ANTHONY MOORE

The Musical Yardstick

"God's hand stretches the string of the monochord,
which passes through two octaves, from a high G in the sphere of the angels, –
through the solar system to the sun at the middle G, down past Venus,
Mercury and the Moon, – through the elements, fire, air, water, –
on down to the resonant bottom G of earth itself."
(Ascribed to Robert Fludd[1])

"…through the elements, fire, air, water…"

The horizon tilts up into the sky on smooth, celestial gears as the flat sea touches the underbelly of the bloated star. The sun had been utterly brilliant that morning and although with the oncoming darkness it will have given its all, for now it continues to glow on her retina. Thanks to that optical system of delayed time she can re-watch the sunset simply by closing her eyes. She had always wanted to live on a planet with more than one sun. This is what she is thinking: the eye paints onto the outside; an inner light shining out through the lens and casting

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1 In: Thomas Levenson, *Measure for Measure. A Musical History of Science* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1994), p. 24.

What Fludd adopts from the Pythagoreans is the fact that proportionality offers the opportunity for both scaling up and scaling down, of doubling and halving, and demonstrating sameness between above and below. Whilst Fludd's measure can be interpreted in many ways, I have chosen to use it to represent the different spheres of activity that take place throughout this text. The opening description firmly positions the protagonist in the post-Copernican tradition of a world where the term "sunset" has been replaced by "earthup". However, as her world orbits through omni-directional time, the next occasion we come across her she may well have shifted further into the past or, for that matter, into the future. As a guide to the prevailing cosmology in the text, we may imagine a system where three spheres orbit a central star, with the difference that these celestial bodies are not solids moving in space but rather concentrations of time moving in time itself. They rotate into the past and round into the future, orbiting the unspoken now of the centre. Just as planets, these concentrations are in fixed orbits set at greater or lesser distances from the present, which means the most distant swing further into the future and further into the past than those closer concentrations that might be named "the just before" and "the just after". Time becomes spatial when the planets cross the event horizon of the now, instantaneously creating other nows at a distance. This textural astrolabe is no model, for like this text, time is also two-dimensional.