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Mythological Allusions in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

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Abstract

A Classical allusion refers to myths in ancient Roman and Greek works of literature. Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), utilized mythological allusions in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1588-1592) to create a connection between ideas.

Dr. Faustus wanted the infinite. He sold his soul to the devil to gain it. He rejected theology and embraced magic and mythology that epitomized pseudo-divinity.

Classical mythology invites moral and theological discussion. It intensifies the aesthetic purpose and the spiritual evaluation of Dr. Faustus's ambition.

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Classical mythology has complex and interwoven dimensions that encompass religious, social, and political formula of personages and events. It is an introduction to the primary characters and most important stories of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Mark Cartwright presented a detailed definition of Greek Mythology in *the Ancient History Encyclopedia* stating that it explained

the environment in which humankind lived, the natural phenomena they witnessed and the passing of time through the days, months, and seasons. Myths were also intricately connected to religion in the Greek world and explained the origin and lives of the gods, where humanity had come from and where it was going after death, and gave advice on the best way to lead a happy life. Finally, myths were used to re-tell historical events so that people could maintain contact with their ancestors (1).

Mythology, whether Greek or Roman, presented an image of the ancestors' way of living and thinking in an environment where nature was a decisive factor in shaping the individual's imagination to create a world that suited him better. Edith Hamilton asserted the importance of imagination in ancient mythology when she said that: "the imagination was vividly alive and not checked by the reason" (1). She also reconsidered man's place according to the Greek mythology as occupying the center of the universe instead of gods. She said "with the coming foreword of Greece, mankind became the center of the universe, the most important thing in it. Human beings had counted for little heretofore" (Hamilton 5). Unlike the Egyptians, the Greek artists interpreted the importance of man by giving their gods human shapes not bestial ones. They created human-like creatures to make the comparison even more rational and to emphasize the importance of man. Thus the Greeks, Hamilton explained, "had no wish to create some fantasy shaped in their own minds. All the art and all the thought of Greece centered in human beings" (6).

In her book, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, Hamilton referred to the Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.-17 A.D.) as being the one whose books consisted of stories of classical mythology. However, she denounced his opinion of these myths as being nonsense "idle tales, sometimes witty and diverting, often sentimental and distressingly rhetorical" (13). Ovid's most famous collection of poems was called "Metamorphoses", where he was selective in choosing the myths that "dealt with the transformation of people, gods, and heroes into forces of features of nature" (Blakeney 1).

Classical mythology was revived by the Renaissance scholars who noticed the audience's obsession with mythology and supernatural elements. The prospect of creating a humanized world appealed to the Elizabethan playwrights, like Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe (1564-1593), was born at Canterbury. At the age of fifteen, he won a scholarship to attend the King's School. He was granted another scholarship, to Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, where he was expected to embark on a career in the church. Yet, Marlowe's "fiery spirit" set its rebellious attitude to any restrictions and found its vent in establishing the real needs of human soul. Critics were controversial concerning Marlowe, the man and the writer. He was accused of atheism and a departure from heavenly matters; still, Marlowe the writer was recognized by his moral voice. Nicholas Brooke affirmed the former's moral interest in his article *The Moral Tragedy of Dr. Faustus* when he said "Marlowe's main pre-occupation ... is still the moral one, of Man's faculties and his voluntary subjection of them to an accepted order" (93). Consequently, this preoccupation would link him to the ancient world as a source of inspiration to heighten the tragic sense that characterized man's existence especially in his play *Dr. Faustus*.

Ovid and other famous classical authors, like the Roman Virgil, and Greek Lucian, were introduced to Marlowe through his Cambridge education in classical literature. Marlowe was fluent in Latin due to his work as a translator. He "received a thorough grounding in Latin and Greek grammar, and some ancient literature. He would have learned about Roman history, as well as the familiar Greek and Roman legends" (Simkin 14). However, by employing classical mythology in his works, Marlowe maintained an intimate acquaintance with the valuable implications of the stories of ancient glorious gods and heroes. Classical allusions inspired and enhanced his main ideas.

