
UNIT 1 CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE AND THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit helps you to understand the Elizabethan drama of which Christopher Marlowe is one of the chief representatives. The focus in this unit is on the distinctive growth of Elizabethan comedy and tragedy. An attempt is made to show how tragedy effectively reflects the cultural aspirations and the keen intellectual sensitivity of the Elizabethans.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Christopher Marlowe is the originator of the mature English tragedy. Between the playwrights who preceded him like Thomas Kyd and those who succeeded him like

1.2 CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) is the most intellectual of the playwrights during the Elizabethan age in English literature. The period known for unprecedented literary activity in England, finds its genius, chiefly, in drama whose most eloquent spokesman was William Shakespeare. Marlowe is, undoubtedly, the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors in drama. To him, goes the credit of heralding the powerful English tragic drama that remains, even today, as one of the chief achievements of English literature. Marlowe died very young, before he was thirty, in suspicious circumstances but left about half a dozen tragedies all written in a period of five years — *Tamburlaine* (1587), *Doctor Faustus* (1586), *The Jew of Malta* (1589), *Edward II* (1591), and *The Massacre at Paris* (1592). Endowed with vast biblical and classical scholarship, a rebellious spirit and poetic imagination, Marlowe marks the end of an adolescent phase in English drama and begins its mature tragedy. In effecting this transition, Marlowe had to attempt to reconcile the traditions of medieval Christianity with the rise of the Reformation, on the one hand, and reconcile these two with the continental Renaissance humanism and the revival of the fascinating classical learning and literature, on the other. Additionally, there was the linguistic and lyrical upsurge of the blank verse and its liberating tone of freedom from the rigors of metrical verse. Whatever Marlowe wrote was poignant, for he could never separate his personal yearnings from his dramatic reflections. A very striking personality and a powerful dramatist, he is a significant part of a still greater tradition of the Elizabethan drama—tragedy in particular, which was taking shape in his time. Marlowe is judged with a sense of regret that he died young and that his talents left many a masterpiece unwritten, especially in view of the fact that Shakespeare, similarly gifted could achieve greatness with longer years of life. On Marlowe's four hundredth anniversary, Harry Levin reassessed Marlowe's importance thus:

Marlowe must abide the question of history, which Shakespeare has all but overflowed. Yes, he is for all time, we must agree with Ben Johnson. And Marlowe then, was he primarily for his age? Certainly he caught its intensities, placed its rhythms, and dramatized its dilemmas as no Elizabethan writer had previously done, and as all would be doing thereafter to some extent...

Marlowe's output was meteoric in its development, and in its expression as well. In that sense, his end was not untimely, and it is futile to sentimentalize now over his fragments and unwritten master works. Shakespeare needed maturity to express ripeness, although he could never have matured without assuming first the youthful stance that Marlowe had made permanently his own. Insofar as he must seem for ever young, we are inclined to feel old as we belatedly reread him.¹

An understanding of this emerging tradition is necessary for clearer perspectives on Marlowe's dramatic endeavours and achievement.

1.3 ELIZABETHAN DRAMA: RELIGIOUS BEGINNINGS

One of the finest dramatic traditions in literature, the Elizabethan drama emerged in the middle of the sixteenth century in England in response to the growing needs of popular entertainment, national and cultural aspirations. To begin with, the

Elizabethans had to reckon with theatre as a vehicle for religious and moral instruction. After the decline of classical drama in Europe; the Middle ages witnessed the use of theatre in the church for religious instruction. This has, in fact, led to the rebirth of western drama after the Middle Ages. The antiphonal singing, the essential part of a Roman Catholic prayer in the church, displayed dramatic possibilities that could be effectively used for instructional purposes. Further, illustrations of the stories of the Old and New Testament, particularly during festivals like Christmas and Easter, through dramatic presentation, became an integral part of the Roman Catholic liturgy.

1.4 MIRACLE AND MYSTERY PLAYS

What began as a religious performance by the clergy extended itself to include lay performers. As the performances gradually became buoyant during the festivals, the clergy came to be excluded from participating in such joyous celebrations. The exclusion of clergy entailed the relaxation of church control over such performances, leading to the secular growth of, what is essentially, a Christian drama. This religious tradition of theatre became popular in England by the fourteenth century as Mystery and Miracle plays, the former dealing with biblical stories and the latter with the lives of the Christian saints. In course of time, cycles of plays evolved presenting various stories but with a singular theme. Though composed by the clergy, with a certain secular disposition, in iambic verse, the theatrical organization went into the hands of social and trade guilds associated with towns like York, Chester, Coventry, Wakefield and Lincoln. These cycles, largely bereft of any lasting literary value, facilitated the replacement of Latin by the vernacular as the medium of religion, the shift of theatrical activity from cathedrals to open public places, and in theatrical experience, a change from a sense of religious solemnity to the pursuit of popular taste. A significant development for the later Elizabethan drama was the mixing up of the solemn religious practices with the comic frivolities inherent in day to day life.

1.5 MORALITY PLAYS

The later advances of English religious drama was in the form of a morality play which was, in turn, followed by interludes, the non-allegorical religious plays about earthly characters with a predominant satirical tone. The morality tradition is significant for the abstract characterization of several qualities, both good and vicious. The dramatic story is an allegory of the interplay of the forces of good and evil. The dramatic conflict, essentially between good and evil, leads to the inevitable victory of the good over evil, the former characterized by the strength of religion and the latter smarting under a comic impotence. The morality plays have a long history in England beginning with the fifteenth century and lasting the whole of the sixteenth century. The plays had to reckon with the growth of English nationalism, its political and economic power. More importantly, they had to come to terms with the tides of classical revival and the new humanist learning from Italy. The representative morality plays of the early Tudor period, like *The Castle of Perseverance* (1425), *The Pride of Life* (1425) and *Everyman* (1500) (translated from Dutch, the authors anonymous) survey human life from birth to death through the conflicts occurring between one of the cardinal virtues and the seven deadly sins. Social reality of human life was beneath the concern of the early morality play. Plays of the late period like *Impatient Poverty* (anonymous, 1547-58), Lewis Wager's *Mary Magdalene* (1490), Nathaniel Woodes' *The Conflicts of Conscience* (1581), John Rastell's *The Nature of the Four Elements* (1517-27) largely dispense with the allegorical form, assume a protestant stance and deal with the issues of the upbringing of the youth and the evils of social corruption. Significantly, these morality plays betray an awareness of the new age of Renaissance, its affluence and

learning, though the awareness particularizes the Christian formulation of the essential fallibility of man. The plays are substantially dramatic unlike the early morality plays and display, forcefully, the tenor of the English language.

1.6 RISE OF ELIZABETHAN COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

The long years of the morality tradition, through the vicissitudes of church doctrine and the pressures of the new age, led to the evolution of the Elizabethan dramatic genres of comedy and tragedy. Though the biblical tradition presented dual perspectives on the predicament of man, either of the comical insignificance or of unmitigable suffering, paralleling the generic perspectives of the subsequent comedy and tragedy, the Elizabethan tragedy or comedy, in the making, came to increasingly bear the secular burden of the times. The concern with human condition *per se* is the chief characteristic of Elizabethan drama. The growth of the new classicism or learning is definitely a major contributory factor but, more importantly, the socio-economic and cultural growth of the nation made the focus on human material possible. If we look at the earliest English comedy, Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553) or the earliest tragedy written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, *Gorboduc* (1561), the Tudor setting and ethos is particularly striking notwithstanding the classical dramaturgy through which the plays take shape. The new blank verse, having unburdened metrical rigor generates a new literary freedom hitherto unknown. The new verse presents a heroic spirit in language, emotion and action.

1.7 THE GROWTH OF THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

The early Elizabethan drama, before the regular playhouses were constructed, permeated a broad gamut of the social life of the times. Nicholas Udall's plays were school plays enacted by the boys as part of the liberalized school curriculum. In spite of their amateur playing, the boys used to be requisitioned to stage the plays before royal dignitaries or in the court itself. The early English tragedy had its advent at the Inns of the Court. *Gorboduc* was written and produced by two lawyers at the Inner Temple. Oxford and Cambridge became important centers for staging Latin drama, so much so that even Queen Elizabeth used to visit the universities to witness the performances. Later, the royal court, with the ostensible purpose of regulating theatre, assumed the function of theatrical organization, providing grants and costumes to several amateur boy groups. John Lyly staged several comedies for Queen Elizabeth and established the genre of Elizabethan comedy. Tragedy, however, could not find patronage either at the royal court or in London. It had to await the advent of adult acting companies and the erection of Public theatres on the outskirts of London. It is in these theatres like the Curtain, the Rose, and the Globe, that the Elizabethan stage came into being, a stage that introduced the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

While the growth of Elizabethan drama as a native tradition was a steady one moving self-assuredly without meekly copying classical models, the same would not have been possible without Elizabethan Drama registering itself as significant European theatre since the Greek drama of the fifth century B.C. In its European phase, Elizabethan theatre not only integrated within itself various elements of classical drama but also the Greek formulations about comedy and tragedy. The task for the Elizabethans was not only to be forcefully English but also thoughtfully European and distinctively Elizabethan.

The Latin form, with its division into five acts, of the plays of Terence and Plautus structured English romantic comedy right from *Ralph Roister Doister*. The plays abounded in classical themes like love, intrigue and friendship and character types like the braggart lover, the parasite servant, and the scheming old man. The comedy developed into two distinct traditions of the romantic and the critical comedy. Beginning with Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, the romantic comedy grows through the court plays of Lyly like *Compaspe* (1581), *Mother Bombie* (1590) and *Endimion* (1583), George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584) and Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1590) and culminates in Shakespeare's comedies like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *As You Like It* (1600) and *Twelfth Night* (1601). Primarily meant for aristocratic entertainment, romantic comedy pursues the theme of love—love as a blend of sentiment, foible, eccentricity, artifice, dedication and self-centeredness. Romantic love is more in the nature of the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. Melodramatic to the core and farcical in treatment, this comedy, set in a pastoral or old world ambience, evokes a romantic mood and an atmosphere of exhilaration, celebration, chivalry and enchantment. With song and imaginative idealism, romantic comedy provides an escape route into a world of fancy and imagination from the grim realities of life.

The other tradition of comedy belongs to the redoubtable Ben Jonson who presented what are called the comedies of humour like *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), *Volpone* (1606) and *The Alchemist* (1610). Essentially city comedies, Jonson evolves his plays as social purgatives to the prevalent moral degradation. Funny yet serious, the laughter evoked is carefully controlled. Falling back on the tradition of rogue fiction, Jonson's protagonists are rogues who succeed until the end by their ability to gull others for their avaricious needs. Their eventual failure is a moral corrective driven home forcefully by the playwright.

1.9 ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY : THE SENECA INFLUENCE

The earliest inspiration for the English tragedy were the Latin plays of Seneca. It was the retributive revenge motive, belief in fortune or chance, stage declamation and soliloquy of the Senecan plays that made the plays of Thomas Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare extremely popular with the Elizabethan audiences. The appeal of the blood letting Seneca to the Elizabethans, bred on the Christian morality tradition, is apparently strange and curious. But the Elizabethans found a satisfying correlation between the contradictory traditions. F.P. Wilson sums up the Senecan appeal to the devout Elizabethans.

The extent of his influence on English tragedy, academic and popular, would have not been so great if the themes, the doctrine and the form have not proved congenial. The Elizabethans would enjoy the impression which his tragedies gave that crime meets its punishment in **this** life. They had the same appetite, or at least the same stomach, for sensational incident and violent passion ... Also they shared with him a taste for moral statement, for pity sentential and love of rhetoric. His doctrine, it might be thought would have repelled a Christian audience but this was not so. The medieval *contemptus mundi* had held that we are born in sin linked to it before we are able to sin...²

1.10 GREEK ORIGINS OF TRAGEDY

However, Seneca did not exhaust the Elizabethan 'tragedy' which looks back to ancient Greece for the spirit and theory of western tragedy. The Greek tragic theory and vision helped Marlowe and Shakespeare enormously in achieving great complexity and depth in their plays. The dramatic form of tragedy owes to a lyric sung in honour of Dionysus, Greek God of vegetation and wine in the course of the fertility feasts, made to commemorate the harvest and vintage. The original Greek word, *tragedia*, comes from another word meaning a goatsinger, possibly the ritual song and dance known as *dithyram*, attended by the sacrifice of a goat. The *dithyram* evoked ideas of death and renewal of life, a process evoked by harvest and vintage. The point is that death is an inescapable positive fact of life preceding fresh lease or renewal of life. In the hands of the Greek Dramatists like Aeschylus (525-426 BC), Sophocles (996-406 BC) and Euripides (485-406 BC), tragedy focused on the aesthetic beauty though it varied in emphasis from dramatist to dramatist. Aeschylus to whom tragedy as a dramatic form owes its existence strove to elevate tragedy to the realm of fundamental truths, Sophocles gave the concept of dramatic unities and cherished tragedy as an art form unencumbered to achieve or present anything. Euripides (485-406 BC) used tragedy to reflect upon the darker aspects of life.

1.11 ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

In the course of Greek drama, tragedy acquired a high seriousness both in its purpose and treatment of materials and reckoned with the concerns of the whole community and strove to raise fundamental questions about human existence and also to provide deep psychological insight into the metaphysical and epistemological processes of the world and human life. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher in the fourth century B.C. after examining Greek drama of his time very minutely, offers a definition of tragedy and its constituent elements in his treatise on drama called *Poetics*. For him, "tragedy is a representation of an action which is important, complete and limited in length. It uses language made beautiful in different ways and in different parts of the play. It is enacted not recited and by arousing pity and fear, it gives an outlet to emotions of this type."³

Aristotle uses the medical metaphor, namely, *catharsis* to describe the function of tragedy which is to purge the emotions of pity and fear in the audience. On seeing a tragedy the audience unburdens the constricting emotions that inhibit the understanding of their own life.

The elements of tragedy, according to Aristotle, are plot, character, diction, ideas music and spectacle. The plot must have a beginning, middle and end. The moving devices of plot are *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. *Peripeteia* entails an ironic frustration of purpose on the part of the protagonist who is not only a man of noble birth but obviously blessed with outstanding qualities, producing an opposite result from the one intended. The increasing failure of the protagonist is on account of the tragic error or *hamartia*. Essentially, the protagonist moves or is driven towards *anagnorisis*, the discovery of the true situation. The progression of the plot displays both verbal and dramatic irony. Verbal irony occurs when the actual intent of the speaker or the writer is expressed in words that carry the opposite meaning. Dramatic irony enables the spectator or reader of a play to know more than its character. The irony is tragic since the audience or the reader understand the predicament of the protagonist who indulges in self-delusory assertions.

1.12 THE ELIZABETHAN FORMULATION OF TRAGEDY

While the significance of the Aristotelian formulation of tragedy is immense for the Elizabethans, the immediate fascination for the Elizabethans may have been the Roman models of tragedy like those of Ovid, Plutarch and Seneca who gave a Roman sense of virility, dignity and energy to the Greek tragic sense. The Elizabethan fascination for the tragic form as it comes to them through the Greeks and Romans is on account of their love for the regenerative force of life, coupled with a sense of wonder and mystery at the forces inherent in the world and human life. The tragic dilemma as dramatised in the Greek plays came to characterize the new ambivalence felt by the Elizabethans in the midst of individual and national prosperity and achievement, on the one hand, and the need for a new definition of individual and public morality, on the other hand, for which the orthodox Christianity offered no satisfying solutions. If we look at the dominant motifs of Elizabethan Drama, the revenge motive, modelled after the Senecan plays, running through Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1589) Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589) and *The Massacre of Paris* (1592), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601), Cyril Tourner's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606-7) and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613-14) what is accepted as a retributive justice in Seneca for an order of justice and individual morality becomes, unlike in Seneca, the essential question in Elizabethan Drama about the very stability of the societal moral system. The Elizabethans were increasingly burdened with a Renaissance inspired man-centered world where human possibilities assume the force of a moral axiom distorting the distinctions of good and evil or right and wrong. The human potentialities flower in an inextricable admixture of good and evil. In a mature play of Shakespeare like *King Lear* (1605) the radical questioning extends to the cosmic forces inherent in nature, morality and justice. The inevitable tragic assumption is a non-absolutist view of the world and an acceptance of the dialectical functioning where in the good and evil interact in a mutually supportive manner. T.S. Tomlinson sums up the moral vision of the Elizabethan tragedy:

...the central paradox of Elizabethan tragedy in particular seems to be that it sees the good and the valuable as — at least in part — actually nourished and supported by chaos and evil ... Nevertheless there is a sense in which the Elizabethans generally, to experience the tragic and the chaotic, at the same time experience energy and richness of life ... Shakespeare has seen in the chaos and destruction of tragedy — even possibly in evil itself — a source of energy and vitality greater than any found elsewhere. Less richly, and in greatly varying emphases, the writing of other Elizabethan dramatists bears out the truth of this central paradox. The deepest response to evil and good or to the valuable and chaotic, sees them, as in the same sense, dependent on each other for their form, substance and the very existence.⁴

The basic question Elizabethan tragedy raises is a relational one — between man and nature, nature in the larger sense of a cosmic force external to man, and nature embedded in the human condition. The Renaissance which brought a keen awareness of the infinite human potentialities makes this question a very poignant one for the Elizabethans. How does or should man relate himself to the forces within himself and to those external to him in the environment? The orthodox Christianity skirted the issue under the obligation imposed on man to obey the moral laws stipulated by it. Could the moral law be at variance with the natural law evolved by the same author of moral law—God? Moral law should synchronize with natural law in order to avoid a disjuncture between man and his situation. However, the condition of nature within man cannot be a law unto itself, as Marlowe was to dramatize in his powerful Renaissance play of infinite human ambitions and adventure, *Tamburlaine*. But moral law, independent of human nature, could not be the regulating factor. A correlation within nature, between nature within man and the one external to him in

environment regulates human condition. The correlation is of a very complex nature without being restrictively adversarial or benevolent to man. It provides a framework of mutual support and opposition, the only framework for human growth. Writing about Shakespeare's dramatic world, Tomlinson points out the essential dynamics in Shakespeare's dramatic world that explains considerably the whole of the Elizabethan dramatic perception:

The point, rather, is that in the fabric of Shakespeare's verse, the world of nature is given us as having an existence which, paradoxically, is at once independent of, and intimately related to man's status and worth. Any full realization of nature, Shakespeare is saying, must ultimately be in terms of man's consciousness; but the Shakespearean tragic paradox includes also a demonstration that nature, so far from being a mere background or illustration of a morality or goodness truly grounded in man alone, is in itself an indispensable source of nourishment, the given body of experience and substance sustaining and supporting human life. The tragic hero often fails to see this, and sees it only imperfectly. But the playwright sees it.⁵

The richness of Elizabethan tragedy is not simply ideational. The tragic form in the Elizabethan plays, more so in Shakespeare's plays which present the apotheosis of the growth of the complex and sophisticated Elizabethan world view, itself structures the Elizabethan thought and speaks more eloquently than what the characters articulate. The Greeks formulated the tragic form through their experiences of life. The discipline of the tragic form evolved by them is essentially an aesthetic value deeply cherished by them. The Elizabethans go a step further and make the dramatic art of tragedy a key to understanding the rich complexity of the Elizabethan mind and life. They endeavoured more in the direction of the evolution of the art of tragedy that mirrors their cultural and intellectual ambivalence than in the direction of the intellectual exercise of their minds. The strength of the Elizabethan mind lay in an intellectual understatement and in finding metaphors of dramatic action which speak out their minds eloquently.

