippa, *Opera*, ed. Pichard H. Popkin (2 vols.; Lyon, c. 1600; facsimile rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 306-7, 321.
50. See Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVII^e siècle* (1942; rpt. Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1968), p. 125; and Zambelli, "Magic and Radical Reformation," 101.
51. Wisdom of Solomon, 7:17-21. Agrippa quotes this passage in *De vanitate; Opera*, vol. 2, p. 314. The first edition of 1530 also reads "sapientiam".