Christopher Marlowe used mythological allusions for didactic purposes, and aesthetic reasons. Katherine Blakeney said that "the way Marlowe used his vast knowledge of ancient literature in his plays is rather descriptive or comparative" (2). He revolutionized the Elizabethan theatre by challenging the social and religious norms where man was supposed to follow during his time. Tragedy for Marlowe resulted when a human being was condemned for his genuine endeavors to go beyond the limits assigned to him by divine authorities. He "considers in man not the subtle distinction and varying relationships that mark him off from other men or bind him to them, but the immutable element in man, the spirit of man which can be matched against the universe" (Brooke 25). Another interesting point was highlighted by Thomas Bulfinch in the preface of his book *Bulfinch's Mythology*. He asserted the importance of borrowing illustrations from mythology to objectify the authors' poetic pictures which helped to adorn

their literary works with aesthetic significance and depth. He said: “Without knowledge of mythology much of the elegant literature of our own language cannot be understood and appreciated” (v).

Like the Greek artists, who created new types of heroes or gods, Marlowe created his own, unfamiliar, images of the Renaissance men who struggled to extend the limits of human sovereignty by challenging destiny. His heroes would imitate Icarus, Alexander, Mars, or Apollo. Moreover, Marlowe’s intentions to satisfy his audience with his art, led him to be selective and deliberate in exhibiting the mythological figures who emphasized many of the potentialities of man as love, hate, ambition and pride. Eventually, the Renaissance man would be able to identify with those figures and understand his relationship to the rest of the world.

Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604) authenticated a new culture inspired by old-age stories when man used to be the center of the universe. That culture intensified personal independence and individual expression with a growing secular view of life. Marlowe’s incisive and daring critical eye was able to diagnose man’s spiritual sickness in his society as being derived from over-ambition and self-recognition. The world in that play was the one “where aspiring evil ultimately destroys itself, hoist with its own petard ... a warning against the quest for infinity” (Godshalk 37). The world of ancient mythology was populated by abstractions; where the hero was an allegorical everyman. Doctor Faustus was a symbol of an over-ambitious man whose delusion empowered the devil to have control over him. Mythological allusion was also influential in Marlowe’s character creation. The use of magic enabled Marlowe to bridge the gap between the past and the present in the play. The spirits of the past were to be conjured by Faustus through the means of magic, and with such power he would affirm his godlike qualities. Consequently,

this affirmation of his godlike power would serve as the basis for his belief that he has successfully transcended the mundane limits of the human condition, placing himself alongside the legitimately supernatural and divine entities of which he believes himself to be the master (Taylor 3).

Furthermore, Marlowe’s mythological heroes were presented by him as types to express the moral qualities of his characters. The prologue, embraced three mythological figures: Mars, Muse, and Icarus. Mars, the Roman god of war, defeated the Carthaginian in the battle of Thrasymene (June 217 BCE). In the Iliad, Hamilton explained, Homer described him as “murderous, blood-stained, the incarnates cures of battles” (31). Marlowe intended to present a theme far away from war, as what was used to be presented in classical literature. He was ironic in his intentions since the whole play was based upon the everlasting war between good and evil. The

flames of internal war inside the new type of man (the Renaissance man) sparkled with the absence of religious faith, was best exemplified in Marlowe's Dr. Faustus.

Marlowe also alluded to Greek mythology by using effective metaphors in the prologue when he presented the Muse to heighten the beauty of his plays "Nor in the pomp of proud audacious deeds, Intends our Muse to vaunt his heavenly verse" (*Doctor Faustus* 1). The nine Muses were the daughters of Zeus; they were the goddesses of poetry. At the beginning they were not distinguished from one another, as they were "of one mind, their hearts are set upon song and their spirit is free from care" (Hamilton 36). Later on, each one of them occupied a different field like history, astronomy, tragedy, comedy, dance, epic-poetry, love-poetry, songs to the gods, and lyric poetry. The very line "intends our Muse to vaunt his heavenly verse" assured Marlowe's association with the past. Like Faustus, Marlowe aspired to ascend a higher level of knowledge and differed from his contemporaries. He aimed at a cultural revolution by creating a new image of man, a godlike figure who was intellectually free to create his own world. The eager scholar was trying to overreach himself and challenge higher authorities in his endeavors to take the position of God. The intentional denial of the sovereignty of God over human beings led the Renaissance man to lose himself and be damned forever, like what happened to Dr. Faustus at the end of the play.