The Elizabethans have immensely enriched the Greek tragic form both in their adherence to dramatic form and in the liberties they have taken from the rigorous discipline of the Greek dramatic art. The Elizabethan tragic protagonist is an Aristotelian hero, usually of a noble birth, blessed with outstanding qualities but suffers from a serious tragic flaw or hamartia in his character that sets the play in motion. The Chorus plays the introductory and summative function as in Greek Drama. Plot is a major element as in a Greek Drama using the devices of peripeteia and anagnorisis. The interest of the audience is sustained by the spectacular action and dramatic irony whereby the audience knows the predicament of the protagonist that the latter fails to understand. The plot leads the protagonist to a tragic recognition of his weakness while the audience gains a cathartic experience of the feelings evoked in the course of the play.

The Elizabethan drama abounds in the number of dramatic characters in a play while their number was limited in the Greek Drama. The dramatic unities are followed more in their breach by the Elizabethans who try to encompass a larger and larger framework of time and place, for their renaissance aspirations drive them to boundless action. Similarly, a zest for a diversity of experiences always haunted the Elizabethans making it impossible for them to stick to the Greek dramatic distinctions of tragedy and comedy. Consequently, Elizabethan drama intermixed tragic and comic experiences, a practice so abhorrent to the Greeks.

For the Elizabethans, more specifically for Marlowe and Shakespeare, tragedy is not a restrictive view of human excellence or weakness as the Greeks are often inclined to present but an affirmative view of human aspirations whose pursuit brings a glory to the definition of man. Struggle, conflict, suffering and failure may be the inescapable attendants but the human spirit is not stifled in its pursuits by what attends to them. The ability to withstand them is the tragic glory of man.

1.13 SUMMING UP : THE MODERNITY OF ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY

What the Elizabethans have done in formulating a tragic method and vision is the definition of a modern scientific temper and attitude to life that began with the Renaissance and extends itself to contemporary times. Hieronimo, Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello and Macbeth, if we are to forget their Elizabethan lineage, are striking dramatic approximations of the states of mind modern man struggles to cope with, as restlessly as the Elizabethan protagonists attempted to do. In the age of nuclear technology, we are still beset with a Tamburlaine and the Faustian problem of reconciling infinite human potential with situational possibilities. In the realm of personal relations, we err as tragically as Lear, Hamlet or Othello. The story of man has remained unchanged for the last several centuries. Man succeeds eminently with his given potentialities but fails far more easily than he succeeds. The tragedy of the contemporary man is strikingly Elizabethan and, particularly, Marlovian. As Harry Levin would say we "cannot but discern" our "culture hero in the ancient myth of Icarus (and) in Marlowe's tragedy of the scientific libertine who gained control over nature while losing control of himself."⁶

1.14 REFERENCES

1. Harry Levin "Marlowe Today" *Drama Review* 8, 4, 1963-64, pp.22-23.
2. F.P. Wilson. *The English Drama 1485-1585*. Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1969. Pp.126-127.
3. Aristotle quoted in translation from poetics in Collier's Encyclopaedia.
4. T.B. Tomlinson. *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1964. pp.3-4.
5. Ibid., pp.11-12.
6. Harry Levin. *The Overreacher: The Study of Christopher Marlowe*. Boston: Beacon Press 1952, p.134.

1.15 KEY WORDS

Reformation

A religious movement in the sixteenth century Europe for the reformation of the doctrines and institutions of the Christian Church led by Martin Luther (1483-1546). The Reformation laid primacy on the individual faith to the exclusion of sacramental action. It held that the scripture, the word of God, speaks directly to the conscience of the Christian without the intermediary of the Church authority.

Renaissance

A complex of literary and artistic movements stimulated by the study of classical literature and art during the fourteenth and fifteenth century in Europe. Historical self-consciousness, reform of Christian society through classical education, liberation of the human mind from superstition and error were some of the important features of the Renaissance movement. The movement synchronizes with the growing prosperity of the European nations. More than anything else, Renaissance championed the worth of the human individual.

Seven Deadly Sins

Classification of sins found in the works of Christian theologians since St. Thomas Aquinas: The sins are pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. These sins are essentially viewed as acts of rebellion against God.

Cardinal Virtues

The principal moral qualities that determine man's goodness. These are prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude. The fourfold classification goes back to the classical philosophy. St. Ambrose in the fifteenth century applied the term cardinal to these virtues of faith, hope and charity.

1.16 QUESTIONS

1. Trace the growth of English tragedy since the Mystery and Miracle plays.
2. Critically examine the role of the Renaissance in the growth of the Elizabethan Drama.
3. Point out the elements of Aristotelian tragedy in Elizabethan drama.
4. Discuss how Elizabethan tragedy departs from Aristotelian formulations of tragedy. In what ways do these deviations enrich the Elizabethan drama.
5. Discuss the salient features of the mature Elizabethan tragedy.
6. Critically examine Christopher Marlowe's dramatic endeavours that make him an outstanding predecessor to William Shakespeare.
7. In what ways is the Elizabethan tragedy close to us in the twentieth century?

1.17 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Fredrick S. Boas. *An Introduction to Tudor Drama*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1993. A survey of the growth of the English stage through the schools, universities, inns of court and the royal court with a special focus on the biographical plays and the poetic tragedies of Christopher Marlowe.
2. Tucker Brooke & Mathais A. Shabber. *A Literary History of the Renaissance Volume II*. Albert C. Baugh ed. New York. Appleton Century Crofts. 1967. Discusses Renaissance literature in England, surveys the religious prose, the Elizabethan lyric, verse and prose narratives of the time; Elizabethan comedy and tragedy, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Jacobean Drama, Caroline drama and the seventeenth century poetry.
3. Harry Levin. "Marlowe Today," *Drama Review*, 8, 4, 1963-64. An assessment and a tribute to Marlowe on his 400th anniversary.
4. T.B. Tomlinson. *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1964. A critical discussion on the dominant issues in Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy with focus on the revenge theme.
5. F.P. Wilson. *The English Drama. 1485-1585*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1969. A Historical Survey of the English drama through the early and later Tudor period with a special focus on the generic growth of comedy and tragedy during the period.

UNIT 2 THE TRAGIC DRAMA OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 *Doctor Faustus* as a tragedy
- 2.3 *Doctor Faustus* and the Christian Morality Tradition
- 2.4 The heroic character of *Doctor Faustus*
- 2.5 The tragic premise in *Doctor Faustus*
- 2.6 The strength of tragedy
- 2.7 Act I : *Doctor Faustus*: The Unscholarly attitude
- 2.8 Act II : The Unfolding of Faustus' tragedy
- 2.9 Acts III & IV : The Comic diversion of tragedy
- 2.10 Act V : The tragic denouement of *Doctor Faustus*
- 2.11 Marlowe's achievement in *Doctor Faustus*
- 2.12 *Doctor Faustus* : appeal to 20th century
- 2.13 References
- 2.14 Key Words
- 2.15 Questions
- 2.16 Annotations
- 2.17 Suggested Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit discusses how *Doctor Faustus* emerges as a great tragedy. The focus is on how it is modelled after a Christian morality play and how the play transcends the morality ethos within its structure to become a great human tragedy.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Doctor Faustus was written for the Admiral's Men and was staged in 1588. It's first Quarto edition was published in 1604. Several reprints of this Quarto appeared subsequently with some interpolations. However, in 1616, an enlarged edition of the

play was published containing many comic scenes absent in the 1604 edition. Contemporary editions of *Doctor Faustus* depend on both the 1604 and 1616 versions of the play.

2.2 DOCTOR FAUSTUS AS A TRAGEDY

One has to wade through several conflicting traditions to look at the dramatic core of *Doctor Faustus*. The influence of the traditions of orthodox Christianity, of the Reformation the Renaissance, of Paganism, of individualism and the incipient scientific modernity is exhaustive in the play. One is lost in the pervasive or conflicting claims of these traditions. However, the strength of the play lies in its disturbing impact on the audience, whether Elizabethan or modern a fact that vouchsafes that the play is not exhausted by the claims of a specific tradition but has an essential drama and a tragic rhythm.

Undoubtedly, *Doctor Faustus* explains a moment in history. Its tragedy is, irreducibly, a national or cultural predicament. As a dramatic genre, it has all the essentials that go with it. The play's power to disturb the audience is the power of its specific genre. Consequently, one has to see, in the first instance, how tragedy is a powerful discipline in a particular point of time and place and, secondly, how *Doctor Faustus* comes to realize the power of tragedy.

2.3 DOCTOR FAUSTUS AND THE MORALITY TRADITION

There is nothing new about the dramatic story of *Doctor Faustus*, – the story of human presumption, temptation, damnation and fall being the essential narrative of the mystery, miracle and morality plays. *Doctor Faustus* does not deviate either from the narrative or the thematic strain of the Christian drama preceding it. There is little drama in the divinely ordered destiny of man excepting the allegorical interplay between the forces of good and evil. The human situation is a pathetic comedy of evil, the evil that man, at best, could be tempted to, that all that man is capable of in his comic impotence is wrath and despair. The comic imbecility of man however, is a part of the divine totality of purpose as reflected in the world, the natural universe and history. As such, evil is not an antagonist but simply a lack or deficiency of being that is taken care of in the ultimate divine order where all being is ultimately good. Douglas Cole sums up the Christian dramatic tradition of Marlowe who chooses to transform the German Faust legend into a tragedy:

The English morality is staged as a homiletic allegory. Within its transparently didactic framework, the personifications of abstract vices and virtues contend for the allegiance of the central figure or figures that represent man. The characteristic plot is a contest, and its characteristic movement is from the seduction of mankind by vice to the salvation of mankind by virtue and repentance. The fundamental issue of the morality play is thus always the same, and it is by definition a serious one. The fundamental evil involved, sin in one or another of its particular forms, is always the same, and just as serious. But the dramaturgical expression of the issue and the evil, drawing from the heritage of the mystery plays, combined with moral gravity and comic effect; the comedy of evil persisted along with the allegory of evil; like the allegory, it found its support and basis in the doctrinal and homiletic formulation which was responsible for the morality tradition.¹

For his tragedy, Marlowe had to contend with a comedy and an allegory of evil, a didactic contest for dramatic conflict and homiletics for dramatic resolution. The dramatic thrust of the morality play was towards a slapstick in order to demonstrate human frivolity. The human protagonist suffers immensely but the suffering is retributive and axiomatic rather than real. The Faust legend Marlowe uses in the play eminently fits into the morality comedy form, for the necromancer, Faust, who sells his soul to the devil for swinish pleasures, effectively illustrates the human predicament in the morality plays.

2.4 THE HEROIC CHARACTER OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Obviously, Marlowe had not chosen to write another morality play to demonstrate the all pervasive divine providence though he sticks to its narrative and, to an extent, to its comedy. While being subordinate and adherent to doctrinal Christianity, Marlowe's Elizabethan protagonist, Faustus, a representative morality figure, has grown privy to the national and cultural self-assertiveness characteristic of the Elizabethans and to their Renaissance inspired humanistic aesthetics and intellectuality. The difference perhaps, lay more in Marlowe who, his theological training and scholarship notwithstanding, is a more aggressive representative of the aspiring and critical humanism. The comic imbecility of the representative human figure as presented in the Christian drama was definitely an anathema to Marlowe. In recasting the Faustus legend, Marlowe infused a heroic element in the Faustus narrative. The forces of evil are internalized in the human protagonist to the extent that man does not solely depend on the external temptation of evil. Similarly, the forces of good or of Christianity are made a part of the internal being of the protagonist. The earlier allegorical contest between the forces of good and evil in the human space becomes a fact of an irresolute coexistence within man and their competing claims always running short of a convincing victory of one over the other. Man is not a passive recipient of good and evil but can actively pursue them. Apparently, the human protagonist exercises choice and assumes responsibility but the choice does not negate the responsibility. The human consciousness which posits a diversity of feelings and aspirations generates suffering. Suffering is inevitable to a perceptive mind in a situation where cultural and intellectual aspirations are keenly felt. The condition of a perceptive individual in an aspiring culture resists, impulsively, any diactically formulated definition of his being. The resistance is unsucceeding in the given totality of the human situation but the struggle, and even the eventual failure, elevates man to a higher realm of heroic and critical activity. Such a human condition is tragic, for the greater the human abilities and endeavours, the greater is the self-lacerating human suffering and extent of failure.

2.5 THE TRAGIC PREMISE IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

What Marlowe attempts in *Doctor Faustus* is a tragic vision of heroic human possibilities. In the very tragic premise, Faustus is just the antithesis of the protagonists of the morality plays. Where his predecessors were passionless, Faustus, like Icarus, attempted, as the Chorus puts it, "to mount above his reach". If Morality heroes are self-effacing human beings, Faustus is superhuman in his ambitions. Though the condition is human, man could be as omniscient as God by virtue of his learning and, reasonably, should be as omnipotent as God. Where humanness does not limit Faustus' achievement, why should he be limited in power by the human condition? "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man" whereas his power should reach out "as far as doth the mind of man"² (Act I, Scene i, 22 and 58). Faustus aims simply

All things that move between the quiet poles
 Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
 Are but obey'd their several provinces.
 Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;..³
 (Act I, Scene i, 55-56)

The gap between the power Faustus can reach out to by virtue of his learning and the power of God could be filled by the “heavenly” necromancy, the black art opposed to God and forbidden to man. There is a specific way to human learning even in the much cherished new learning of the times. Necromancy is no tribute to human excellence and if there are limits to human learning or excellence, it is no reflection on the cherished humanist goals of the times. In his infinite ambition, Faustus degrades the human condition and his religious sacrilege is an accentuation of his human degradation.

2.6 THE STRENGTH OF TRAGEDY

Tragedy is essentially an interrogative process. The dramatic fusion of ideas, and action itself, presents a critical perspective of one on the other. Drama becomes tragic when it fights a limiting or unlimiting structure or formulation. Though as a dramatic narrative, *Doctor Faustus* is a Christian morality play, the evolution of *Doctor Faustus* as an intensely heroic protagonist begins the refashioning of the morality play. The play is a human tragedy for not only is Faustus tragically constituted in his boundless ambitions but, at the same time, the play questions the effectiveness of the cultural aspirations that shape his ambitions. Resultingly, the play provides a complex interaction between the human dimensions of the dramatic character and the ambiguities and ambivalences of the cultural situation the character is placed in.

2.7 ACT I : DOCTOR FAUSTUS : THE UNSCHOLARLY ATTITUDE

Much of the play is set in motion by the chorus itself – the dramatic premise and its ensuing implications in the narrative that Faustus in his attitude to religious and humanist learning, his twin accomplishments, lacks authenticity and has set on an Icareseque journey of self-destruction. As he proceeds to dismiss all disciplines of learning one after another in the beginning of the play, he betrays, professedly, ignorance rather than knowledge.

Bartlett Giamatti sums up Faustus' learning:

When he says Philosophy is limited, we see a man who confounds Aristotle with Peter Ramus, a man who treats the deep questions of being and not being and the technique of disputing well as if they were the same. When he says medicine is limited, we see a man who confuses gold and health, alchemy and physic, and who finds medicine wanting because it is not miracle, a lack he will remedy by turning to magic, miracle's parody. The soaring language does not offer us an ennobling spectacle; rather the opposite.⁴

Faustus' tragedy, Phoebe S. Spinard observes, is that of a “dilettante” who chooses not to choose. Faustus is merely a “dabbler in books who thinks himself an expert in all fields of knowledge”, “a seeker after surface show who will not bestir himself to look for the roots of things”. He is not “just a bad Christian; he is a bad humanist.”⁵

Where knowledge should be strength it turns out to be a weakness in *Doctor Faustus*. Knowledge is power but the desire for knowledge for the sake of power demeans both knowledge and power. In fact, the sixteenth century witnessed a certain conflict between the contemplative and the utilitarian ends of knowledge. The orthodox Christian religion definitely erred in its absolutist approach to knowledge as contemplation, driving many a scholar into the ways of the world. Faustus, like many Renaissance inspired scholars, betrays a utilitarian weakness for knowledge. This has made the disintegration of humanism far more easy than that of orthodox Christianity. "Faustus' plenty makes him poor" – this is the tragedy of *Doctor Faustus* and of his age too.

The subversion of knowledge Faustus intends has serious personal overtones for him. The new aesthetic and intellectual game plan entails reformulation of his identity by the newly felt desires and ambitions, an identity culturally so well fixed by his learning and vocation and constituting his very being. His heterodoxy require a basic transformation in his being and reformulation of his thought processes and beliefs. But Faustus simply walks past himself, a self so entrenched in orthodoxy, and is driven back continually to the untransformed self. Heterodoxy is easy to desire but difficult to cultivate and far more difficult to assimilate.

