UNIT 6 THE PERFORMANCE OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Structure

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 Tydeman 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 Eiffingham. 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 Tydeman records an early impression of the play as noted in Sir John Melton's *Astrologaster* of the *Figure Caster* of 1620.

> shagge-hayr'd Devills 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, Tyrdeman notes that there was even a rumour among the credulous that the actual demons participated in the stage action. Edward Allyen, who also played Tamburlaine and the Jew of Malta, evoked instant identification from the audience with his "barnstorming" acting. Obviously, Faustus was lost in Allyen and it was Allyen 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 Heyhood 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 pay 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 Mephostopilis' 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 wrting 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 Mephostophilis "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 elation 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 subleties 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 dominence 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 sublety, 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' 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 sedentry 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 Eddisson 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 convival" 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 Mckellen'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 overeacher 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 sensous 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 uncharacterically attractive that it was not only Faustus who was delighted but the audience also applauded the Sins on their appearance. Nevill Coghill created a "beautful 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 corelate 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 hellinic 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 attendent 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 takes the text on trust, directors can scarcely be blamed for their vigorous weilding 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 Eloit 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 for beyond the procenium, the effectively costumed actors of Smoke screens..... many shrewd eclectical 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 tyrany of the text. The *Mise-en-scene* is capable of organsing the theatrical text, after the play text is introduced, through actors, stage, objective, décor, lighting, costumes, movement, sound etc. Antaud'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, pursuaded 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

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2. Phoebe Spinard. "The dilettante's lie in *Doctor Faustus*", *Texas Studies in Language & Literature* 24, 3, 1982, p. 244.

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10. Ibid., p.63.

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12. Ibid., pp.82-83.

13. Quotation from William Tydeman. *Doctor Faustus*: *Text & Performance*. P.69.

14. *Time*, October 16, 1964, p.77.

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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 surroudings 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, Bertalt 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 belif 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 Greenblt 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 predominence 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 psycholgically 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.