The third mythological figure presented in the prologue was Icarus: "His waxen wings did mount above his reach, And, melting, heavens conspire'd his overthrow; For, falling to a devilish exercise" (*Doctor Faustus* 2). In classical mythology Icarus was a proud and over-ambitious boy who soared high in the sky and his wax wings melted causing his eventual fall and death. The Icarus image helped Marlowe to emphasize the tragic sense of his play. Mary Meehan in her book *Christopher Marlowe Poet and Playwright: Studies in Poetical Method* said that "the extended metaphor likening Faustus to Icarus emphasizes the disastrous end of Icarus' flight and cast a somber shade over the play from its inception" (73). The story of Icarus emphasized the fall of Lucifer and both stories would obviously denote and foreshadow the fall of Dr. Faustus. That was why the play was so steeped in morality plays.

In the first scene, Marlowe presents the mythological figure Jove, ruler of gods in Greek mythology. The evil angel tries to tempt Faustus to abjure God and the sculpture, to be as powerful as Jove in the sky: "be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky, lord and commander of these elements" (*Doctor Faustus* 4). As a tragic hero, Faustus's flaw is highlighted as it leads to his downfall at the end of the play. Taking the place of Jove will surely predict his destruction because he will never reach the place of a deity.

However, there is a resemblance between Faustus and Jove. In Greek mythology Jove is another name for Jupiter or Zeus, the supreme ruler and lord of the sky whose power is supposed to be greater than all the other divinities gathered together as suggested by Hamilton. Yet, Zeus is also liable to be deceived by others like his brother Poseidon and his wife - Hera as described by Homer in the Iliad (21). Throughout the Trojan War, Zeus ordered his brother, Poseidon, not to get involved in human's affairs, but Poseidon loved the Greeks and withstood his brother's instructions. Hera also favored the Greeks and sided with Poseidon to deceive Zeus and help the Greeks to be victorious.

Hera notices Zeus on Mount Ida, overlooking Troy, and devises a plan to distract him so that she may help the Greeks behind his back. She enlists the help of the goddess Aphrodite to make her beautiful in preparation for seducing Zeus ... By distracting him in the 'Deception of Zeus', Hera makes it possible for the Greeks to regain the upper hand in the Trojan War (Alchin 2).

Like Zeus, Faustus is deceived when Lucifer tempts him to follow the evil example and distract his attention more than once from repentance. Lucifer gives Faustus false grandeur to gain victory by taking another human soul to be added to his kingdom.

Faustus asks for the aid of his two friends, Valdes and Cornelius to teach him magic. Valdes encourages Faustus referring to the glory that he might gain if he practices magic. He says: "Faustus, these books, thy wit, and our experience, shall make nations to canonize us" (*Doctor Faustus* 6). Valdes mentions the "Queen of Love" (*Doctor Faustus* 6), the goddess Venus (Aphrodite), goddess of love in Greek mythology. She is the daughter of Zeus in the Iliad and the poets connect her to the sea since she is believed to have sprung from the foam of the sea. Without her, there will be no joy and beauty in the world. Marlowe compares the beauty of the female elementary spirits to Venus's radiant light "like women, or unwedded maids, shadowing more beauty in their airy brows than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love" (*Doctor Faustus* 6). Hamilton describes how the poets see her stating that "the winds flee before her and the storm clouds; ... the waves of the sea laugh; she moves in radiant light. Without her there is no joy nor loveliness anywhere" (30). Marlowe's reference to her is not only for the sake of aesthetic reasons, but as one of the various heavenly illusions which lure Faustus into hell. She is one of the images presented to Faustus by Valdes to heed him in his intention to practice magic and be glorious.