It is clear from the beginning of the play that Faustus is tragically deficient or too distracted for the great act of transformation he sets up for himself and for which he is otherwise well-equipped with his qualities of mind, temperament and training. The profound scholar that he is, Faustus is scared that his scholarship, in its true implications, might thwart his desires. He substitutes "conceit" for resolution and fantasy for the hard facts of knowledge. Faustus has no response to what the Good Angel has to say but the words of the Evil Angel are always appetizing. While he requires to "Read, read the scriptures" as the Good Angel points out to his unscholarly inclinations, he is easily "glutted with Conceit" with the words of the Evil Angel. Desire and Conceit do not generate determination. As Valdes tells him and as Faustus repeatedly tells himself, he has to be "resolute" but Faustus cannot unlearn all his learning, though, at the same time, he is not able to realize his learning. A victim of the tragic division between the contemplative and functional needs of learning in his time, Marlowe's Faustus has to begin his education after his learning is over. Experience is a greater teacher than the book could ever be. Curiously enough, Mephistophilis, the great champion of Christian heterodoxy, begins to teach Faustus, not the virtues of religious revolt but those of the orthodox religion – that Lucifer preceded Faustus in his revolt of "pride and insolence" and that hell is no land of freedom and aspirations but simply the agonizing "loss of the eternal joys of heaven" and its "everlasting bliss".

Act I establishes Faustus' tragedy. The subplot of Wagner, the scholars and the clown dramatizes Faustus's predicament in very crude terms. The clown "would give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of Mutton" and would raise the devils effortlessly. What Faustus aspires through his studious revolt is farcical.

2.8 ACT II : THE UNFOLDING OF FAUSTUS' TRAGEDY

Act II unfolds Faustus' tragedy in greater detail. The egocentric self-temptation of Act I gives way to an agonizing conflict between the religiously constituted self and the aberrations of its human impulses. In the opening soliloquy of Scene i, of Act II, Faustus defines his own tragedy

Now, Faustus, must
Thou needs be damn'd and canst thou not be sav'd.

.....

Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub:
Now go not backward: no, Faustus, be resolute:
Why waver'st thou? O, something soundeth in mine ears,
'Abjure this magic, turn to God again!'
Ay and Faustus will turn to God again.
To God? He loves thee not;
The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite...
Wherein is fix'd the love of Belzebub:
To him I'll build an altar and a church,
And offer lukewarm blood of new born babes⁶ (II, i, 1-15)

Faustus has damned himself through his egocentric indulgences and is beyond repair. The incorrigible state makes Faustus despair in God, a despair that makes him continue his self-indulgence for which the king of devils provides the fascination and the means. Obviously, despair is not totally the resulting state of his self-indulgences but has rather shaped his self pursuits. Faustus' state of mind transcends his mental frame and is, possibly, rooted in his particular religious persuasion. The new protestant faith of the Elizabethans experiences a chasm between God and his worshippers, having repudiated the intermediary role of the Holy Roman Church and its order of the saints, rituals and other processes of salvation. In the sceptical mood about the Catholic Church's religious practices, a faith in God and His Justness came to be intertwined with a certain despair in God. Despair reflects a fear of God and the want of a satisfying or self-fulfilling experience of Him. Faustus's despair and his refusal to believe in his salvation, as the orthodox church would ordain him, leading to the kind of blasphemy he makes, is closely associated, as critics like C. Lily, B. Cambell and C.L. Barber view, with the protestant "casuistry". The protestants looked upon conscience as a more effective way, than the prescribed rituals, of reaching God. Marlowe does not champion the protestant's individual path to God, but uses blasphemy in the Faust legend for dramatising heroic possibilities of the Renaissance inspired aspirations. Significantly, Faustus does not express faithlessness in God. He wants to be like Him, and, as despair sets in, he only feels that God would not love him and wonders whether He could harm him after he has deserted Him for the company of Mephostophilis.

As despair leads to the self-indulgent belief that divine providence as well as the divine wrath cannot reach him, Faustus signs the pact with the devil giving away his soul in return for his services.

However, Faustus' pact with the devil is as self-indulgent as his rejection of divinity, both being subject to human vacillation. As Faustus fluctuates between despair and repentance, so does he flee from the devil, and surrender to the devil alternately renewing his contact with the devil after every bout of repentance. The pattern of self-willed despair and damnation becomes so intense and pervasive that in a given moment, he feels despairingly damned and also, self-assuredly, defiant of divinity. His "blood congeals" when he signs the pact and feels his arm inscribed with a divine warning – "Homofuge", Man flee, but there is the self-assurance that his senses have deceived him and, even if he were not deceived, he would not flee from the pact.

If divinity is unsatisfying and, thus frustrating, so is the devil unable to answer or give every thing he asks for. If he could retain his faith in God in spite of despairing and rejecting Him, he would stick to the devil for whatever it could give him for there is no alternative to God and the devil; he is born and bred in the realm of God but has chosen to live defiantly and voluptuously in the realm of the devil.

The morality structure of the play minus the morality kind of a submissive hero but one with an individualistic conceit builds up the tragedy of Faustus. It is not totally Faustus' sinful conceit that gives the particular kind of tragic agony to the play. In his conceit, Faustus looks askance at God and convential Christianity as to why they seek the abject surrender of man and thus degrade him particularly when man is made in the image of God and craves to be like Him on the earth: "Be thou on earth as Jove

is in the sky.” Marlowe lends justification to this human aspiration in the evolution of the Faustus character. Faustus’ impulsiveness, conceding a certain measure of human fallibility, is the intensity of the human bitterness – Marlowe holds out for a dramatic statement. Marlowe’s reported atheism has nowhere touched the point of faithlessness in God but faith in God to Marlowe, as to Faustus as well, could be born of the excellent human potentialities, that should, essentially, reflect divine omnipotence. Nicholas Brooke writes:

The dramatic tension of the Faustus story as Marlowe presents it lies primarily in the fact that Faustus is determined to satisfy the demands of his nature as God had made him to be himself a deity and that is forbidden: and it can only be achieved by a conscious rejection of the God who created him in his own image but denied him (as much as Lucifer) fulfillment of that image.⁷

Consequently,

...Faustus’s self-damnation is wholly positive, achieved by an assertion not a failure of Will...Faustus’s Hell is not a place of torture, it is Hell only in that it is an absence of heaven. It is an extreme of anti-God whose nature is deliberately opposed to the Angels’ joyous submission to the service of omnipotent Heaven is the subjection of self, Hell in this sense is the assertion of self...Marlowe’s philosophical position is that man has certain overriding desires whose realization is denied by any form of servitude, and the order of God is, as Milton’s Satan observed, an order of servitude.⁸

The tragedy in *Doctor Faustus* gains strength in this rigidity of protest. The protest is made in the agonising awareness that it entails the deprivation of heavenly joys. Faustus cries out in desperation:

When I behold the heavens, then I repent,
And curse thee, wicked Mephistophilis,
Because thou hast depriv’d me of those joys.⁹ (II, ii, 1-3)

Faustus’s rebellion is a desperate one for it loses more than it gains. But Faustus “is resolved” and shall “never repent”. He sees no reason either to “die” or to “basely despair”. For all its deprivation, his human condition has its own promise:

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander’s love, and Oenon’s death?
And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes,
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephostophilis?¹⁰ (II, ii, 25-30)

Even Christ cannot save Faustus, as Lucifer says, as His “justness” precludes those like Faustus who are assertive of their worth. Faustus belongs to Lucifer who championed a similar protest against God earlier and experiences heavenly deprivation but pursues his freedom.

The dramatic causes provided through Faustus’s ambitions and the temptations of the devil do not stand out as significantly as contributory causes as does Faustus’s self-determination to protest against God.

2.9 ACTS III & IV : THE COMIC DIVERSION OF TRAGEDY

Act II unfolds the total tragedy of *Dr. Faustus*. Both Act I and II dramatize the rigour and tenacity of Faustus’s rebellion against his own rootedness in orthodox religion

and against his deeply cherished heavenly joys and against his frustrating sense of their deprivation. However, while Faustus's rebellion is heroic in its assertion of the human spirit, the course of Faustus rebellion through the third and the fourth acts is totally unheroic. Faustus seeks and Mephistophilis plans, rather a series of comic indulgences mainly to distract the former's mind from the tormenting religious awareness. Faustus has no choice but to delude and delight himself in trivial and vicious pleasures. He tells Mephistophilis.

Sweet Mephistophilis, thou pleasest me;
 Whilst I am here on earth, let me be cloyed
 With all things that delight the heart of man,
 My four and twenty years of liberty
 I'll spend in pleasure and in dalliance¹¹ (III, I 58-62)

"Pleasure" and "dalliance" become the course of Faustian revolt – pomp and display in the courts of Europe, vengeful humiliation of the papal court in Rome. As a scholar set to question the divine omniscience, in the beginning of the play, Faustus sought indulgent knowledge and half-truths. Now, a confirmed rebel, Faustus remains a voluptuary. Marlowe did not draw the rebellious Faustus heroically but his point was that his act of rebellion, whatever may be the course of it, against God is immeasurably heroic, for few would dare such a rebellion. Greater rebels than Faustus, as in Marlowe's other plays like *Tamburlaine* was far more limiting in their ambitions and tasks.

2.10 ACT V : THE TRAGIC DENOUEMENT OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Further, as Faustus reaches his rebellious or tragic death in Act V, the nature of his death and the attendant torment bespeaks a magnificent tragedy, if not that of a magnificent tragic hero:

But Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned: the serpent that tempted Eve
 may be saved, but not Faustus...Gush forth blood instead of tears!¹²
 (V, ii, 41-42)

The tragic conflict does not abate until the end. Faustus seeks an alternate heaven through the devilish Helen:

Her lips suck forth my soul: See where it flies!
 Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
 Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
 And all is dross that is not Helena.¹³ (V, i, 102-105)

Faustus knew that his revolt against God does not go beyond a futile gesture of defiance but the gesture is not only characteristic but worthy of Man given his magnificence. Faustus dies questioning the very validity of human existence:

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
 Or why is this immortal that thou hast?

 This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
 Unto some brutish breast! all beasts are happy

 O soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,
 And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!¹⁴ (V, iii, 175-190)

2.11 MARLOWE'S ACHIEVEMENT IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

The inevitable question that arises at the end of the play is: Faustus's achievements and failures notwithstanding, what does Marlowe achieve in the play with its morality structure and theme, the irrepressible and wayward hero and the farcical subplot. The play itself is very weak in form, more a cluster of scenes with no intelligible act division. The poetry and the elevated dramatic style belongs more to the individual passages than to the play. There is no progressive dramatic action with the prologue enunciating the tragic fate that awaits *Dr. Faustus* in the beginning itself and with Faustus himself presenting his tragic predicament from beginning to end.

Doctor Faustus is essentially a static play of tragic irresolution. In fact, the play stagnates so much in the middle sections of the third and fourth acts, which are meant to distract Faustus, that it distracts the audience as well.

Marlowe has a twofold aim in the play. He would write a morality play and hence the substantial stasis and comedy and the undramaticity of the play associated with the morality tradition. In writing the morality play, he would rewrite the human story which has become very thoughtful, spectacular and poignant. To the comedy of evil, Marlowe adds a heroic tragedy. The twofold play, as J.P. Brockbank observes, serves a purpose for the audience:

In fear we acquiesce in the littleness and powerlessness of man, and in pity we share his sufferings and endorse his protest.¹⁵

2.12 *DOCTOR FAUSTUS* : APPEAL TO 20TH CENTURY

Though loose in form and disjointed in its dramatic power, *Doctor Faustus* has tremendous appeal to the audience. In fact, the play is nearer to the psychic experience of the modern man who experiences a split personality and copes with it through the stratagems of neurosis à la Faustus. For Kenneth L. Golden,

Like modern man, Faustus is the victim of a Splitting of the will. He rejects Christianity Because it would hamper his boundless desires, Yet he also cannot escape Christianity, or at Least certain aspects of it – especially guilt and The sense of sin that leads to despair. The Psychological law embodied in the common dictum “Genius to madness is near allied”, Jung found occurring again and again in the sense that the conscious and the unconscious elements of the psyche exist in a compensatory relationship.... Faustus' neurosis – the split, dissociated nature of his psyche – is a match for any of the “double Thinking of the modern mass mind.”¹⁶

In evolving the emerging duality of the Elizabethan mind, Marlowe anticipates the depth psychology of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung:

Both Freud and Jung see Unconscious as a timeless realm or, to put it another way, one containing the past, the present and the future. Further, even the so-called conscious mind is not separated from the unconscious in any absolute way and contains opposites existing side by side.¹⁷

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6. Christopher Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*, Act II Scene I 1-15.
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9. Christopher Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*, p.22.
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17. Ibid.

2.14 KEY WORDS

1. **Casuistry:** Derived from Latin *casus* meaning case, the word pertains to the application of moral principles, largely in theology, to singular cases of conscience. The protestant focus on individual conscience in deciding religious matters as against the authority of the church in such matters has brought the phrase, protestant casuistry into popular case. Since moral or religious law is always abstract, hence the need for casuistry. Even early

Christianity depended on casuistry for solving the individual religious problems of the people. St. Paul used casuistry at great length in his first epistle to the Corinthians to define the moral law on the eating of sacrificial meat, on work and virginity etc.

2. **Farce:** Latin *Farsa* from *farcire*, to stuff viands. Originally an interlude between the parts of a serious play, farce as a form of comedy presents a boisterous action. Rarely an independent play, even a good comedy like Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Twelfth Night* are difficult to imagine without the element of farce that abounds in these plays.
3. **Icarus:** Son of Daedalus in Greek mythology. Daedalus, along with his son, Icarus, having incurred the wrath of King Minos, for their cunning activities flee by fastening wings to their bodies. Rather overambitious, Icarus flies very near the sun. His waxen wings melt under the heat of the Sun and Icarus falls into the sea. Since then, Icarus becomes a synonym for an overreacher.
4. **Necromancy:** Derived from the Greek *nekros*, a dead body, necromancy is the art of divining the future by consuming up the spirits of the dead and questioning them. Though the practice had been in vogue right from the times of ancient Greece, it was only in the middle ages, that it acquired an anti-religious character and came to be viewed very seriously by the Christian Church.
5. **Neurosis:** Dissociation of personality due to the existence of complexes. When complexes become incompatible with the conscious part of the personality, the dissociation of personality takes place creating a personality split with the incompatible complexes seeking an indirect expression. In the modern world, one does not suffer from a conflict of conscious compulsions but from neurosis, the human personality seeking an indirect or vicarious expression of multivalent feelings. The term was made popular by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, psychologists in the early part of the 20th century who are responsible for the science of mental health called psychoanalysis.
6. **Skepticism:** A critical attitude in philosophy that ranges from refusing to admit the possibility of knowledge to subjecting every claim of knowledge to strict proof. The third century Greek philosopher, Sextus Empiricus, Rene Descartes in the seventeenth century and Bertrand Russell in the 20th century championed skepticism. Over the centuries, skepticism or skeptical attitude is instrumental in checking all extravagant claims to knowledge.
7. **Slapstick:** Knock about comedy. Slapdash methods. Originally a slapstick was a wand made of two flat pieces of wood with a handle. It was used by the harlequin in a pantomime. When he struck one of his companions, the slapstick made a loud report.

2.15 QUESTIONS

Questions

1. Discuss *Doctor Faustus* as a play in the English Morality Tradition.
2. Discuss *Doctor Faustus* as an Aristotelean tragedy.
3. Discuss how *Doctor Faustus* illustrates English protestianism.

4. Critically examine how *Doctor Faustus* attempts to depart from a comedy of evil to become a tragedy of human heroism.
5. Examine Marlowe's intellectual and dramatic achievement in *Doctor Faustus*.
6. Examine *Doctor Faustus* as a tragedy of Neurosis and relate it to the predicament of contemporary man.

2.16 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

- a. Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,
Whereby whole cities have escap'd the Plague,
And thousand desperate maladies been eased?
- b. Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.
- c. The Emperor shall not live but my leave,
Nor any potentate of Germany
- d. Away with such vain fancies, and despair:
Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub.
- e. The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite,
Wherein is fixed the love of Belzebub.
- f. Homo, fuge: whither should I fly?
- g. If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell.
My senses are deceive'd here's nothing writ:-
- h. Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives tales.
- i. Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just:
There's none but I have interest in the same.

2.17 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 IRONY AND THE TRAGIC DILEMMA IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction : Nature and Definition of irony
- 3.2 Marlowe: An ironist
- 3.3 Irony of Faustus' aspirations
- 3.4 Faustus' tragic dilemma
- 3.5 Self -multiplicative irony in *Doctor Faustus*
- 3.6 Summing Up Tragic irony and dilemma in *Doctor Faustus*
- 3.7 References
- 3.8 Keywords
- 3.9 Questions
- 3.10 Annotations
- 3.11 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit helps you to understand irony as the distinguishing feature of *Doctor Faustus'* tragedy and how the essence of irony and tragedy lies in a dilemma with which *Doctor Faustus* dies without being able to resolve it.

3.1 NATURE & DEFINITION OF IRONY

In the preceding unit, we discussed how *Doctor Faustus* holds a sort of balance of opposites between the morality and the heroic strains of tragedy. This oppositional balance is not simply thematic or intellectual but is the core of drama, and particularly that of tragedy, defined as irony. The subtlety of irony, in the form of a flux of opposite experiences distinguishes a good play from an inferior one and, to an extent, drama itself, which attempts to realize the human paradoxes in the dramatic action, and distinguishes itself from other genres of literature.

Dramatic irony is an intermediary between the subjectively felt ironies of experience on the part of the dramatist and the objectively found ironies of the world. Understood textually, dramatic irony refers to the possibilities of a multivocal or a privileged reading as against a popular reading of a play that is not available to the character and, at times, to the playwright himself. Renaissance drama favours irony

or an ironic reading by virtue of its transitional experience wherein the acceptance of medieval values has become uncomfortable and, at the same time, there is a hesitation to accept the aspirations of the new age. Consequently, the transitional experience of the times required a dramatic strategy or trope that would play an uncharacteristic role of remaining subtly evasive instead of standardizing the dramatic experience. The term irony was given literary sophistication by Friedrich Schlegel in the nineteenth century. He liberated the term from "simple verbal raillery" to explain the paradoxes in Shakespeare and the romantic poets. In Schlegel's understanding, Bert O. States writes:

Irony was the highest principle of art, and the poet stands ironically above his creation, as God does above his own; the creation is utterly objective in character, and yet it reveals the subjective wisdom, will and love of the creator. Thus the author pervades his characters and their actions but he is never subjectively identifiable with them. Like God, he always expresses less than he thinks.¹

Crediting irony with an infinitely variable strategy for encompassing nature's possibilities and an ability to summon "vital tension—producing mechanism of dramatic action", Bert O. States attempts to define irony:

By irony, in its widest context, I do not refer to that negativity of attitude we associate with common irony, but rather to the very principle of negation itself. The difference between irony as dry mock or perverse negativity, and irony as an unlimited capacity to negate, or oppose ideas, is not a difference in the kind of operation the mind performs but rather a difference in the mind's intentions towards the observed content. Hamlet is ironic in the first sense. Shakespeare creating Hamlet is ironic in the second... Irony is the dramatist's version of the negative proposition. It helps him to avoid error, and by this I mean that it widens his vision, allows him to see more circumspectively the possibilities in his "argument"; and in so doing it ensures his not falling into the incomplete attitudes of naivete, sentimentality, selfrighteousness, or unearned faith. In short, the complete dramatist-- if there is such a person -- is unironically ironic.²

3.2 MARLOWE: AN IRONIST

More than any dramatist of his time, Marlowe faced the task of intellectual and artistic correction or reformulation. He had no more the world of established truths to live in but rather one of half-truths, the age-old truths which have become half-truths by his time and, further, the axioms of the new humanist learning which are limiting in themselves. The Christian faith in his time was at loggerheads with the new humanist values of material prosperity and pagan aesthetics. There was also the schism between the Catholics and the Protestants within the Christian faith. A scholar of vast learning, unlike many of his contemporaries, Marlowe could not help a critical and even a sceptical attitude towards both the dogmatic and the resurgent ideas current in his time. Scepticism, undoubtedly, represented the intellectual acumen and rigour of the Elizabethan mind. Marlowe's intellectual predecessors are the Latinist Erasmus and the great Thomas More. In *The Praises of Folly*, written in England at Thomas More's house, Erasmus, formulating the concept of serio-ludure--the serious or the great as inseparable from the weak or the frivolous-- sums up the ironic perspective necessary for the cultural experience of the times. More wrote a companion piece to *The Praises of Folly* in Latin called *Utopia* (1515) presenting the tragi-comicality of his times.

Irony as a self-defeating human presumption was the structure of medieval Miracle and Morality plays. Marlowe follows the dramatic form of these plays but the point

of Marlowe's irony is a dilemma on the part of man whether there are infinite possibilities in him or all that he confidently feels about himself is simply a presumption. The essential irony implicit in the Miracle and Morality plays precludes human tragedy while the Marlovian irony makes the human dilemma poignantly tragic.

The nature of irony in *Doctor Faustus* is confounded by the fact that Marlowe nowhere articulated either his religious convictions or his humanist yearnings. It is equally difficult to say whether Marlowe suffered a schism within his mind with regard to the Catholic or the Protestant faith or with regard to the values of the Christian faith as against the emergent humanist values.

Except stating that Marlowe was deeply sensitive to the raging intellectual and religious controversies of his time, it is difficult to say what Marlowe's specific persuasions were. Critical perception often centers around Marlowe as a cynical Nietzsche bent on dismantling all orthodoxies. This view has its basis in Marlowe's "atheist lecture" which led to the charges of Richard Baines, an informer, and Thomas Kyd, against Marlowe for blasphemy before the Lord Keeper. But this perception is very tentative, especially in view of Faustus' last soliloquy containing the most passionate religious faith. Obviously, Marlowe's atheism was polemical against religious obscurantists; and the religious passions of the dying Faustus do betray Marlowe's deep religiosity.

With Marlowe's convictions eluding any definite critical point of view, Marlovian irony has to be credited to his dramatic genius that could evaluate all kinds of experience with an unfailing objectivity. What Marlowe presents in *Doctor Faustus* are two distinct structures of irony, one based on the theological concepts of sin and damnation and the other on the self-limiting structures of human possibilities. Marlowe's specific dramatic achievement lies not only in making one irony intelligible in terms of another but in fusing them in such a manner that one heightens the other.

3.3 THE IRONY OF FAUSTUS' ASPIRATIONS

The original Faust Book on which Marlowe bases his play did not have serious theological or human implications. Marlowe gives Faustus both a theological and human motivation. Faustus experiences spiritual pain and intense suffering caused by the nature of both his religious and human impulses. There is an irony implicit in the very combination of religious and human impulses.

A doctor of divinity and a master of several human sciences like Medicine and Law, Faustus is fully aware of the nature and indispensability of religious faith on the one hand, and the nature and possibilities of human excellence and achievement on the other. A religious faith is a positive and humble acceptance of human possibilities and the formulation of a concept of a power superior to man and omnipotent in itself. Similarly, non-religious human learning is based on the concept of human reason as the regulator of human affairs. Pride, both religious and secular, should adhere to the formulations that shape religious faith and human learning. There is no scope for any human achievement in religion and for godly power in human learning.

The basic irony of Faustus's aspirations is one of misplacement. He misplaces human learning in the realm of religion and the power of religion in the realm of human learning and achievement. He wishes to be "divine in show" and would "live and die" in Aristotle's works. Logic has "ravished" him. The divine show, Faustus wants, is not of god but of man. Similarly, logic which has ravished him by its analytics should produce "miracles". Medicine, which has saved several cities from plague and cured several maladies, should help him to "heap up" gold and should make Men

"live eternally" and also "raise the dead" to life. Law does not suit human excellence and only divinity comes nearest to it but divinity does not recognize human excellence but presupposes human sin:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.

Why, then, belike we must sin, and so consequently die.

Ay, we must die an everlasting death.

What doctrine call you this, Che sera, sera--

What will be, shall be. Divinity, adieu!³

(1,i,42 -47)

The belief in religion is an admission of human sinfulness and religion must be dispensed with but Faustus does not consider whether there is any human failure outside the realm of religious formulations of sin and, further, as Douglas Cole points out, Faustus

arrives at his fatalistic conclusion by joining together two premises which themselves are glaring half-truths for each of the propositions he cites from the Bible is drawn from contexts and passages which unite the helplessness of the sinner with the redeeming grace of God... "For the wages of sinne is death but the gifte of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"... "If we acknowledge our sinnes he is faithful and just to forgive our sinnes to cleanse Us from all Unrighteousness."⁴

Phoebe S. Spinard observes that Faustus' translation of Che sera, sera could just as easily have been, "What shall be will be". In the first, there is a rejection of will; in the second, an affirmation at least of the "possibilites of the will". Faustus is indeed refusing to consider his "being" in God, but by disposing of the question along with the answer, he is betraying the humanist goal of seeking the truth of "being" outside of religious systems.⁵

3.4 FAUSTUS' TRAGIC DILEMMA

Faustus' dilemma is essentially that while religion precludes human possibilites other than sin and repentance, the Humanist thought and learning gives him no solace being in itself self-limiting. Faustus is frustrated by the divine limitation of the human condition but the human condition, left to itself is as frustrating as the divine limitation. 'Yet, art Thou Faustus, and a man' and Faustus' dilemma is tragic for the human aspirations are whetted by divine power but the divine power is not within the human realm even if human capabilities are strained to the utmost. There is no escape from a sense of limitation, either religiously felt or humanly realized. Hence the need for religious faith, however constrictive it may be.

The human condition, at its best, is, thus, a delicately built irony of unrealizable ambitions. The irony compounds itself when man does not contend with this irony. Transgressing this irony is demeaning the human condition and subverting religious faith. Faustus' acts of necromancy and the sale of his soul to the devil are diabolic. The diabolic is the very antithesis of the human as well as the divine.

3.5 SELF-MULTIPLICATIVE IRONY IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

The play presents a course of regenerative irony, for Faustus having strained the delicate irony of human condition has set it on a course sui generis. The theological

formulation of sin could never be farther than human truism. The greater the man tries to be, the less he becomes in fact. Douglas Cole writes:

Doctor Faustus is a man who of his own conscious wilfulness brings tragedy and torment crashing down upon his head, the pitiful and fearful victim of his own ambitions and desires. The irony with which Marlowe habitually invests the downfalls of his protagonists is here wrought to its finest and sharpest point; it is an irony based on theological concepts of sin and damnation, and dramatically expressed in two major patterns of action: the repetitive pattern of moral choice leading to the alternative of spiritual destruction and the pattern of contrast between Faustus' grand imaginative designs and the actual, vacuous accomplishments of his magical career.⁶

Faustus' achievements through his pact with the devil are in an inverse proportion to the magnitude of his ambitions. Ironically, Faustus's fatalistic interpretation of the scriptural assertion that what shall be will be becomes a matter of self-conscious choice. Further, the choice becomes a repetitive pattern of continual wilfulness in the face of an agonizing awareness that the God he rejects is the one he continues to cherish. Necromantic books are "heavenly". The magician he wishes to be is a "mighty God". He rebels against God but the divine consciousness characterizes even his rebellion. God, always, continues to be the measure of all things for Faustus.

The irony of Faustus' revolt does not end with its divine awareness. Lucifer and Mephostophilis whom Faustus courts, share the ironic predicament of Faustus-- Rejecting the God but cherishing Him. Mephostophilis describes Lucifer's revolt against God as not heroic but as one of "pride and insolence" and hell is the absence of "heavenly joy and everlasting bliss". Faustus himself looks upon his own revolt of "desperate thoughts" against God as securing "eternal death".

No dramatic character could be a creation of such an enduring irony as Faustus is. His is the paradoxical case of a revolt against something that constitutes his very being. Irony builds up the character of Faustus and the play so forcefully that the greater the revolt of Faustus is against God, greater still is his divine awareness. Irony builds up not merely the paradox of Faustus' revolt but, also through the paradox, intensifies Faustus' self-awareness and his sense of the human condition.

Now, Faustus, must thou needs be damn'd?
And canst thou not be sav'd. What boots it, then, to think of God or heaven?
Away with such fancies, and despair;
Despair in God, and trust in Beelzebub.....
Abjure this magic, turn to God again!

.....
To God? He loves thee not.
The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite,
Wherein is fix'd the love of Belzebub.
To him, I'll build an altar and a church.⁷

(II, i 1-15)

The tragic dilemma in *Faustus* does not rest in his choice between God and the devil but in their inseparable coexistence within his human condition. Fear of God and damnation and the trust of the devil emanate from the human condition. God is the heavenly joy of human limitations and the devil is the appetite of human aspirations. The heavenly joy lies for man in a condition of human limitation and a tragic torment awaits in the human state of promise and excellence. Both god and the devil define man in a mutuality and confront him with an acute tragic dilemma as to whether he be content with the humanly limiting bliss or contend tragically with the magnificence of human promise and possibility.

The tragic dilemma is all the more tormenting for there is no truly human resolution of this dilemma. God calls upon him to return to Him but the devil manipulates him to retain his contractual bond with him.

The parity of God and the devil in the centrality of man, however, is only a stage in the human predicament of Faustus and does not last long. Faustus has not, in fact, rejected one in favour of the other but has replaced God by the devil, with the divine awareness constituting his being, remaining more or less intact.

The divine awareness is a sense of humility and veneration towards a superior being. What Faustus gave as a devout soul to God, he would now give to the devil raising an altar and building a church. He would complete the bond with the devil using the same words, "Consummatum est", Christ used in completing the "work of redemption on Calvary". However, the devil does not redeem Faustus from his divine awareness but rather intensifies it and generates deep despair:

Home fuge: whither should I fly?
If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell.⁸

(II, i. 75-76)

The devil is no less despairing of Faustus' ambitions of divine power on earth. Neither could Faustus give wholehearted commitment to the devil nor could the devil keep up the obligations of the contract. Both despair of god, reject Him and lead a life of distraction as wounded rebels rather than as defiant fighters. The analogy between the man and the devil ends there for the loss is gruesome for Faustus who can only fall back on his despair whereas the devil could live on the thoughts of avenging their defeat as ineffectual angles.

The signing of the pact with the devil starts unfolding the fundamental irony of Faustus' aspirations. Faustus signed the pact only to undo himself totally. The pact signed to gain absolute power on earth only leads to Faustus' mental disintegration, for what he gets through the pact is only an increased despair in God as well as in the human condition. Mephostophilis would not answer Faustus' query about hell for it reminded him of his own tortured state of being. He wouldn't answer Faustus' question about the creation of the earth as well, for the creator is his bitter enemy nor could he give Faustus a wife, for marriage is a divine sacrament. Ironically, the show of the Seven Deadly Sins, he arranges is what he could give and what Faustus could relish vicariously. The period of contract of twenty four years turns out to be not only a denial of Faustus' aspirations but one of a progressive degradation of Faustus as a man. Douglas Cole writes:

In not choosing the God in his desire to be as God, Faustus has provided not only for his destruction, but also for his degradation. Instead of reaching the stature of demi-God or even commander of the world, Faustus becomes an imperial entertainer. The restless scholar hemmed in by the limits of mortality gains his satisfaction by playing the practical jokes on the papal court: the man who looked forward to controlling the lives and the power of all the earthly rulers now becomes the magician of the emperor, building castles in the air, and presenting spirits that resemble great men of the past.⁹

Further, the fascinating devil providing allurements turns out to be a tormentor threatening punishment as Faustus attempts to seek divine grace which amounts to disobedience to the devil.

The devil is temptation, distraction and sovereign power but doesn't stand by the contractual obligations. Faustus who aspired to rule the world cannot even insist on

the devil's obligations much less abrogate the contract for its breach but meekly assures obedience without insisting on the same from the devil.

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul,
For disobedience to my sovereign Lord.¹⁰

Sweet Mephostophilis, entreat thy lord
To pardon my unjust presumption,
And with my blood again I will confirm
My former vow I made to Lucifer.¹¹

(V, i, 74-81)

Faustus asks Mephostophilis to torment the old man who agonizes him with his advice. Mephostophilis' reply is significant.

His faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;
But what I may afflict his body with
I will attempt, which is but little worth.¹²
(V, i, 85-90)

Implicitly, Faustus could be tormented, for his faith in God is so shaky, but not the old man. Obedience to the devil and faithlessness to God bring the same fate. In fact, the devil heaps degradation whereas God could only pose a serious limitation on his human condition. Further, faith in God could be such a terrifying human strength that the devil would not dare to touch him. If the human condition is limiting, the limitation is a virtue, and a divine blessing too. Faustus should not have despaired in being Faustus and a man but should have felt supreme confidence in his human state. This realization couldn't be farther from Faustus but the human will would rather suffer its choice than retract meekly even if the choice is degrading and torturous.

At best, Faustus can distract himself from the gravity of wilful choice with whatever appeals to the baser human instincts. He asks for Helen but Mephistophilis can only give him a devilish shadow of Helen in whom we can read his predicament.

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.-
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.

.....
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.¹³
(V i, 95-100)

Imagery builds up the irony of Faustus' predicament. Douglas Cole sums up the ironical thrust in Faustus' passions:

Helen, whose beauty caused Troy to burn, will do the same for Faustus; the immortality offered by the kisses of a demon lover is an eternity in hell; the soul that is sucked forth cannot be given back again; hell not heaven is in these lips; the flames of Jupiter that destroyed admiring Semele are the flames of this Helene's abode which will destroy a hapless Faustus; wanton Faustus, like Arethusa, will hold the burning sun in his arms but not without fiery pain.¹⁴

The apostrophe to the devil in Helen's form is a desperate attempt to heighten his predicament and allow it to reach its logical end where the nature of his undoing comes in full force to his realization.

But Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned; the
serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus¹⁵
(V, ii, 13-15)

3.6. SUMMING UP : TRAGIC IRONY AND DILEMMA IN DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Faustus comes to full repentance at the end of the play. The last soliloquy is an admission of the possibility of divine grace and forgiveness. Ironically, the realization comes at a time when the devil is around to torture him to death and if only his doom could be postponed, he would gain the divine forgiveness. Faustus willed his destruction so long, now he craves for time to be able to gain his salvation. But Faustus knew that the possibility of repentance and forgiveness waited on him until he reached his end. As he dies with all the opportunities of repentance and forgiveness thrown away wantonly, what remains is the burden of the human condition that contained the germs of his degradation and destruction.

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
... This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
unto some brutish beast! All beasts are happy ...¹⁶
(V, iii. 100-110)

The pain of devilish torture is so intense, Faustus cries to God to save him from the tortures of the devil:

O God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet, for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me
Impose some end to my incessant pain.¹⁷
(V. iii. 100-104)

Faustus who sought the devil to oppose God, seeks God's mercy and his innate forgiveness to rescue him from the devil. Christian theology proves itself forcefully in Faustus' predicament. However, its point is religious didacticism whereas Marlowe brings out irony and a tragic dilemma. For Christian theology, Faustus' predicament falls short of a tragedy for he was motivated by nothing but presumption which could have been easily remedied by repentance and, consequently he could have been rescued by divine forgiveness. But for Marlow, the immensity of the human condition forces desperate choices on man which could not justifiably be termed right or wrong but which have to be understood in terms of reality that constitutes human condition. What happened to Faustus may justify Christian theology but what it explains are the irredeemable paradoxes of man. Hence the irony of Faustus' career and his tragic dilemma. Douglas Cole sums up the Marlovian irony:

For Marlowe, the tragedy lies, not in the inevitable falling off of human achievement from the ideal, but in the travesty of the ideal that the deeds of man so often represent, and in the illusory aura of nobility with which man persistently invests his base desires. It is the tragic view of the ironist who sees in man the responsible cause of his own undoing, who presents man as a destructive agent who, by the abuse of freedom and will, persistently, betrays others and inevitably betrays himself.¹⁸

3.7 REFERENCES

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2. Ibid.,p.xviii.
3. Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*, p.5.
4. Douglas Cole. *Suffering: Evil in the plays of Christopher Marlowe*. Princeton, Princeton UP.1962,p.198.
5. Phoebe S. Spinard. "The Dilettante's Lie in *Doctor Faustus*". *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 24,2, 1982. pp.245 to 247.
6. Douglas Cole. *Suffering and Evil in the plays of Christopher Marlowe*, p. 191.
7. Christopher Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*,pp. 16-17.
8. Ibid., p. 19.
9. Douglas Cole. *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Marlowe*, p. 216.
10. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*,_ p. 46.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.,
13. Ibid., p.17.
14. Douglas Cole. *Suffering and Evil in the plays of Marlowe* p. 220.
15. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* p. 46.
16. Ibid.,p.57.
17. Ibid.
18. Douglas Cole. *Suffering Evil and Evil and in the plays of Marlowe*. p. 263.

3.8 KEY WORDS

Arethusa:

A nymph in Greek mythology who was persued by the river God, Alpheus. She flies to Sicily where she takes the the form of a spring in Ortygia, an island near Syracuse. Alpheus, flowing under the sea, was there united with her.