After signing the bond with his own blood, Faustus asks Mephistophilis two questions; the first one is concerned with the

whereabouts of hell "Tell me, where is the place that men call hell?" (*Doctor Faustus* 18). Being dissatisfied with the answer, he asks his second question which is related to his desire to have a wife. His request is approved by the devil, yet she is not going to be human, but a devil in disguise; "a wife in the devil's name" (*Doctor Faustus* 19). Once more, Marlowe refers to classical mythology when he compares the devilish wife with the goddess Penelope, wife of Odysseus.

Odysseus, Penelope's husband, was a legendary hero in Greek mythology. He was the king of the island of Ithaca in Homer's epic, the *Odyssey*. During the Trojan War, Odysseus was the one who contrived the idea of the Trojan horse inside which the Greek warriors hid. Meanwhile, the Trojans were drunk after a deceptive celebration of the end of war so, at night, the Greek warriors slew everyone and at last won the battle (Karas 1).

After the end of the Trojan War, Odysseus made a ten-year journey to reach his home, Ithaca. Believing that Odysseus was dead, men from the surrounding islands came to Odysseus's house to woo his wife. The wife proved to be intelligent and resolute in her endeavors to overcome all the temptations. Sheila Murnaghan, in the introduction to the book *Homer: the essential Odyssey*, matched Penelope to Odysseus in matters related to "cleverness, self – possession, and patient endurance" (xvii). Such attributes are however proved to be absent from Marlowe's Dr. Faustus. Penelope is contrasted with Faustus himself since she is greatly tempted by the many suitors who are anxious to marry her and to ascend the throne just like him. Nonetheless, she differs because she is completely loyal to her social standards and ethics. However, Marlowe is ironic since Faustus's suggested wife has no relation whatsoever with the mythological woman, Penelope. The renaissance educated audiences know that Penelope's name is a metonymy of sincerity and chastity. She is able to keep her sacred bond of marriage unspoiled for 20 years. Accordingly, the metaphor here is used not for the sake of comparison, but to emphasize the moral disparity, and the gap, between the good and the devil paths.

The Chorus at the end of scene six declares Faustus's intention to start a journey to discover the universe: "He now is gone to prove cosmography" (*Doctor Faustus* 26). Marlowe describes this journey in an imaginative and charming way to extend the aesthetic depth of his play. He figuratively borrows the mythological place, Olympus, the home of gods which parallel heaven in its beauty and height, to give a poetic picture of Faustus's supposed ascent to heaven. Hamilton considers Homers' description of the place as "an abode of perfect blessedness. No wind ... ever shakes the untroubled peace of Olympus; no rain ever falls there or snow; but the cloudless firmament stretches around it on all sides and the white glory of sunshine is diffused upon its walls" (Hamilton 20). Thus, it is Faustus's desire to reach such a level, such a perfect place and be a deity.

Throughout his journey across the universe, Faustus reaches Rome. There, he swears by “the Kingdom of infernal rule, Of Styx, of Acheron, and the fiery lake of ever-burning Phlegethon” (*Doctor Faustus* 28) that he is honest and eager to know about the history of Rome through its monuments. Hades or Pluto is the Greek god who ruled over the underworld where Styx, Acheron, and Phlegethon are rivers that lead to the underworld. They foretell Faustus’s tragic and inevitable journey to the underworld since these rivers are supposed to take man from life to death. Faustus is already a devil being a follower of Lucifer. His journey to the underworld is fatal.

Styx is the first river that is mentioned by Faustus. It separates the world of the living from that of the dead. Greek gods swear by this river. Faustus also swears by it. However; “should a god break a vow sworn on the river Styx, that god would be forced to drink from its water and would become mute for nine years” (Sherman 392).