Fredrick Schlegel (1772-1829): German critic, aesthetician and writer of romanticism, Schlegel formulates the aesthetic theory of romantic poetry and also the notion of romantic irony.

Helen:	The most beautiful woman in Greek legend; married to Menelaus, later the King of Sparta. She was abducted by Paris the Prince of Troy. Aided by many admirers of Helen's beauty, Menelaus wages a war against Troy. When Paris dies, Helen marries his brother Deiphobus whom she betrays to the Greeks. Helen returns to Sparta with Menelaus after the Fall of Troy.
Semele:	Princess of Thebes in Greek mythology with whom the Greek God Zeus falls in love. By Zeus, she conceives, Dionysus. While Dionysus was still unborn Semele gets consumed by the radiance of Zeus Olympian splendour which Semele herself entices him to wear, under the malicious prompting of Zeus' wife, Hera.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how irony constitutes the chief element in the characterisation of Faustus.
2. Illustrate the use of dramatic irony from the text of *Doctor Faustus*.
3. The essence of irony is dilemma: Discuss the statement with reference to *Doctor Faustus*.
4. Tragic irresolution is the dramatic strength of *Doctor Faustus*. Discuss.

3.10 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

- A. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.

Why, then belike we must sin, and consequently die?
- b. What doctrine call you this, che sera, sera - What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!
- c. Alas, poor slave! see how poverty jesteth in his nakedness! The villan is bare and out of service, and so hungry, that I know would give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though it were blood-raw.
- d. To him I'll build an altar and church, And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes.
- e. Hell hath no limits nor is circumscribed In one self place; for where we are is hell, and where hell is, there we ever be:
- f. O, no end is limited to damn'd souls! why were thou not a creature wanting soul?
- g. This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd unto some brutish beast!

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Cole, Douglas. *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1962. The book presents an exhaustive background to the Marlovian tragedy and discusses the nature of evil and tragic suffering in *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus*.
2. Hardin F. Richard. "Irony and Privilege in Marlowe" *Centennial Review* 33,3, 1983. pp. 207-227. The article discusses Marlowe as an ironist and looks into the possibility of two audiences for Marlowe's plays, one making an ordinary reading or viewing, and the other, the privileged, who could see the irony implicit in the play.
3. States, Bert O. *Irony and Drama: A Poetics*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1971. The book analyses the concept of irony, its relation to dialectics, besides discussing patterns of irony.

UNIT 4 THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction : Transcending medieval Christianity
- 4.2 Renaissance aspirations
- 4.3 Renaissance scepticism
- 4.4 The Historical character of *Doctor Faustus*
- 4.5 *Doctor Faustus*: Catholic and Protestant schism
- 4.6 *Doctor Faustus*: The Renaissance aspirations & rhetoric
- 4.7 *Doctor Faustus*: Renaissance Tragedy
- 4.8 *Doctor Faustus*: Catholic faith and Protestant despair
- 4.9 Summing Up : *Doctor Faustus*: A tragedy of the Renaissance and Reformation
- 4.10 References
- 4.11 Key words
- 4.12 Questions
- 4.13 Annotations
- 4.14 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit focuses on the content of the play. The interpretations of the play have been, at times, diametrically opposed to each other. *Doctor Faustus* is called essentially a Christian play by virtue of its medieval form. On the other hand; it is called inevitably a Renaissance play, for the aspirations of *Doctor Faustus* are those of the Renaissance. The Christianity the play presents is that of the division between the Catholics and the Protestants and the Renaissance the play illustrates is that of the English mind divided between religion and secular ambitions. The tragic complexity of *Doctor Faustus* has to be understood in terms of the interacting influences of these divisions.

4.1 INTRODUCTION: TRANSCENDING MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY

The medieval morality form *Doctor Faustus* assumes is simply exhaustive for it explains, minutely, the dramatic and thematic thrust of the play. As the morality

form exhausts the play, the question that inevitably arises is, where was the need for Marlowe to write about a dramatic tradition that was subject to so much of repetition for more than a century. Obviously, *Doctor Faustus* is not the facile hero of the morality play even if the play exhausts him as such. The justification to interpret the play in terms of medieval Christianity could be the dramatic existence of *Doctor Faustus* at that level. The play is the thing, Leo Kirschbaum asserts:

What does matter is that in terms of the play, Faustus is a wretched creature who for lower values gives up higher values. That the devil and Hell are omnipresent, potent, and terrifying realities - these are the values which govern the play. You must temporarily accept them while you watch the play. You need not ultimately accept them. But you should not interpret the play in the light of your philosophy, or religion or absence of religion. You cannot do so if you hear it properly as a play, as an entity, as a progressive action, as a quasi morality in which the characters in the play accept, which the playwright advances and accepts in his prologue and epilogue and which hence the audience must understand and accept.¹

While 'the play is the thing', it is not the total thing as well. Nicholas Brooke argues:

the play is not just
putting the Faust book on the stage. . . Faustus is,
and is not in control of the events that destroy him;
but Marlowe does not clarify his thought on the matter,
and if at one moment he seems to imply one attitude,
at another he equally clearly implies the opposite.²

4.2 RENAISSANCE ASPIRATIONS

At any rate, for Nicholas Brooke, a totally Christian conclusion of *Doctor Faustus* is not convincing since he dies seeking not the mercy of God but the extinction of the human state that has come to be invested with boundless aspirations and self-awareness. What the play puts into dramatic action and predicament is the Renaissance inspired idea of secular virtue which ultimately goes back to Aristotle.

The conception, for instance, of Tudor king or Italian prince was compared to Aristotle's description of the magnificent man, or even of the great souled Man, he who excels in all worldly 'goods' wealth, dignity, popularity and so on, who is a great patron of the arts, and who is superior to all the limitations of lesser men, . . . he must be wholly resolute in his pursuit of greatness. . . he will tolerate no rival within his sphere of influence. . . an understanding of Aristotle greatly illuminates what it is that Faustus is trying to achieve; the subjective aim of self expansion is equated with the objective ideal of Aristotelian greatness, and not only are Mephostopheles and Lucifer treated as rival magnificos, but Faustus himself is aiming at that state.³

Marlowe brings in the Renaissance attitude into the Elizabethan world dominated by the medieval values of Christianity. Whether Marlowe ascribed to this attitude or not is a moot point, for he chose to be a dramatist keen on enlarging the dramatic cosmos by the tide of the new influences taking root in the Elizabethan world. *Basically, it was a conflict of attitudes - the rigidly limited and defined world of medieval thinkers and the Renaissance world of natural law and human ideas, based on demonstrable*

truths. The change could be seen from the shift from the old scholastic studies of logic, natural philosophy and medicine for jobs in Law, Medicine and Theology to the Studia Humanitatis consisting of Grammar, Rhetoric, History and Ethics focussing on human abilities required for several societal duties. The emphasis of the new studies is mainly on the linguistic and rhetorical human skills rather than on the unalterable divine truths. Many Renaissance thinkers, Erasmus being the foremost among them, sought the reawakening of human self-consciousness and his awareness of the universe around him. In the immediate context of the Elizabethan world, their concern is to stop the institutional decay of Christianity reeling under the burden of outworn traditions and the despotic church power. Along with the revision of the scholastic curriculum, they wanted to reform Christian society through a revival of classical learning. In fact, for Erasmus, the revival of classical learning was a prelude to the restoration of piety.

Based on an immense sense of human worth and possibility, the Renaissance mind explored the cosmic reality beyond the factual terms. For them, the aesthetic dimension is as central to man as the factual or the rational. In fact, the exclusion of the aesthetic undercuts the basic being of man, and as, the search for truth is invariably the search for beauty, the one cannot be divorced from the other. A sense of enquiry towards everything that concerns man and a spirit of revolt against anything that seeks to deny human reality characterizes the renaissance mind.

4.3 RENAISSANCE SCEPTICISM

Significantly, Renaissance presents also a countervailing sceptical attitude of mind towards its own inclinations of intellectual and aesthetic curiosity and passion. As described by Erasmus in his *The Praises of Folly*, the Renaissance cherished sceptical perspectives as well on the boundless enthusiasm about human possibilities. In its enthusiasm to strain its farthest limits, the human mind could undo itself instead of realizing its potentialities.

The failure is tragic given the strong sense of human self-confidence and possibilities. The Renaissance makes the human tragedy possible for the first time as the medieval Christian thought never admitted any human possibilities other than his total insignificance and impotence.

4.4 THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Doctor Faustus reflects the division in the English mind during the Elizabethan period between the traditional religious ethos and the new ambience of critical and aesthetic values. The religious providentialism the church presented was ideologically acceptable to the Elizabethans but provided no practical guide in coping with the desires of the emerging secular culture. Marlowe makes Faustus a product of historically and culturally determined desires, and history, no matter what it might portend for the intensely self conscious Renaissance man, is a part of Marlowe's dramatic statement and tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*.

4.5 *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*: CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT SCHISM

In fact, history for the Elizabethans did not simply entail a division of religious and secular concerns for there is a greater schism within the Christian religion in Elizabethan England that Marlowe's play does not totally escape, though under the

broader conflict of religious and secular values, the former does not gain serious dramatic cognizance. The ideological conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants was a part of Marlowe's learning at Cambridge. Critical perception of *Doctor Faustus* largely centered around the ideology of the medieval morality but the possibility that Faustus's religious revolt could ideologically have been shaped by English Protestantism, not merely by Renaissance aspirations, was not seriously considered. The movement of the Reformation synchronized with the Renaissance in opposing the dehumanization implicit in the ideological formulations of institutional Christianity. English Protestantism, deriving inspiration from John Calvin, besides opposing several religious practices of the orthodox church, propounded the rebellious doctrine of justification by Faith or conscience as against the institutional mediation or determination of the individual's faith. Further, Protestantism believed in absolute predestination and in the notion of the elect. Though the concept of human sin, as a flight from God in exercise of choice, is the same to the Protestants as it is to the orthodox Church, Calvinist Protestants and anti-Calvinist champions of the Roman church differed diametrically in the possibility of divine mercy for the sinner. The orthodox Church presented the idea of an ever benevolent God waiting to save the repentant at any time, Protestantism advocated the idea of a sinner as being a born reprobate through predestination whose predicament is one of endless despair from which there is no escape.

In his ruminations about the possibility of divine grace to him after he signs the pact with the devil, *Doctor Faustus* reflects the divergent positions of the Catholic and the Protestant positions. The religious controversy was so near Marlowe at Cambridge where he was a student when the defenders and opponents of the Calvinist faith like William Parkins and his follower, William Barret, on the one hand, and opponents like Peter Baro on the other, entered into endless polemics. Lily B. Campbell calls *Doctor Faustus'* despair a case of a torturous Protestant conscience while the possibility or impossibility of divine grace for Faustus holds the dramatic tension in the play:

It is the continuing struggle of conscience, the conflict between hope and despair, where hope would lead him to God again and despair would keep him from salvation, that makes the suspense of the play. The outcome remaining in doubt till the eleventh hour, the tension continues throughout the play and gives it its peculiar dramatic compulsion.⁴

In fact, Faustus' despair, either in itself or in juxtaposition with his religious hope or Renaissance aspirations presents the rich complexity of the Elizabethan mind fluctuating among several alternatives without being able to affirm or reject anything decisively.

4.6 FAUSTUS: THE RENAISSANCE ASPIRATIONS AND RHETORIC

From the beginning, *Doctor Faustus* explores religious and human dilemmas characterising the Elizabethan mind. Marlowe begins Faustus' story in a duality of Renaissance ambitions and religious values. There is Faustus' craving for classical learning, "Sweet Analytiks", "live and die in Aristotle's works" "who has ravished" him and a craving for a "world of profit and delight, of power, of honour, of omnipotence". The extent and depth of ambitions could only be expressed in liturgical images like "heavenly" for the delights of necromancy and the reach out of the worldly power could only be like "jove in the sky" and hence the dissatisfaction with the human state, "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man". Though divine power is the ultimate test of human achievements, pursuit of divinity, according to

Faustus, is self-defeating, for human aspiration in a world of sin, and man cannot deceive himself by denying sin or ambition. "Why, then, belike we must sin and consequently die". He would ignore the eternal possibility of divine grace that the Catholic church promises and would rather go by the Calvinist argument that a sinner, a man of ambitions like him, is a born reprobate, his sin resulting from his predestined state.

Faustus gives necromancy the thrust and power of scientific method through which the Renaissance scholars attempted to understand nature's treasure as well as the aesthetics of human beauty.

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I'll have them to fly to India for Gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates;
.....
....sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than has the white breasts of the Queen of Love.
From Venice shall they drag huge argosies,
And from America the golden fleece
That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury ⁵..... I, i 75-130.

"Nature's treasure" is an obsession with the Renaissance scholars since from nature proceeds human nature and the diversity of its desires, and taste for jewels, food, gossip, fashion, etc. Along with the gluttony of desires, there is a rhetoric of words. In fact, words play a greater role, for words have a thrust that impel desires rather than vice versa. Bartlett Giamatti writes:

Renaissance man felt he had the power to transform himself because he had the power of language. Words were units of energy. Through words man could assume forms and aspire to shapes and states otherwise beyond his reach.⁶

With a Renaissance focus on linguistic and rhetorical skills, Marlowe "wrestled with the multiform angel (or demon) of language".

... he expanded the limits of the stage by writing of human mind in its battle to surpass human limitation. He used soaring words as symbols of man's aspiring mind. And he used the lurking dangers in words to image the terrors of aspiring too far.⁷

In a characteristically Renaissance attitude, Faustus chooses to be impulsively rhetorical, driving himself into a state of aspiration beyond his abilities. Rhetoric drives Renaissance man towards knowledge, beauty and material power. There is an impatient blending of the intellectual, aesthetic and the material resulting in the overturning and undoing of the inherent strength of all three urges. Thus, the multivalent urges of the Renaissance display human magnificence as well as the tragic entrapment of man in his own self-exalted state of being. After rhetoricizing the possibility of manifold human grandeur, Faustus begins his tragic undoing with "waxen wings" of words "mounting above his reach."

Words fly past ideas as Faustus dismisses one discipline after another to convince himself that only necromancy fits his genius. What Faustus does not realize is that in the very name of human excellence he is flying away from human excellence into

areas that have not done any credit to man. He signs a pact with the devil who is the very antithesis of the moral being of man. Ironically, he is not frightened of damnation but would confound hell in Elysium and would allow his ghost to rest with the old Greek philosophers forgetting that heaven and hell are human inventions made to ennoble human life. The classical mythology is used not to elevate himself intellectually but used self-deceptively for self aggrandisement. The rhetoric of learning becomes a medium, not of self-elevation but of unlearning and degradation. The apostrophe to Helen in the final act is Faustus' finest rhetoric of learning and taste but all that Faustus gains is a self-deluding exercise to overcome the tormenting fears of damnation.

4.7 FAUSTUS' RENAISSANCE TRAGEDY

Phoebe S. Spinard sums up Faustus' tragic undoing as that of an accomplished scholar choosing the ways of a "diletante" who uses learning superficially, and causes a yawning gap between what he says and what he is led to. Bartlett Giamatti sums up Faustus' Renaissance tragedy

Where at the outset Faustus was a creator, at the end he is a creature; where before he dreamed of unlimited power and glory now he is assured of limitless torment. The words by which he reshaped himself into a demigod at the beginning have now exploded into a horror all about him. What we see on stage are the contents of his head - the Hell he will possess forever, the heaven he will shortly lose. He brought it on himself, this deformed world, when he converted, when he turned to magic from God, when he turned the power of words from God's praise to his own.⁸

Faustus fails as he is simply carried away by the Renaissance aspirations instead of understanding the spirit of these aspirations that looked forward to human excellence and splendour. With all his accomplishments, Faustus fails tragically as a Renaissance hero, but the question arises as to whether Faustus deserved the tormenting suffering he had to experience. What is the nature of Faustus' sin that invites so much of divine wrath? The answer again lies in the humanist aspirations, though of a different kind. If the Renaissance posited man at the center of a secular world, the religious movement of the Reformation posited man in a direct relation with God bypassing the institutional authority of the church and its liturgical practices. Faustus' inability or refusal to repent may, in one sense, be his Renaissance pride but, in another sense, it is a protestant's admission of conscientious suffering and a despairing awareness that he is not the elect of God and, is thus, a reprobate.

4.8 DOCTOR FAUSTUS: CATHOLIC FAITH AND PROTESTANT DESPAIR

In the dramatic conflict between faith and despair in *Doctor Faustus*, the possibility of a strain of Protestant faith in Marlowe's making of Faustus, makes Faustus' despair all the more acute. The possibility of divine grace that Faustus is alternately hopeful of, in the immediate context of the schism, in the Church becomes a Catholic proposition but Faustus' despair triumphs in the play making his hope of salvation ineffectual and giving the protestant faith an edge over its Catholic rival.

Marlowe gives Faustus, for his rejection of divinity, the initial motivation of Renaissance aspirations. However, very soon *Marlowe qualifies Faustus' motivation by the latter's awareness of eternal damnation having already taken place by his "desperate thoughts against Jove's deity" even before he sold his soul to the devil.* The Pact with the devil is yet to come, despair precedes it:

Now, Faustus, must thou need be damn'd?
And canst thou not be sav'd.
What boots it then to think on God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies, and despair
Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub.

However, Faustus has not removed all traces of hope

...O, something sounds in my ears,
Abjure this magic, turn to God again
Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again

The hope is ineffectual

To God? He loves thee not;

There is also the self-loving Renaissance man in the despairing Protestant.

The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite.
Wherein is fixed the love of Belzebub
(II, i 1-15)⁹

Faustus' blood congeals as he signs the bond with the devil but his faith is not that strong, the blood flows on just being warmed by fire. What is strong is his despair.

Homo fuge! Whither should I fly?
If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell. (II, i, 75-76)¹⁰

Repentance is an impossibility to Faustus the way he is made

My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent;
Scarce can I name salvation, faith or heaven,
But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears
'Faustus thou art damn'd'
(II, ii, 18-20)¹¹

Faustus does cry for God's mercy although he knows that it is impossible to get it. Lucifer makes the nature of Protestant faith clear to Faustus: He chooses people for His Mercy, who would never sin in the first instance and only those outside his grace would sin and, these are outside his justice too.

Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just. (II, ii, 87)¹²

Until the end, Marlowe dramatizes the ineffectual possibility of divine grace for Faustus.

See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: Ah, my Christ.
(V, iii, 77-78)¹³

But there is no escape from Faustus' predicament:

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransom'd me,

Impose some end to my incessant pain. . .
O, no end is limited to damned souls!(V, iii 100-108)¹⁴

Lily B. Campbell likens Faustus' predicament to that of Fancis Spira in Italy who out of conviction professes the Protestant doctrines of justification by faith. He is summoned to papal Legate at Venice for heresy and is forced to recant his utterances. Under the threat of severe punishment, he makes both a private and public recantation. After the first recantation, Spira felt God's presence who tells him not to abjure Him and at the same time, tells him not to recant. Having been convinced of his sin of deserting god, Spira experiences an intense despair in God and would not accept the advice of several learned people to seek divine mercy for he is convinced that his sin has resulted from his not being the elect of god and that despair is his lot. Finally, he dies unable to cope with his despair.

For Campbell, *Doctor Faustus* is, basically, neither a tragedy of medieval Christianity nor of the Renaissance but specifically that of the Protestant faith uppermost in the sixteenth century English mind.

We see Faustus confirmed in sin more disastrously by yielding to the counsels of despair urged by Mephistophilis and the Bad Angels than by yielding to the enticements of pleasure. And we see him consequently rejecting the mercy of God promised in the words of the Good Angel and the old Man as he cast off faith and Hope. The Faust Book certainly left open the way for Marlowe's development of the story of *Doctor Faustus* as a case of Conscience. My contention is that the "medieval" elements of Marlowe's play are not medieval but of the Reformation and that they constitute the essential dramatic unity of the play culminating in the speech of Faustus as he faces his doom, so that theme and plot and poetry come together in the diapason of that final grandeur.¹⁵

4.9 SUMMING UP : DOCTOR FAUSTUS: A TRAGEDY OF THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

The confluence of the influences of Renaissance and Reformation, the Reformation particularly sought by English Protestantism of the times, immensely enhances and sophisticates the dramatic cosmos of Doctor Faustus. Marlowe's use of Renaissance and Reformation aspirations is neither axiomatic nor ideological but one of perceptive intellectual sensitivity. In the possibilities of Faustus' multivalent conflict, Marlowe makes *Doctor Faustus* acquire a historical character without making the play an interplay of historical forces. Without the Renaissance, and the Reformation, *Doctor Faustus* would have remained a simple morality play. The Renaissance makes it a human tragedy of Christian morality, the tragedy that was missing from the morality dramatic tradition. The Reformation and English Protestantism make the human tragedy of *Doctor Faustus* emanate from a deep sense of religious conviction and conscience and from an individual's right to a particular kind of religious experience which is vehemently and tragically asserted.

4.10 REFERENCES

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2. Nicholas Brooke. "The Moral Tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*" "*Critics on Marlowe*" pp.93-94.
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9. Christopher Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*. pp.16-17.
- 10: Ibid. p. 19.
11. Ibid. p.23.
12. Ibid. p.25.
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4.11 KEY WORDS

Protestantism: Sixteenth century religious reformation movement consisting of distinct mainstream strains like Lutheran (Martin Luther) Calvinist (John Calvin) and the Anglican. Despite differences, the different strains of Protestantism believed in the concept of justification by grace through faith and reject the primacy of the Pope, emphasize the individual faith and accept the Bible as the prime authority. These mainstream Protestant movements stress the supreme authority of The Bible and the possibilities of salvation only to those who accept Christ and practice infant baptism. The radical groups like the Baptists, and the Quakers practice adult baptism limiting faith to those who practise it and believe in a critical understanding of religious faith.

4.12 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss *Doctor Faustus* as essentially a Renaissance tragedy.
2. Examine *Doctor Faustus* as a study in the duality of Christian faith.
3. Illustrate the ideas in *Doctor Faustus* that present a meeting point for the movements of Renaissance and Reformation.

4.13 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

- a) I'll have them fly them to India for gold Ranasack the ocean for orient pearl and search all corners of the new found world. For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.
- b) Sometimes like women or unwedded maids, shadowing more beauty in their airy brows than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.
- c) 'Twas made for man, therefore is man more excellent
- d) Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just;
- e) I do repent: and yet I do despair

4.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

- 1) Campbell B. Lily. "*Doctor Faustus*: A case of conscience." PMLA 67,2, 1952. pp. 219-239. Campbell discusses, *Doctor Faustus* as a Protestant play illustrating Protestant doctrines of justification by faith, predestination and election.
- 2) Giámatti, Barlette. "Marlowe: The Arts of Illusion." Yale Review Giammotti, discusses the Renaissance inclination to rhetoric and how *Doctor Faustus* becomes a victim of rhetoric.
- 3) Pinciss G.M. "Marlowe's Cambridge years and the writing of *Doctor Faustus* ." Studies in English literature, 88, 1993. pp. 249-264. Pinciss traces the ambiguity of Faustus' hope and despair to Marlowe's sensitivity to the polemical controversy between Calvinists and anti-Calvinists at Cambridge when Marlowe was a student there.

UNIT 5 DRAMATIC POETRY IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction: Fusion of Drama and Poetry
- 5.2 Marlowe's indifference to dramatic art
- 5.3 *Doctor Faustus*: Dramatic rhetoric rather than art
- 5.4 Marlowe's 'Mighty Line'
- 5.5 Blank Verse: Renaissance rhetoric
- 5.6 Blank verse in England
- 5.7 The poetry of *Doctor Faustus*
- 5.8 Marlowe's poetry: an Estimate
- 5.9 Summing Up
- 5.10 References
- 5.11 Key words
- 5.12 Questions
- 5.13 Annotations
- 5.14 Suggested Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses the play, *Doctor Faustus* as essentially poetic. The play gained greater recognition as poetry than drama, mainly on account of the use of blank verse in place of the rhymed verse. Marlowe makes blank verse give greater freedom of language and imagination and an ability to present diverse thoughts and feelings to drama.

5.1 INTRODUCTION: FUSION OF DRAMA AND POETRY

Drama and Poetry are two distinct forms but when they are fused in a literary endeavour, the power generated is greater than their individual strength. As we read Doctor Faustus, what we get primarily is a feel of poetry though the impact of the powerful tragic drama is never lost. In fact, poetry heightens the effect of tragedy

in *Doctor Faustus*. Great poetry and drama inescapably arrive at the same thing: a perspective on human condition. The impact on the reader or the viewer, either through the dramatic interplay of ideas or through the rhetoric of poetry, is far-reaching. *Doctor Faustus* touches us deeply. In doing so, the tormenting conflicts and the irrepressible rhetoric of words merge indistinguishably.

5.2 MARLOWE'S INDIFFERENCE TO DRAMATIC ART

In rewriting the Faust legend, Marlowe, possibly, experienced the want of a progressive plot and action that would generate their own drama. Marlowe has in *Faustus* an unprogressive state of mind or conflict to dramatize or to rhetorise. There is a justifiable criticism against *Doctor Faustus* as drama. The play lacks structure, it is poorly organized presenting itself as a jumble of scenes rather than coherent drama. There is reckless fluctuation, critics allege, from high thoughtfulness to sheer frivolity and from magnificent poetry to insipid dialogue. Several critics found nothing in the play other than a few magnificent lines.

5.3 DOCTOR FAUSTUS : DRAMATIC RHETORIC RATHER THAN ART

Nonetheless, *Doctor Faustus* emerges as powerful tragic drama notwithstanding Marlowe's indifference to dramatic craft. Marlowe simply centered dramatic thought and action in the conflictual core of human aspirations at a crucial transitional phase of western history when religion, aesthetics and philosophy were poised to take a new turn. This drama had no premise other than the advent of the self-consciousness of man and the inescapable dialectics which history imposes on the beginning of every new era.

The apparent lack of an achievement in dramatic art is due to Marlowe's preoccupation with the dramatic core of an emerging man-centered world. The kind of human experience *Doctor Faustus* presents does not require the ingenuity of dramatic art so much as a rhetoric that aggressively fashions out the new human character. The rhetoric relies, not so much on dramatic devices but on language, its words, and their melody and poetry.

5.4 MARLOWE'S 'MIGHTY LINE'

In the very choice of Marlovian preoccupation in *Doctor Faustus*, dramatic art takes a backseat, and the rhetoric of human concerns evokes poetry provoking critics to say that *Doctor Faustus* is more poetry than drama. In fact, since the time Marlowe wrote the play, he faced criticism on several counts from critics but no one grudged paying a tribute to Marlowe's poetic excellence in theater. Tributes to Marlowe began with Ben Jonson who was impressed with the poetry in Marlowe's drama and called it the "mighty line". Robert Greene finds a thunder in Marlowe's voice. For Leigh Hunt, "if ever there was a born poet, Marlowe was one" and "Marlowe and Spenser are the first of our poets who perceived the beauty of words."¹

5.5 BLANK VERSE: RENAISSANCE RHETORIC

The poet in Marlowe was obviously born in the Renaissance love of rhetoric. Language was the weapon Renaissance chiefly used to explore human aspirations and

elevate man to a centrality in the cosmos. Barlett Giamatti notes Marlowe's achievement in *Doctor Faustus*.

... Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* celebrates that God-like Power of Language and shows us how words can soar, and tempts us to dizzying heights within our heads. But all the time, Marlowe is in control. He knows too much about the shaping power of words to be a Faustus.²

It is not Faustus alone who wanted to be a magician; Marlowe aimed at nothing short of it. Faustus fails for he chose a black art for magic. Marlowe chooses poetry to achieve the power of magic through the glory and power of language and its words. However, the power to be achieved required a change in the structure of the verse that is to be used. The earliest dramatic form of the Miracle plays use the intricate stanza form but as the dramatic discipline started gaining maturity, the rigidity of the stanza form was gradually given up in favour of the diversification of verse forms and their total simplification to approximate, as nearly as possible, to the spoken speech.

5.6 BLANK VERSE IN ENGLAND

F.P. Wilson details the course of versification in English drama. Speaking of John Skelton's versification in *Magnificence* Wilson says:

Here then is a conscious attempt to introduce variety of verse and to fit the verse to the character. It has been said that Chaucer proceeds from complex metre to simple, and from simple metre to complex. The drama, too, as it moves from the simplicities of *Magnificence* to the complexities of *Hamlet*, proceeds from complex metre to simple. Skelton has abandoned the intricate stanza forms of the Miracle play but he is still experimenting with a great variety of verse. Later in the century, as we enter the great Age, even rhyme tends to disappear and we are left with blank verse and prose.³

The move towards blank verse is desirable for rhetoric. The historical importance of Skelton's *Magnificence*, Wilson says, is that "perhaps for the first time in English drama, a work of conscious art, a laureate devising a long work in conscious observance of rhetorical principle, the blank verse used by Marlowe and Shakespeare owes its freedom to a series of efforts to shed the metrical burden for gaining the rhetorical effect".⁴ The freedom of the form also synchronizes with the declining popularity of the miracle and morality plays. Tucker Brooke & Matthias A Shaaber trace the growth of Blank verse in English up to Marlowe.

Unriming decasyllables had been written before him by several sixteenth century Englishmen: by the Earl of Surrey and Nicholas Grimald, by Sackville and Norton in *Gorboduc*, by Gascoigne in *The Steel Glass* by Turberville, by Peele in *The Arraignment of Paris*, by the youthful Spenser, and probably by Kyd. Various, and yet similar, purposes seem to have prompted these innovators; the desire to approximate the Virgilian hexameter or the *senarius* of Seneca, the desire for a prose-like (Horatian) vehicle of contemporary satire in *Gascoigne*, the effort at Ciceronian eloquence in the play of Peele. They were all exotic ambitions and, except in Peele's few lines, they produced exotic effects. It was Marlowe who changed the sow's ear into the silken purse. When he employed it, blank verse became at once what Shakespeare, Milton and so many others have shown that it can hardly cease to be the most expressive and the grandest of English metres.⁵

Surrey used blank verse, perhaps for the first time to translate part of Virgil's Aeneid into English. Since then, blank verse became the medium of dramatic poetry. If one wanted to write serious kind of drama, it was felt, blank verse was the exalted

medium. Skelton, for example, used blank verse in *Magnificence* for describing virtues like Magnificence and used a light four stressed couplet or a two stressed line for describing vices. Similarly, Sackville and Norton in *Gorboduc* and Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* used blank verse for the purposes of subtle characterization.

Basically, the term blank verse is used for an unrimed iambic pentameter. An iamb is a metrical foot of two syllables, the first unaccented and the other accented, the first short and the other long as, for example, in to strive or to seek. A pentameter contains five metrical feet or measures. The pentameter is a ten syllable line with five stresses falling on the even syllables. A typical iambic pentameter reads like the following line:

In courts of kings, where the state is overturned. The foot or a measure in English prosody contains two or three syllables, with only one of them bearing stress. While in the iambic, the unaccented is followed by an accented syllable, in the other metrical unit, trochee, the accented syllable is followed by an unaccented syllable. Both the iambic and trochee differ from a spondee which is a double stressed foot. In addition, there is a pyrrhic foot which is totally unstressed. The variation of trochee, iambic and spondee within the decasyllabic line gives, especially in Marlowe, utmost melody. When it lacked this variation, as in Sackville and Norton or as in Thomas Kyd, blank verse produced monotony. Their attempt was to produce an English equivalent to the twelve syllable iambic trimeter used by the Athenian dramatists. The particular form suited Greek language in terms of its approximation to their every day speech. But the rather slow moving English language, as compared to Greek, required variation. Thus the five foot ten - syllable iambic pentameter with continual variations of the iambic with trochee, spondee and pyrrhic came to characterize the resurgent English dramatic verse.

5.7 THE POETRY OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

This variation for achieving a variety of rhythms was characteristic of Marlowe's dramatic verse. *Doctor Faustus* begins with the Chorus saying:

Not marching in the fields of Thrasymene
 Where Mars did mate the warlike Carthagens.

the first line begins with a trochee but has a pyrrhic ending with the last syllable being unstressed. For the straightforward narration of the lines, there is a regular beat trying to give the impression of dignified order where an effect is warranted.

Nor in the pomp of proud audacious deeds (chorus line 5)

Having commenced be a divine in show. (I, i, 3)

The iambic pentameter is falling on a trochee for a beginning and also for marking pauses.

Pause is an important element in blank verse providing a variety of rhythm. Surrey and others have made the pause occur at the end of a line making the sense rather coextensive with the line. Marlowe dispensed with the line as a unit of thought, and made the sense run on from one line to the next making in the process, the paragraph rather than single lines as units of ideas. This is a strategy of what is called run-on lines, a strategy typically Marlovian.

Learned Faustus,
 To find the secrets of astronomy,

Graven in the book of Jove's high firmament,
Did mount him up to scale Olympus's top,
Where sitting in a chariot burning bright,
Drawn by the strength of yoked dragon's necks Chorus.⁶ (III, 1-6)

Or

As I was sometime solitary set
Within my closet, sundry thoughts arose
About the honour of mine ancestors,
How they had won by prowess such exploits,
Got such riches, subdu'd so many kingdoms,
As we that do succeed or they that shall
Hereafter possess our throne, shall
(I fear me) ne'er attain to that degree
Of high renown and great authority
Amongst which kings is Alexander the Great,
Chief spectacle of the world's pre-eminence,
The bright shining of whose glorious acts
Lightens the world with his reflecting beams,
As when I hear but motion made of him
It grieves my soul I never saw the man.⁷ (III, iii 18-35)

In the older rhymed verse, the tendency was for the couplet which stood by itself. The pause in the couplet was invariably at the end of the line after the fourth syllable and the iambic beat was never varied. Marlowe varies the whole pattern of the regulated metrical verse. For Marlowe, whatever was the metrical pattern, it had to follow the overflowing idea and there is hardly any splitting of the idea for metrical regularity.

Though the run-on lines give the impression of formlessness at times, there are single lines that make a very compact and forceful expression of ideas. In fact, Marlowe's ideational and metrical mastery within a single line is remarkably exceptional. *Doctor Faustus* abounds in several memorable lines.

Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man⁸ (I, i. 23)
Homo, fuge, whither should I fly⁹ (II, i, 75)
What art thou, Faustus but a man condemned to die?¹⁰ (IV, iv 37)
Damn'd art thou, Faustus, damn'd; despair and die?¹¹ (V, i, 48)
I do repent; and yet I do despair¹² (II, ii. 63)
Her lips suck forth my soul; see where it flies!¹³ (V, ii, 95)
See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament¹⁴ (V, iii, 78)

The sheer compressive force and summative brilliance of the ideas is strikingly clear in these lines. Faustus' tragic impatience with human limitations comes out in a few words of the first line. Similarly, the next three lines, individually present the Protestant doctrine of predestination and Faustus, not being the elect of God is condemned to despair. "I do repent and I do despair." Marlowe sums up the conflicting notions of Catholics and Protestants about the possibility of eternal grace and the impossibility of such grace to the sinner. Similarly the nature of the self-willed damnation of Faustus is presented in the line on Helen. The supreme Christian virtue comes out with utmost devotion in the line, See see.....

Brevity, and consummate lyricism for heightening mental and emotional states mark several passages which continue to be memorable even after centuries.

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.¹⁵ (V, ii, 90-94)

In relatively few words, Marlowe has written, perhaps, the most magnificent apostrophe to Helen. Marlowe's greatness is that he could present with great ease the most exquisitely romantic and also versify brilliantly the most pathetic and the anguishing. Faustus' last soliloquy is deeply touching for its rhythmic expression of the most tormenting human agonies.

Stand Still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come,
Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul! (V, iii, 66-71)

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand and at last be sav'd!
O, no end is limited to damned souls!
Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?¹⁶ (V, iii, 102-107)

In barely fifty four lines in the last soliloquy, Marlowe presents Faustus' arrival as a visionary after having gone through, in the course of the play, ambition, pride, insolence, impulse, passion and sheer frivolity besides the nagging doubts about divine mercy and wrath. In the last few minutes of his life, as charted in the soliloquy, Faustus sets forth the remorseless logic of time, immense divine mercy which nonetheless, is capable of ruthless wrath, and the futility of knowledge, and ambition and of the human life itself. A vehement protest against the denial of human worth is ironically presented through despair in human condition. Simple words like "live," "see", "look", "ever", and "perpetually" are loaded with immense philosophical significance.