Faustus also swears by Acheron, the river of woe and pain. The ferryman Charon takes the dead across the Acheron to transport them from the upper to the lower world. It is a one-way journey like Faustus’ woeful journey with the devil which will take him to an unredeemed end (Hamilton 40). As for the river Phlegethon, it is the river of fire since “it is said to travel to the depths of the Underworld where the land is filled with fire where the most sinister souls live” (Gill 2). Faustus’s soul is among these “sinister souls”, this river will swallow by its horrible fire.

Accordingly, these rivers are referred to by Marlowe as metonymy for death that waits for Faustus’s cursed soul. It will be carried off to join the devils in the underworld to be tormented forever.

Marlowe touches on a myth whose protagonist is goddess Diana. The emperor of Innsbruck asks Faustus to summoned Alexander the Great and his paramour as an affirmation of his occult powers. A knight in the court suspects Faustus’s proficiency and he demonstrates sarcastic remarks that insult Faustus. He says: “I’faith, that’s as true as Diana turned me to a stag” (*Doctor Faustus* 36). Faustus addresses the knight: “when Actaeon died, he left the horns for you” (*Doctor Faustus* 36). The story of Actaeon is mentioned in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as the one who intrudes on the privacy of Diana (Artemis), goddess of chastity and Apollo's twin sister, while she is bathing in the river. As a result, Diana transforms him into a stag. Actaeon’s two dogs, fail to recognize him. They chase, capture, and tear him apart (Roman 10). Actaeon’s story, like that of Icarus, emphasizes and predicts Faustus’s tragic end. Actaeon’s death is effectuated by his desires which violate sacred rules related to the higher authorities. In this scene Marlowe tries to please the audience. As an answer to the knight’s insult, Faustus makes a pair of horns appear on his head. Consequently, he presents a two-fold usage of the myth; as a metaphor since the horns on the knight’s head was a great insult to his manliness. These horns refer to a man whose wife

was unfaithful to him. While the other usage was related to Marlowe's motive to amuse his audience with comic scenes inspired by this myth.

Faustus exhibits an inclination to repent which necessitates the second appearance of the two angels. Each tries to pull him away into a different direction. Unable to repent, Faustus starts to listen to the voices of despair tempting him to commit suicide. He soliloquizes stating that: "fearful echoes thunder in mine ears ... then swords and knives, poison, guns, halters, and envenom'd steel are laid before me to dispatch myself" (*Doctor Faustus* 21). However, the pleasures in life seem to be stronger than his despair. Faustus's source of pleasure is entrenched deeply in classic mythology, especially Homer's the Iliad and Odyssey, "of Alexander's love, and Oenon's death" (*Doctor Faustus* 21). This tragic love, which is presented by Marlowe to please his protagonist, encompasses three significant names; Alexander, Oenon, and Helen. Each one of these names adds to the literary and aesthetic weight of the play.

Alexander or Paris, Son of Priam; the king of Troy, was born with a prophecy that one day he would ruin his country. Henceforth, his life was doomed from the very beginning. According to Homer's myth, gods were responsible for Paris's ill-fated future. The evil goddess, Eris, who was denied a wedding invitation by the other gods, swore to have revenge. She threw a golden apple with a note telling that it was "for the fairest". The goddesses: Aphrodite, Hera, and Pallas Athena competed to take this apple. To settle the dispute Zeus suggested that Paris would be the judge. Each one of the three goddesses tried to tempt him with a certain bribe. However, his mediation was in the favor of Aphrodite who promised that the fairest woman in the whole world should be his (Hamilton 254-5). Helen was already approved to be the fairest woman in the world and thus she would be his beloved though it opposed religious and social standards in life since she was a married woman.

Paris violated the sacred bond of marriage twice: First when he abandoned his faithful wife, Oenone and second when he abducted Helen, wife of the Greek prince Menelaus, setting thus the flames of the dreadful Trojan War where thousands of people died. Marlowe seemed to be highly inspired by this story though he was ironic when he let Faustus say: "I should have slain myself, Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair. Have not I made blind Homer sing to me of Alexander's love, and Oenone's death?" (*Doctor Faustus* 21). W. L. Godshalk in his book *The Marlovian World Picture* asserted that Marlowe was confronted by the recklessly ambitious society. Thus: "Marlowe's world is the anti-utopia, the contra-ideal. Most of the principles upon which civilized life is based are forgotten or dismissed as irrelevant. It is a world where evil grows from the ambition to attain impossible ends" (36-7).

According to her prophecy at the beginning of their marriage, Paris was wounded during the Trojan War, only his wife Oenone could cure him. Still, she refused to cure him because Paris favored Helen. However, when he died she committed suicide out of grieve. Like Paris, Faustus is tempted, not by the mythological goddesses, but by the devil who encourages Faustus to violate the sacred rules of God by giving his soul to the devil for worldly pleasures. The similarity between this myth and Marlowe's play is apparent since both protagonists, Paris and Faustus, are driven by the vanity of their ambition and passion which blind them to consider reason, leading thus to their eventual downfall.

Helen is described as the 'peerless dame', 'the pride of Nature's works', and 'only paragon of excellence' (*Doctor Faustus* 43). Basically, the implication of Helen's name brings to the mind two images; tempting beauty and death. Marcus Wischik in his article, *Discuss the Role of Helen of Troy in Doctor Faustus* asserts Helen's 'seductive evil' that will lead Faustus to hell. Wischik says:

When we look at the attractive nature that Helen has ... we can see how seductive evil is ... It is easier to give in to ones baser desires, to want to make love to Helen, than it is to uphold the principles of the Church. This is why Faustus wants to retreat to the past, to a time where the church didn't exist (2).

Furthermore, Helen's name, is a personification of death because she is the main reason "that launch'd a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium" (*Doctor Faustus* 45) Faustus says this when Mephistopheles brings a spirit in the disguise of Helen to be his paramour. He expresses a wish to re-enact Homer's Iliad, especially the part which is related to the Trojan War. Like Paris, Faustus is ready to destroy his own city to satisfy his physical and sensual desires. Faustus, who substitutes Paris willingly, is ready to fight Menelaus and wound Achilles "I will combat with weak Menelaus ... I will wound Achilles in the heel" (*Doctor Faustus* 45). Marlowe asserts Faustus's desires to fight eagerly to gain worldly pleasures. Faustus is unwilling to take any effort to gain God's forgiveness. The conflict between theology and mythology is evident. He says: "I will be Paris, and for love of thee, instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked" (*Doctor Faustus* 45). Faustus describes Helen:

O, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms

(Doctor Faustus 45-6).

As a scholar, Faustus's ambition exceeds all limits and his speech "communicates an intense perception of great beauty, yet every line confirms that 'heavenly Helen' is simply a demon in disguise, a succubus whose lips 'suck forth' the soul of Faustus and lead it to the flames of Hell" (Mcalindon 127). He cannot repent, ask for God's forgiveness or resort to the rules of the church. Thus, Marlowe here uses exaggeration and irony to satisfy the renaissance audiences who are living a radical upheaval in religious and cultural standards and at the same time are highly fascinated by magic and by the mythological past. Marlowe ensures the Renaissance man's departure from religion and his constant preoccupation with trivial and devilish exercises. However, a departure from the illusionary world of mythology would happen with the approaching fact of Faustus's certain death as explained by Mcalindon who says "in the last scenes mythology withers away in the presence of theology, and the few pagan relics found there ... are but final ironic exposures of the great mythological lie epitomized by Helen" (221).