The primary focus on the idea rather than on the metrical line, as could be abundantly seen in the last soliloquy, is Marlowe's redefinition of the poetic by the dramatic. He is credited for having begun a sentence period as against a line period for poetry. The fusion of drama and poetry, or specifically of the dramatic conflict and poetic rhapsody, perhaps, could never be as harmonious as in *Doctor Faustus*.

Marlowe's dramatic poetry, however, is not faultless. He is criticized for not maintaining poetic rhapsody for sustained effect. He is also criticized for alternating magnificent lines with purely pedestrian ones and splendid monologues with laboured verses. There is also an allegation that free movement of the verse is impeded by coloured epithets and 'sonorous phrases'.

Though not exactly careless artistically, Marlowe, as Harry Levin says, "is always himself" whereas Shakespeare is everybody. Further, the focus in the play had to be on Faustus, that too on the Marlovain Faustus. Poetry came rather intermittently waiting both for ideas and their conflicts to intensify and for Marlowe's imagination to strike. Yet at times, there is a mismatch of content and poetry as could be seen in Faustus' apostrophe to Helen. Helen, after all, as Faustus knows, is no Helen but a devil in disguise. The distraction of Faustus from his despair, is too little cause for the magnificent poetry of the apostrophe.

5.8 MARLOWE'S POETRY: AN ESTIMATE

The nature of Marlowe's achievement lies primarily in the nature of dramatic or poetic endeavours in the play. *Marlowe was basically searching for poetry and drama in what for him is to be an intensely human situation rather than attempting a work of art.* Swinburne was nearer the truth in his praise of Marlowe:

He is the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all poetic literature. The place and value of Christopher Marlowe as a leader among the poets would be almost impossible for historical criticism to overestimate.¹⁷

T.S. Eliot was far more thorough in his praise of Marlowe:

The less questionable judgement is that Marlowe exercised a strong influence over later drama, though not himself as great a dramatist as Kyd: that he introduced several new tones into blank verse and commenced the dissociative process which drew it further and farther away from the rhythms of rhymed verse; and that when Shakespeare borrowed from him, which was pretty often at the beginning, Shakespeare made something inferior or something different.

..... Marlowe's rhetoric is not, or not characteristically, Shakespeare's rhetoric; Shakespeare's is more exactly a vice of style, a tortured perverse ingenuity of images which dissipates instead of concentrating the imagination, and which may be due in part to influences by which Marlowe was untouched. Next, we find that Marlowe's vice is one which he was gradually attenuating, and even, what is more miraculous, turning into virtue. And we find that this poet of torrential imagination recognized many of his best bits (and those of one or two others), saved them, and reproduced them more than once, almost invariably improving them in the process. ... Contrary to usual opinion Marlowe was a deliberate and conscious workman.¹⁸

Harry Levin looks at Shakespeare's debt to Marlowe:

Shakespeare seems to have marked the passing of Marlowe through his own *Richard III* where he proved himself to be past master of the Marlovian attitudes and tonalities, even while he was ranging on toward richer complexities and subtler nuances of human relationships. To be sure, *Richard II* would be unthinkable without the example of *Edward II* or *The Merchant of Venice* without *The Jew of Malta*. Speaking more broadly *Hamlet* owes a certain amount to the precedent of *Doctor Faustus*, and *Coriolanus* to *Tamburlaine*.¹⁹

5.9 SUMMING UP

There stands Christopher Marlowe: a pioneering explorer of innovative poetry in drama. The poetry that is instantly dramatic and belongs essentially to the human mind and soul presenting their passionate ecstasies and tormenting conflicts and agonies. If Marlowe was not a great dramatic poet like Shakespeare, he nonetheless, is great in formulating the essentials of dramatic poetry in which Shakespeare and others who followed him, found a model for their dramatic endeavours. If the essentials of dramatic poetry Marlowe discovered and formulated were not shaped into an exquisite dramatic art of poetry, it was because, as Harry Levin says, Marlowe chose to be himself and left it to others to see what he could offer them.

5.10 REFERENCES

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18. T. S. Eliot. *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Clifford Leech ed. Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1964, pp. 12-13.
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5.11 KEY WORDS

1. Soliloquy: Coined from Greek solus (alone) and loqui (to speak). Speaking one's thoughts aloud with none to hear, or regardless of the presence of hearers. It is a declamation in this manner by the characters. Soliloquies are popular in Marlowe's and Shakespeare's plays.

5.12 QUESTIONS

1. Examine Marlowe's use of blank verse in *Doctor Faustus*.
2. Give a critical appreciation of *Doctor Faustus* as dramatic poetry.
3. Discuss Marlowe's contribution to the growth of dramatic poetry in English.

5.13 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

- (a) Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!
- (b) The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
- (c) Mountains and hills, come, and fall on me,
And hide from the heavy wrath of God!
- (d) Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!

5.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

T.S. Eliot, *Christopher Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Clifford Leech ed. Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1964. Eliot estimates the quality of Marlovian Verse, compares it with that of Shakespeare and also Marlowe's contribution towards the evolution of dramatic poetry in England.

UNIT 6 THE PERFORMANCE OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction: *Doctor Faustus* and the Elizabethan Stage
- 6.2 Textual diversity of *Doctor Faustus*
- 6.3 Twentieth century productions of *Doctor Faustus*
- 6.4 William Poel and Nugent Monk
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- 6.10 Production of Specific scenes in *Doctor Faustus*
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6.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit looks at *Doctor Faustus* as theatre. Very few plays present such diverse elements that lend themselves to such diverse interpretations as *Doctor Faustus* does. We can see the sensitive spiritual drama and also the spectacular action with exhilarating audio-visual effects. There is a high tragedy and also a grotesque comedy. It is viewed as essentially a morality play, and also a preeminently

Renaissance and Reformation play. It is also viewed as a psychological play and magical extravaganza. *The character of Doctor Faustus itself is subject to varied focus—a thoughtful scholar, a devout Christian, magical trickster and a seeker after egoistic trifles or after simple sensuous pleasures.* The theater history of *Doctor Faustus* illustrates the diversity of focus in staging the play.

6.1 INTRODUCTION: DOCTOR FAUSTUS AND THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

Doctor Faustus was primarily written as a playscript for the Elizabethan audiences. The standardization of the play as text entailed several attempts, following the initial production. The first recorded performance of the play was on September 30, 1594 at Rose Theater by the Admiral's men with Edward Alleyn playing the lead role of Faustus. There are possibilities, William Tyndeman notes, that the piece was sold to the Earl of Pembroke's Men, one of the many professional acting companies of London. It might have also been acted by them at the Court. However, the script passed into the hands of Lord Admiral's Men, possibly through purchase by Lord Howard of Effingham. It was also staged at the Theatre in Shoreditch any time between 1588 and 1593, either by Pembroke's Men or by Lord Admiral's Men. The morality framework and the intensely Christian theme notwithstanding, in writing *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe had in mind the predominant purpose of entertaining the Elizabethan audiences who would care more for a spectacle than for a moral story. William Tyndeman records an early impression of the play as noted in Sir John Melton's *Astrologaster* of the *Figure Caster* of 1620.

shagge-hayr'd Devils runne roaring over the stage with Squibs in their mouthes, while drummers make thunder in the tyring-house, and the twelve-penny Hirelings (i.e. stage-hands) make artificial Lighrening in their Heavens.¹

The state of the popular Elizabethan mind was such, Tyndeman notes that there was even a rumour among the credulous that the actual demons participated in the stage action. Edward Allyn, who also played Tamburlaine and the Jew of Malta, evoked instant identification from the audience with his "barnstorming" acting. Obviously, Faustus was lost in Allyn and it was Allyn who mattered to everyone. His popularity was such that he had to be recalled from his retirement on account of Queen Elizabeth's admiration for him. Thomas Heywood found him to be "peerless" and Thomas Nashe found him making good any shortcoming in the text. However, in the succeeding years, his acting was condemned as unreal though he was recognized for his essential theatrical hold on the audience. The essential intellectuality of the play might not have been totally lost on the Elizabethan audience, though they were largely attuned to the popular taste for spectacle and high rhetoric. The Elizabethan stage conventions and practices, largely developed in terms of the audience's proclivities. Even before the Elizabethan stage conventions could render the play strikingly physical, Marlowe himself initiates a visual thrust in the making of Faustus' character. Phoebe S. Spinard observes:

..... Faustus is not a visionary but a visualizer. Most of his accomplishments are described in terms of seeing, whether in reading books or in viewing the geography of the earth and sky from Mephostophilis' dragon drawn chariot. His plans, too, are focused visually on concrete objects the projects he will accomplish with his magical powers, the gifts he will obtain from the spirits even his possible rufuges from the devils in his final soliloquy.²

Further, Spinard observes, Faustus calls for a visual response from the audience as when the devil in Helen's disguise is presented to him and when he finds Christ's blood streaming in the firmament. On both the occasions, Marlowe seeks to put the

audience on a visual track through Faustus' words. Faustus "cannot grasp what he cannot see" and uses "outward shows as a substitute for thought." *Marlowe's Elizabethan Faustus is definitely a correlative effort for the Elizabethan audience's proclivities. Marlowe was writing theatre as much as drama in Doctor Faustus.*

However the tendency to be theatrical, is partly correlated with the dramatic and rhetorical strain in *Doctor Faustus*, and, at times, it is simply let loose as in the middle sections of the play. The fact is that the dramatic word and its rhetorical force and the visual spectacle stand on the same footing in Marlowe's play. The same is true of the Elizabethan theatre in general. The visual dominates the verbal but the rhetorical dramatic word is the organizing principle. This is the Renaissance element characterizing the Elizabethan drama. Writing of themes and conventions of Elizabethan tragedy, M. C. Bradbrook asserts that the "essential structure of Elizabethan drama lies not in the narrative or the characters but in words". Through "word play" and "word patterns", the Elizabethans build their drama on words. Faustus with all his human learning, wanted to be divine in show and asks Mephistophilis "what means this show" for all that he presents. For Russell, Marlowe's play is "visual as well as intellectual, physical and metaphysical, responsible and popular". Russell writes:

For Marlowe both words and actions are important. He was sometimes content with action and no words as crucial moments of his drama. Helen who ravishes Faustus and "sucks forth" his soul only passes over the stage in silence Marlowe was not fond of the rhetorical elaboration of Seneca, Kyd or early Shakespeare Marlowe did not pursue comparisons so nimbly, and seldom developed an intricate argument, he preferred to build to progress, retaining each element within the final large impression.³

He further writes:

Reliance on visual effect is perhaps most impressive in relation to individual characterisation, for besides maintaining a typically Renaissance complication of meaning and situation, a show implied a kind of density in character portrayal. It was not accidentally that Alleyn was framed for majestic parts The actor of Tamburlaine, Faustus and Barbaras had to be able to hold the center of large stage pictures and make a clear physical statement; nervous subtleties or minute physical realism were required for neither words nor gestures.⁴

Visual explicitness underwritten by a clear thematic perspective was required of *Doctor Faustus* or of a typical Marlovian play on the stage. Perhaps, the resources of Elizabethan theatrical organization or abilities were inadequate for Marlowe's theatre. The Victorians who revived interest in Marlowe who was almost forgotten for nearly 200 years after the closure of theatres in London in the middle of the seventeenth century, cared more for Marlowe's poetry than for his drama or theatre.

6.2 TEXTUAL DIVERSITY OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

In staging *Doctor Faustus*, the initial problem is the kind of Faustus to be chosen. The textual diversity and even Marlowe's authorship of certain scenes has never been convincingly settled. The play exists in two texts belonging to 1604 and 1616 which have come to be known as A and B texts. Tydeman presents the problem as to which of the texts is to be considered more authentic:

...it is now clear that the A text omits or corrupts much of what was originally presented on stage, while the B text although more faithful to the

early script, includes a good deal of material added after Marlowe's death in 1593.⁵

The A Text was a shorter one meant mainly for the touring companies with a greater focus on the tragic scenes than the comic ones. The B Text includes, in detail, the comic scenes of the middle section of the play that were briefly sketched in the first one. Many critics and producers have made a rather eclectic use of both the texts using what suited their point of view for the purpose of textual edition and production.

6.3 TWENTIETH CENTURY PRODUCTIONS OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

The upsurge of interest in Marlowe in the twentieth century both for the dramatic insights and for the theatrical possibilities of his plays raises the question whether Marlowe does not justifiably belong more to the twentieth century for his critical temper and theatrical exploration.

The twentieth century revival of interest in *Doctor Faustus* mainly centers on the play as a neglected classic. The neglect of the play was on account of the constrictive morality framework and also because of too many comic scenes considered unMarlovian. Further, Marlowe was overshadowed by Shakespeare whose dominance led to a view that other than Shakespeare, his contemporaries are not stage worthy. Theatre everywhere has come to be so attuned to Shakespeare that for staging Marlowe, one may have to unlearn or forget Shakespeare. John Russell Brown writes:

Marlowe wrote his plays before Shakespeare's masterpiece had been conceived; but we read him afterwards and in his successor's light ... We stage Marlowe in a theatre accustomed to Shakespeare, with actors, directors and designers who have all had experience of his plays: talents have been developed and techniques evolved for Shakespeare's dialogues in all revolutionary subtlety, for Shakespeare's kind of dramatic action and characterisation.... Marlowe has no Lear or Hamlet or Prospero whose passage through a play involves a deepening or chastening of the character's thought and feeling. His plays are more centered on their heroes than most of Shakespeare's as far as plot and theatrical focus are concerned; but the audience, even of Faustus, is not fully involved with the progress of the hero's consciousness.⁶

6.4 WILLIAM POEL & NUGENT MONK

The pioneering spirit behind the revival of *Doctor Faustus* in the 20th century was William Poel who passionately advocated a return to Elizabethan style auditoria and production methods for staging Marlowe. Poel presented the play at St. George's Hall in London first in July 1896 and then in 1904. Poel's attempt was to create a stage which would approximate, in as many details as possible, the Fortune Playhouse of 1600. Poel mainly relied on the A text of 1604 focusing on Faustus as a restless scholar after knowledge. For Poel, the play is essentially a tragedy and he cut down many comic scenes that would have reduced the tragic grandeur of the play. Faustus was played by a seventeen year old D.L. Mannering, rather a little unassertively and adolescently. The stage divided by the front curtain and a principal curtain-presented the comic scenes near the front curtain and the serious scenes near the main curtain. Though there is considerable focus on the visual element in costuming and stage

effects, Poel's was a simpler production compared to the highly scenic Shakespeare revivals. Bernard Shaw praised Poel's production for his attempts to achieve almost an impossible stage verisimilitude and found Mannering's acting sober and conscientious. However, what began as a modern revival of *Doctor Faustus* did not go beyond Poel. Marlowe did not appeal to commercial playhouses. The next significant production of *Faustus* was for the first Canterbury festival in August 1929 by Nugent Monk as a part of the double bill with *Everyman*. The coupling indicated the approach to *Faustus*. Where Poel tried to recreate an Elizabethan ambience for *Faustus*, Monk's production made it a medieval piece along with *Everyman*, obliterating the essential irony of the play to render it a Christian discourse on the wages of sin.

6.5 POST SECOND WORLD WAR PRODUCTIONS

Doctor Faustus did not receive any significant attention after the Canterbury Festival until the end of the Second World War. Three productions of *Doctor Faustus* in the decade following the war are significant: the first, the Old Vic Company's production at the Liverpool Playhouse in May 1944, Walter Hud's production of *Doctor Faustus* using the 'B' text for the first time with minimum cuts, at the Shakespeare Memorial theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, with Robert Harris as Faustus and Hugh Griffith as Mephostophilis and the revival of Old Vic production at New Theatre in October 1948 by John Burrell, with Sir Cedric Hardwick as Faustus and Robert Eddison as Mephostophilis. Significant in these productions was the fact that Mephostophilis played by a student Andreas Tenber dominated Faustus.

6.6 NEVILL COGHILL

One of the very important productions of *Doctor Faustus* during the century was Nevill Coghill's for the Oxford University Dramatic Society in 1957. Coghill revived the play in 1966 with Richard Burton as Faustus and Elizabeth Taylor as Helen. These two repeated the same roles in the later film version of the play. Coghill's focus was on the paradoxes in Faustus' character. Burton's performance was found to be unromantic and disappointing, as in the productions of the forties by a student, Andreas Teuber. Burton's performance came in for a lot of adverse comment. William Tydeman writes:

... Richard Burton in Nevill Coghill's 1966 production was guilty of overemphasising a neurotic vulnerability. Deliberately eschewing the anticipated romantic interpretation, Burton portrayed the Doctor as an unprepossessing, rather pathetic pedant employing diabolic powers to obtain satisfactions, his physical inadequacies and chosen vocation denied him: ... this presentation of a sedentary bespectacled, provincial dominie, celebrating a windfall of premium bonds with a jaunt round the tourist traps of Elizabethan Europe (Sunday Telegraph, 20 February, 1966) though an enterprising reading, not only reduced Faustus' stature and ruled out any laudable aspect to his ambitions, but also introduced a false incongruity into the play, with exalted sentiments and thrilling language emanating from a totally unheroic figure. The encounter with Helen of Troy became ridiculous and the final shattering soliloquy lacked the full sense of human waste.⁷

6.7 MICHAEL BENTHALL

The Old Vic Company restaged the play in August 1961 at the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh under the direction of Michael Benthall. Paul Dineman played Faustus,

Micheal Goodliffe played Mephostopilis and Robert Eddissoon played Lucifer. Benthall made an eclectic use of the A & B texts cutting down much what he thought was the superfluous comedy and also some of the dialogues that show Faustus too assertive in defying damnation. Dineman was "attractive and convivial" but was found unable to bring to focus the ambition which was the undoing of Faustus so much so that his damnation appeared theatrically unconvincing. Benthall's production received encomiums for the visual spectacle of the middle scenes. William Tydeman sums up his own and other responses to the theatrical spectacle:

In 1961 at the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, Michael Benthall was able to achieve more or less this effect, assisting audiences to participate in the spectacle rather than merely to lose themselves in an illusion. By appearing on a bright lit platform with spectators to three sides of them and by using the gangways of the hall for exits and entries, the players made immediate contact with their patrons, while the director allowed his telling visual effects to impinge on the auditorium itself, notably with the eruption of the emperor's court and Pope's guests on to the dark platform stage which "suddenly (sprang) into blazing colour" (Philip Hope Wallace, *Guardian* 23, August). Benthall's accent on 'multiple comings and goings (Punch) was able to invest the play with the trappings of a 'brilliant pageant' (*Tatler*) whose excitements the *Sunday Telegraph* for 17 September vividly conveyed: 'smoke sulphur and incense about one;....'⁸

6.8 JOHN BARTON

The performance that evoked a lot of critical comment during the seventies was the one directed by John Barton at Edinburgh's Lyceum Theatre in August 1974. Relying mainly on the A text and further subjecting it to several cuts, Barton interpolated extracts from the original Faust legend translated into English. He avoided ambiguity as far as Faustus's tragic predicament and comic proclivities are concerned. The interpolations from the Faustus legend provided a framework of comment with the devils delivering much of the narrative including the choruses. Barton's aim was to give a sort of Brechtian detachment to the audience to enable them to comment on the play. He used puppets for the angles to show the illusory nature of Faustus' world. Ian McKellan who played Faustus evokes two types of responses. On the one hand, there is the picture of Faustus displaying a compulsive neurosis. Milton Shulman writes for the *Evening Standard*, 6 September 1974:

..... the good doctor isn't leaping about for a precious book, nudging the servants of Lucifer for some reaction to his activities, gleefully hugging himself at his own cleverness or thrashing about in fearful agony as he prepares to meet his doom. A little more repose might make a more convincing philosophical Faustus.⁹

Michael Billington writes for *The Guardian*:

The strength of Ian McKellan's performance is that it supplies an internal dialectic..... he is a bushy haired peasant scholar whose arching catlike body is full of yearning lusts; on the other hand, he is a tormented overreacher suddenly prey to fits of rational sadness.¹⁰

Barton's aim is to avoid textual ambiguity and to build up a flux of psychological states in Faustus and bring him nearer to the quality of modern life.