There are certain mythological names which need to be highlighted because they add to the depth of the play under discussion. Marlowe seems to pay special attention to the correlations of their stories which mostly ends by their death to foreshadow Faustus's tragic end. These names are Achilles, Jupiter, Semele, and Arethusa. Out of his never-ending conceit, Faustus compares himself with these mythological heroes. Achilles was the son of the mortal king, Peleus and the immortal sea nymph, Thetis. He was the greatest warrior of the Trojan Wars. Like Paris, son of the king of Troy, Achilles was born with a prophecy that was told by his mother who knew that if he joined the Trojan Wars, he would face a fatal death. Thetis was worried about her son due to his half-mortal parentage, so she dipped him into the water of the mythological river Styx, one of the five rivers of the underworld, to make him invincible. But it seemed that Thetis neglected to dip the heel into the water. "As a result Achilles's heel remained vulnerable" thus "Paris, shot an arrow into Achilles's one mortal spot – his heel – and Achilles died" (Sherman 7). Achilles died because of the immortal part in his body, his heel.

Marlowe is ironic when he makes Faustus a rival to Achilles because the latter is known for his extraordinary courage, nobility, and loyalty. His ends were always noble because he fought his enemy with valour and, he was ready to die to have revenge upon the killer of his best friend. As for Faustus, he starts with noble deeds, yet he ends by practicing trivial and foolish tricks just to entertain himself losing thus his nobility and self-esteem as an intellectual scholar:

I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg;

I'll have them fill the public schools with silk,
 Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad,
 I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
 And chase the Prince of Parma from our land.
 (*Doctor Faustus* 5)

Faustus compares Helen to the “flaming Jupiter” (*Doctor Faustus* 45). Jupiter (Zeus) was the supreme ruler and lord of the sky, who was more powerful than other gods. He was associated with thunder, lightning, and storms. Jupiter had seven immortal wives and he also allied himself to a number of mortal maidens among which was Semele. He never attempted to appear to these mortal maidens in his real form, but instead he visited them under various disguises. Jupiter made an irrevocable oath by the river Styx that he would never deny any of Semele’s requests. Unfortunately, Semele, the beautiful princess and daughter of king of Phoenicia, was greatly hated by Hera. The latter decided to destroy her because of Jupiter’s great love for her. Semele was deceived by Hera who disguised herself as her best friend and persuaded her to let Jupiter expose himself in all his power and glory as he did to Hera. Jupiter “therefore revealed himself as the mighty lord of the universe, accompanied by thunder and lightning, and Semele was instantly consumed in the flames” (Berens 25). Her end, like that of Icarus, Paris, and Achilles is implied to foreshadow the doomed end of Faustus himself. He is also deceived by the devil. He will perish by the flames of the underworld.

Marlowe ended Faustus’s famous speech praising Helen with a reference to a mythological story of Alpheus and Arethusa that was mentioned in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Still, Marlowe might be confused in presenting the protagonist of this story whom he substituted by “the monarch of the sky” (Zeus), while the actual hero was the god of the river, Alpheus. Arethusa was a beautiful nymph and a follower of the goddess Artemis (Diana). While swimming in crystal-clear water, Alpheus fell in love with her and began to speak to her. She was terrified and ran away immediately asking for the aid of the goddess Artemis who transformed her into a stream of water. Yet, Alpheus would never give up and he took on water form and mingled himself with the spring of Arethusa (Sherman 56). Though the story seemed to deal with love, yet there is an ugly point since Arethusa is punished by the god of the river for her disobedience and her refusal to return his love, so eventually she is not totally free. Faustus is deprived of his free-will as he chains himself to the devil that leads to his final damnation. To a certain extent, Faustus deserves his end. Unlike Arethusa, he does not try to escape the devil’s temptation and is so hesitant to ask for God’s help like Arethusa.

Undoubtedly, Faustus is fully convinced that Helen will be his gate through which he will escape eternal damnation in hell “come, Helen, give me my soul again. Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips” (*Doctor*

Faustus 45). This conviction necessitates the appearance of the Old Man for the last time cursing and blaming Faustus for his wrong choice and his total submission to the devil's temptations:

Accursed Faustus, miserable man,
That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of
heaven,
And fly'st the throne of his tribunal seat!
(*Doctor Faustus* 46).

Marlowe's final reference to classical myths is the name of Apollo uttered by the chorus at the very end of the play to assert the end of Faustus and expose the moral lesson of the story. They say:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full
straight, And burned is Apollo's laurel –
bough, That sometime grew within this
learned man. Faustus is gone: regard his
hellish fall (*Doctor Faustus* 50).

Apollo was the son of Zeus and the god of the sun. His domains were arts, music, medicine, and prophecy. His laurel tree was related to his story with Daphne, a wood nymph and a follower of the goddess of chastity, Diana. Like Faustus, Apollo was controlled by his sense of glory and conceit as a learned, skillful and courageous hero who had victory over a dragon. He saw Eros (Cupid), god of love, trying to hold Apollo's bow and arrows. Eros received sarcastic remarks from Apollo who told him that he was too delicate to play with "warlike weapons" and that he should leave them "for hands worthy of them" like Apollo. Such a remark offended Eros badly and he decided to avenge himself using his undefeated weapon, love. He struck Apollo with the golden arrow "to excite love" (Bulfinch 20) in him and a lead arrow for Daphne, daughter of the god of river, Peneus, to repel this love. Apollo chased Daphne who beseeched her father's help. The father transformed her into a laurel tree. Apollo, who did not give up trying to possess her, gifted her with an everlasting green. He said "since you cannot be my wife, you shall assuredly be my tree ... And as eternal youth is mine, you also shall be always green, and your leaves know no decay" (Bulfinch 22). Apollo's disappointment was great after his failure to be united with his beloved Daphne, so he decided to take a branch of the laurel tree, symbol of his love, and to wear it on his head to keep Daphne's memory alive. Hence, "the laurel tree became sacred to the cult of Apollo, and a laurel wreath became a mark of honor to be given to poets, victors, and winners in athletic contests" (Apollo 2). Marlowe's everlasting laurel bough alludes to the classical wisdom and intellectual accomplishments. It is the tree of knowledge that any scholar aspires to implant inside him.

However, Faustus is deprived of his right of wearing the laurel wreath because of his ambition to obtain the forbidden knowledge (black magic).

His laurel bough is burned forever. People in general have to consider his 'hellish fall' as stated by the chorus.

Chor. Faustus is gone: 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
(*Doctor Faustus* 50).

However, Marlowe's adherence to the Elizabethan's obsession with mythology and the supernatural inspired him to write *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*. The play bears many marks of classical mythology that help in the character's growth and in the overall success of the play. Marlowe's employment of mythological allusions in this play helps him to create a harmony among ideas. He describes and compares events and characters with classical mythology to objectify poetic pictures for didactic purposes and aesthetic reasons. *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* authenticates a new culture based on a growing interest in secular view of life where man occupies the center of the universe. Still, Marlowe's main preoccupation is to diagnose the evil consequences of such a quest for infinity that leads man to lose faith and the sight of the image of God in his soul forever. Divine justice prevails at the end of the play.

الملخص

التلميحات الاسطورية في مسرحية التأريخ المأساوي للدكتور فوستس للكاتب
كرستوفر مارلو
إنعام هاشم هادي
صباح عطا الله ضيائي

تشير التلميحات الكلاسيكية الى الاساطير في الاعمال الادبية الرومانية
والاغريقية القديمة. لقد استخدم الكاتب كرسطوفر مارلو التلميحات الاسطورية في مسرحية
التأريخ المأساوي للدكتور فوستس لخلق علاقة بين افكار المسرحية المتعددة الابعاد.
لقد طمح الدكتور فوستس الى المطلق واللامحدود فعمد الى بيع روحه للشيطان
لتحقيق احلامه. لقد هجر الدين واحتضن السحر والاسطورة كنموذج للالوهية الزائفة.
تستدعي الاسطورة الكلاسيكية استعراض وبحث علم الربوبية والاخلاقيات وتشدد على
البعد الجمالي و التقييم الروحاني لطموح الدكتور فوستس.

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