6.9 CHRISTOPHER FETTES

The focus in the eighties production of Faustus, especially in the one at Lyric Studio, Hammersmith in February 1980 and later at Fortune Theatre in March 1980, was on

the sensuous rather than the intellectual Faustus. Under the direction of Christopher Fettes, the youthful John Aubrey played Faustus in the all male cast. The sensuous reverberations of Aubrey's acting did not escape homosexual overtones.

6.10 PRODUCTION OF SPECIFIC SCENES IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

In all productions of Faustus beginning with Poel's at the turn of the century, producing the play is one attempt and the treatment of specific scenes for the purpose of visual spectacle is altogether another thing. The presentation of the devils posed a problem in that they had to resemble the devils of the popular imagination. Poel's devils resembled the devils of the popular paintings of the fifteenth century and Mephostophilis resembled a demon "from the roof of Notre Dame". Benthall presents the devils in colour and style so as to make them unrepulsive as they were supposed to be to Faustus. Barton clothed them as blackrobed monks operating the puppets. For him the devils had no reality other than as figments of Faustus' imagination.

The presentation of the Seven Deadly Sins posed another problem. Bernard Shaw found them in Poel's presentation so uncharacteristically attractive that it was not only Faustus who was delighted but the audience also applauded the Sins on their appearance. Nevill Coghill created a "beautiful mosque" which, however carried an unmistakable sense of menace and violence behind their surface elegance. Barton presents them as puppets making clear that whatever attraction they possess is purely superficial. Both Coghill and Barton tried to correlate the visual aspect of the show with the tragic dilemma of Faustus.

The presentation of Helen was another subtle theatrical problem for the productions of Faustus. Many productions tended to present Helen purely in aesthetic terms keeping in view Faustus' apostrophe to her. The play required an awareness of the demonic nature of Helen on the part of the audience. However, the audiences at several productions, Tydeman notes, were persuaded to sit through the middle sections simply to witness Helen and her mythical beauty. Clifford Williams presents Helen in the nude in a production at Shakespeare's Memorial Theatre in 1968. The point of nudity was her desirability for Faustus but it is extremely doubtful whether it strengthened the cause of her hellenic beauty and the attendant desirability either for Faustus or to the audience. It was John Barton, William Tydeman notes, who presented Helen aptly:

Helen was nothing more than a blonde wig, a mask and a wisp of chiffon carried about by Faustus, lovingly caressed, and finally taken to bed with him. The loss of living, breathing sexuality was great, yet the possible disappointment attendant on discovering Helen to be less perfect than one's image was dispelled, while Faustus's own degradation in the search for physical satisfaction could hardly have been more tellingly conveyed.¹¹

Faustus' apostrophe to Helen marks the zenith of an aesthetic and sensuous transcendence while the same words have to carry the burden of the religious degradation of courting the devil in the disguise of Helen. Obviously, the presentation of Helen is bound to be a very difficult theatrical feat that should present simultaneously an apotheosis and mockery.

6.11 PROBLEMS OF PRODUCING *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

In a way, the problem of presenting Helen is characteristic of the difficulties inherent in producing *Doctor Faustus*. Mutually antagonistic elements have to be delicately poised without allowing one strain to undercut the other – the Christian versus the

Renaissance or the medieval versus the modern. It was a challenge to modern theatre, specifically for the Modern British theatre to stage the ambivalence constituting Faustus' tragedy – the ambivalence extending to the dilemma as to whether Faustus is to be only tragic or comic as well. William Tydeman sums up the endeavour of Modern British theatre to stage *Doctor Faustus*:

Productions of the play have come far since *The Times* said of Poel's 1896 version, that *Doctor Faustus* seems scarcely fitted for representation on the modern stage. Few would take so gloomy a view today. Even if they have rarely been content to take the text on trust, directors can scarcely be blamed for their vigorous wielding of the scissors or the felt pen. Nor must the problems of creating a coherent Faustus, of making the notions of Hell and damnation meaningful to a modern audience, of spanning the presumed gulf between the peaks be minimised. A conflation of the best features of all productions reviewed here – Benthall spectacle, Williams consistent concept of complex Faustus, Barton's puppetry, Fette's economy (and his Mephostophilis) might prove rewarding, but they illustrate the obvious truth that no single production of *Doctor Faustus* in recent times can be truly satisfactory. Yet the play has inspired some exciting theatrical moments, and much of its power is still untapped, particularly its contemporary relevance.¹²

6.12 AMERICAN PRODUCTIONS OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Outside England, the productions of *Doctor Faustus* are far fewer and less convincing too. Two notable productions were in America. One was by Oscar Welles, a Broadway production for the Federal theatre project at Maxine Elmit theater in 1937. This was a popular production for the American stage in the thirties with more than a hundred performances, but the staging had little to recommend other than what the *New York Herald Tribune* for January 9, 1937 had to report.

The action takes place against a black background and the players are brilliantly spotlighted against it. Isolated from their surroundings and appearing for most of the time on the stage apron that extends far beyond the proscenium, the effectively costumed actors of Smoke screens..... many shrewd eclectic contraptions and all the devices of modern stage art but the final effect is of a true and simple translation of the Elizabethan stage into contemporary theatrical terms.¹³

Another notable American production was by The Phoenix theatre under the directions by Word Baker in 1964 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Marlowe. It was a poor tribute to Marlowe on the anniversary. *Time* for October 16, 1964 reports:

Mounting a lavish display of props, costumes, and lighting effects, the phoenix production camouflages the metaphysical tragedy and smothers the tensions in Marlowe's imagination..... Marlowe's mighty line is reduced to a polysyllabic mouthwash.¹⁴

6.13 *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*: THE POSTMODERN THEATRE

Modern theatre, both in England and America, attached to theatrical naturalism and audience reception could not have done justice to the intellectually elusive Christopher Marlowe. It is interesting to see how *Doctor Faustus* lends itself to the critically explorative postmodern experimental theatre that began in America and on the continent in the nineteen sixties. The postmodern experimental theatre mainly opposed the logocentric drama that has come to characterize the western theatre since

Aristotle. The logos or the text is not simply the dramatic text but the cultural logos as well, promoting the dominant values of the time through mimesis and representation. Theatre, over the centuries in the experimentalists' view, has not only made theatrical element like plot, character and mise en scene, subserve the dominant cultural logos but also came to thwart the free flow of human ideas and feelings that the theatre originally aimed at presenting. The playwright as the author of the dramatic and cultural logos appropriated the whole domain of theatrical art thereby denying theatre its legitimate function of generating or regenerating human reality on the stage. The experimentalists attempted to restore to theatre a certain autonomy of creative art independent of the playwright or at least, concomitant to his act of dramatic creation. In the early part of the twentieth century, Antonin Artaud called for a triumph of pure *Mise en Scene* as against the tyranny of the text. The *Mise-en-scene* is capable of organising the theatrical text, after the play text is introduced, through actors, stage, objective, décor, lighting, costumes, movement, sound etc. Artaud's was truly a revolution in theatre which received support from the new formulations in critical theory like Poststructuralism and Deconstruction. The poststructuralists disbelieved in the role of the subject author as the repository of artistic impulses and believed that if the subject or the author were to claim an existence in a work of art, it is in a state of continual dispersal. Similarly, the erstwhile stable relationship between the representer and the represented or the signifier and the signified is a continually fluctuating one. The theory of Deconstruction as formulated by Jaques Derrida believed in the systematic play of differences in language causing a never-ending activity and productivity. Artaud's endeavour to disrupt the logocentric mediation of theatre through the primacy of *mise en scene* appealed to Derrida immensely. The experimentalists in theatre, persuaded by the formulations of the poststructuralists and Derridean Deconstructionists were looking forward to multiple readings of the dramatic texts, through *mise en scene*.

6.14 GROTOWSKI'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Marlowe's intellectual ambiguity and the textual diversity of Doctor Faustus provided an ideal ground for theatre experimentalists to indulge their critical imagination. Jerzy Grotowski's production of *Doctor Faustus* at his theatre laboratory in Opole, Poland in 1963 is an attempt to make the play intelligible to the contemporary postmodern temper and sensibility.

Drawing from several quartos of *Doctor Faustus*, Grotowski begins his production with scene Three of Act Five where Faustus is arguing with his scholars. Rearranged in twenty two scenes, Grotowski turns Marlowe's ambivalent defiance of the established religion into a postmodern cognitive mapping of a dispersed religion. He writes:

This is a play based on a religious theme. God and the Devil intrigue with the protagonists – that is why the play is set in a monastery. There is a dialectic between mockery and apotheosis. Faustus is a saint and his saintliness shows itself as an absolute desire for pure truth. If the saint is to become one with his sainthood, he must rebel against God - Creator of the world, because the laws of the world are traps contradicting morality and truth ... Whatever we do good or bad – we are damned. The saint is not able to accept as his model this God who ambushes man ... But what must the saint care for? His soul, of course his own self-consciousness..... In fact, Faustus is not only a saint but a martyr – even more so than the Christian saints and martyrs because he expects no reward. On the contrary, he knows that his due will be eternal damnation The dialectic of mockery and apotheosis consists then of a conflict between lay sainthood and religious sainthood.....¹⁵

The dialectic between apotheosis and mockery divests the soliloquies of their rhetoric and, in its place the trained Grotowskian actor vocalises and gesturalizes the postmodern resolution of an irresolute Elizabethan dilemma. Grotowski describes how theatre can present Faustus independent of Marlowe, his dramatic text and its constrictive dilemmas and conflicts.

The sky then resonates with the word and in all the corners of the room the hidden actors, reciting like monks, chant prayers like Ave Maria and the Pater Noster. Midnight sounds, Faustus' ecstasy is transformed into his passion. The moment has come when the saint....is ready for his martyrdom: eternal damnation. He is in rapture, his body is shaken by spasms. The ecstatic failure of his voice becomes at the moment of his passion a series of inarticulate cries – the piercing, pitiable shrieks of an animal caught in a trap. His body shudders and all is silence.¹⁶

6.15 SUMMING UP

Grotowski's rather deconstructive approach is one attitude of contemporary critical theory towards theatre performance. The postmodern rendering of the play by Grotowski reflects the new historicist approach dialectically opposed to artistic deconstruction. The new historicist approach renders a work of art equally independent of the artist but makes it predominantly a product of the historical moment of its production. Art, in new historicist endeavours locates itself in contemporary history rather than emerge through any process of imagination. The earlier historicist approach as against the new historicist one, made art a product of its historical moment, regardless of its ability to reconstruct another period. Perhaps, Poel's production comes nearer to the historicist approach.

Since the 16th century, the performance of *Doctor Faustus* surveys a long theatrical history medieval morality play drama of emerging Renaissance aspirations and the self-generative postmodern theatre. Play, drama, and theater-Marlowe visualized the complex growth of dramatic and theatrical art.

6.16 REFERENCES

1. Quoted by William Tydeman, *Doctor Faustus: Text and Performance* 1984, McMillan London, p. 24.
2. Phoebe Spinard. "The dilettante's lie in *Doctor Faustus*", *Texas Studies in Language & Literature* 24, 3, 1982, p. 244.
3. John Russell Brown, "Marlowe and the actors" *Drama Review* 8, 4, 1964, pp. 164 & 158-9.
4. Ibid., pp. 166-67.
5. William Tydeman, *Doctor Faustus : Text and Performance*, p. 15.
6. John Russell Brown "Marlowe and the actors" *Drama Review*, 8, 4, 1964, pp. 155-168.
7. William Tydeman. *Doctor Faustus: Text and Performance*. p. 60.
8. Ibid., p. 70.
9. Quotation from William Tydeman: *Doctor Faustus: Text & Performance*, p.62.

10. Ibid., p.63.
11. William Tydeman. *Doctor Faustus: Text and Performance*, pp.77-78.
12. Ibid., pp.82-83.
13. Quotation from William Tydeman. *Doctor Faustus: Text & Performance*. P.69.
14. *Time*, October 16, 1964, p.77.
15. Jerzy Grotowski, "Doctor Faustus in Poland" *Drama Review* 8, 4 1964, trans. Richard Schechner, p.121.
16. Ibid., pp.132-33

6.17 KEY WORDS

1. *Deconstruction*: A mode of reading first defined by Jacques Derrida based on the principle that linguistic signs cannot be linked to extra-linguistic reality but are, instead components of the self-contradictory structure of language. A deconstructive reading of a text is, then, a search for concealed contradictions within a text that undercut its apparent unity.
2. *Mise-en-scene* (French) Scenery and properties of an acted play; stage setting, and the surroundings of an event.
3. *Modern theatre*: Essentially a theatre of protest that began with the plays of the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen in the latter part of the nineteenth century, like *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1881). The other champions of modern theatre during the 19th and 20th centuries are the Swedish dramatist, August Strindberg, Russian playwright, Anton Chekov, Italian playwright, Luigi Pilandello, the English playwright Bernard Shaw and the American playwright, Eugene O'Neill, and the German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. Two concepts characterize modern theatre: one is the notion of modernism based on the self-consciousness of the artist and objectively verifiable reality of the world. Secondly in terms of theatrical production, it depends on realism and naturalism whose main function is to foster an illusion of reality on the stage and to transmit the theatrical illusion to the audience.
4. *New Historicism*: It is a critical approach to literature with the belief that the meaning and value of a piece of literature resides in history and that the history can be reconstructed. The new Historicism, as championed by Stephen Greenblatt and Michel Foucault emphasises the diversity of social currents in any given period and the inescapable colouring of the understanding of the past by the modes of thought of the present. Further, for the new historicists society is essentially a political structure of power that always seeks to contain challenges to its power.

There are no verified set of beliefs and attitudes in any given period of time but rather tensions and struggles for power within a culture. Originally New Historicism arose in the field of Renaissance studies and extended itself to the study of other literary periods.

5. *Postmodernism*: a broad term to explain the intellectual temper in the West since the Second World War. On the one hand, postmodernism reflects

disillusionment with modernist self-consciousness and its realist/naturalist perspectives and, on the other hand, it runs through several contemporary ideas like post-structuralism, Deconstruction, reader-response studies and new Historicism etc.

6. *Poststructuralism*: Rejecting the supremacy of the authorial voice and interpretative human experience, structuralists like Ferdinand Saussure and Levi-Strauss and post-structuralists like Ronald Barthes and Jaques Derrida, make literature a linguistic model in which signs are related to one another not through logical connection but through a process, a differentiation. While structuralists explore a structure of functional relationships within linguistic structures, Post-structuralists, focusing on the possibilities of reader response, are engaged in decentering even the functional relationships between the signified and the signifying structures to discern the points of rupture or fission in them. From the traditional liberal humanist approach to the post-structuralist approach, which is essentially, deconstructionist, the shift that has taken place is from the predominance of the author, through that of the underlying linguistic structures to the possibilities of the response of the reader.
7. *Theatrical naturalism*: Theatrical naturalism was propounded by Emile Zola who believed that art and literature are on the same scale of gradation like chemistry and physiology etc. Central to naturalism is the idea of stage environment which has to be illusionistically realised for the actor treating the stage geographically and psychologically distinct from the area occupied by the audience through what is called the fourth wall convention i.e., the actor imagines that the stage is circled not only by three walls but by a fourth wall, one in front of the audience too. He has to be totally unaware of the audience in front of him for his awareness of their presence would destroy the theatrical illusion of reality on the stage. This sort of naturalism on the stage is evolved by theatre Libre in Paris, Otto Brahm in Berlin, David Balasco in New York and Constantin Stanislavsky in Moscow.

6.18 QUESTIONS

1. Marlowe wrote as much theatre as drama in *Doctor Faustus*. Discuss.
2. Discuss the textual diversity of *Doctor Faustus* with reference to its productions during the Elizabethan period.
3. Examine the merits and demerits of modern productions of *Doctor Faustus*.
3. Examine Grotowski's production of *Doctor Faustus* and comment on the suitability of the play for a postmodern performance.

6.19 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. William Tydeman. *Doctor Faustus: Text & Performance*. 1984. McMillan London. Tydeman discusses the productions of *Doctor Faustus* since the Elizabethan times to the 1980,s and focuses on the problems of acting involved in specific roles and scenes and of staging the play.
2. John Russell Brown, "Marlowe and the Actors" *Drama Review* 8, 4, 1964. Russell discusses the challenges Marlowe imposes on the actors for his plays.
3. Jerzy Grotowski, "Doctor Faustus in Poland" *Drama Review* 8,4 194, pp.121-133. Richard Scehecher, Grotowski presents his theatre script of *Doctor Faustus* and discusses the critical perspectives of his production.