PREFACE

In course of the last four hundred years or more, Christopher Marlowe's The Tragicall Historie of Doctor Faustus has occasioned more debate than, with the exception of Shakespeare's Hamlet, perhaps, any other English play-text. Being one of the most widely read play-texts, the number of problems associated with different facets of it to have been identified and interpreted in different ways by critics, is naturally large. The following is a brief consideration of some of the typical problems related to the play-text to have kept the critics most engaged.

One aspect of the play-text that critics have debated and disputed for long is the date of composition of the play. W.W. Greg argues in favour of 1592 on the grounds that that was the year of publication of P.F. Gent.'s Elizabethan prose version of the German Faust Book, entitled, The Historie of the Damnable life, and deserved death of Doctor John Faustus, on which Marlowe had based his play.¹ Greg's argument effectively dismisses Paul Kocher's case in favour of an earlier date based on the suggestion that an

edition of the translation existed before 1590. However, Greg's choice of date is questioned by MacD P. Jackson who supports a date before February 28, 1589, because, in his opinion, the allusions to the Faust story in other texts of the time indicated that the translation was known to authors in some form before 1592.

With Doctor Faustus, an additional problem is caused by the existence of two quarto editions of the play, leading to a never ending comparative study of the two. Notably, the first extant quarto edition of the play, to have been published - at least twelve years after its first performance - in 1604, is known as the 'A text', and the other quarto edition, having quite a few variations from the first, one which appeared in 1616, is known as the 'B text'. Greg is in favour of the B text. According to him, the play was originally composed in the form in which it is to be found in the B text, of which the A text was an abridged version prepared for the use of companies while touring in the provinces. Whereas, in spite of Greg's

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4 The B text is about a third longer than the A text, due to additional material in the scenes involving the Pope, the Emperor and the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt.
contention, C.L. Barber bases his interpretation of the play on the A text. Constance Brown Kuriyama, going a step further, opposes Greg's contention in order to assert her views in favour of the A text. According to Kuriyama, the B text lacks the 'aesthetic integrity' of the A text. Moreover, the protagonist's stature, compared to what it is in the A text, is diminished in the B text. On the question of comparison between the two editions, Michael Warren, rightly, states that a comparative analysis of the two texts need not be based on the assumption that one of them is necessarily inferior to the other. He contends that the assumption underlying the debate that there is 'a single reliable text which will one day provide a kind of certainty for the reader', is a 'mirage', and suggests that the two editions be viewed as two distinct plays.

The range of 'theological senses' evoked by the play, too, is vast. Una Ellis-Fermor thinks that Faustus, who ought to be exalted for his logical clarity, his Promethean desire for knowledge and truth and his 'unswerving courage of...mind', in a word, for his being the embodiment

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of a true Renaissance scholar, is, instead, reduced by 'the gods' to a 'plaything'.
Leo Kirschbaum, on the other hand, considers Faustus to be an 'unstable, foolish worldling' who expresses 'intellectual pride to an odious degree' and gives up higher values for lower ones.
Robert G. Hunter, however, reminds the reader of the play, that Marlowe's audience comprised of people having at least three different religious beliefs, namely, 'the convinced and informed Calvinist', the 'semi-Pelagian' and the Augustinian, who would all 'sit side by side at the same performance of Doctor Faustus and each make his separate and different theological sense of what he [saw].

A different and somewhat rare approach to the play-text has been the 'political' one. According to Simon Shepherd who took up the political issues in Marlowe's plays in detail, all Elizabethan plays express political protest. While focusing in Doctor Faustus on how an individual is affected 'when addressed by the state's law', Shepherd finds that although heaven is an emblem of state control, the comic scenes in the play serve to upset

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8 Una Ellis-Fermor, *Christopher Marlowe* (Methuen, 1927).
However, a question that is invariably evoked by the play-text, irrespective of the theological or political denomination of the reader himself or of his neighbouring reader, is as follows: why does Faustus act the way he does? In all the other approaches to the text, the question has only been indirectly and inadequately attended to. There, it has either been too readily explained away in course of the reader's falling back on the persona, even person, of the playwright, or accounted for with a theology or a political ideology that is not always in consonance with the text as we have it. Readers employing the psychoanalytical approach to the play-text have sought to try their perspicacity on this aspect of it, usually along Freudian lines, although it cannot be maintained that they have always been successful in separating the figure of the construct from the figure of its author.

In terms of his observation that the plays of Marlowe are influenced by the playwright's 'unconscious drives' that determines in turn the 'unruly and conflicting emotions' embodied by the play in a way never to be

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'fully clarified in a compelling dramatic image', it was L. C. Knights who indicated for the first time that there existed in the play the scope to study it psychoanalytically.\footnote{12 L. C. Knights, 'The strange Case of Christopher Marlowe', \textit{Further Explorations : Essays in Criticism} (Chatto and Windus, 1965) pp. 75-98.}

C. L. Barber's 'psychoanalytical' approach to the play, in the essay already referred to, is a little less cursory than that of Knights. In the essay Barber argues, that in the conflicts and fantasies of its action and imagery, the play abounds in material relating to the first phase of sexuality of Faustus, namely, the oral phase. Ultimately, Barber's concern with psychoanalysis, too, proves to be tentative, and the same is evident from the very wording of his aim, which is, to 'see, if only darkly, into Marlowe's motives for creating'. The greater concern of the essay being the 'Reformation/Renaissance crisis in which this need took shape'.

In another psychoanalytical study of the play, somewhat along the biographical path indicated by Knights, Wilbur Sanders takes up Faustus with Marlowe. According to Sanders, Marlowe is a psychotic personality, a writer of bad plays, an overrated playwright and an insignificant writer compared to Shakespeare. On the last point, which is the thesis of his book, Sanders states, whereas Shakespeare transcended the 'received
ideas' of his cultural milieu, Marlowe was confined to them, or rather, confined by them. Sanders uses psychoanalytical insights to argue that the defects of Marlowe's personality are inseparable from the defects of his heroes. Thus, it is the defects of Marlowe's personality that account for the 'urges which are only partially understood', the 'motiveless aggression' and the 'preoccupation with destruction' at the thematic level of the texts.¹³

Philip K. Wion, on the other hand, somewhat along the textual path indicated by Barber, proposes to closely 'examine' those features of the play that express the underlying Oedipal wishes and fears of Faustus. Accordingly, he surveys the numerous manifestations of the parent-child relationship, particularly the father-son relationship in the play, and concludes that Faustus' 'feeling towards his 'fathers' are highly contradictory'. He also examines the 'threats, fears and dramatization of various kinds of mutilation' occurring throughout the play as a reflection of the fear and anxiety that is inevitably associated with the Oedipal wishes of Faustus. With reference to Ernest Becker's Denial of Death (1973) - a book that, according to Wion, presents a 'powerful synthesis of psychoanalytic and existential thought' - specifically to Becker's argument

that, for a 'psychotic' person 'life is a more insurmountable problem than for others and for whom the burden of anxiety and fear is about as constant as his daily breath' - Wion wonders how the ego coming under such anxiety and fear from within is to cope with the father looking fiercely at it. Wion considers Faustus' 'final state' to be one of 'the terror of total defencelessness against the most thorough deprivation and implacable hostility conceivable'. He concludes with the suggestion that the 'puritanical world view' within which the play is set is, 'paradoxically', the 'play's central defence against Oedipus motives and anxieties, and at the same time a manifestation of them'.

Constance Brown Kuriyama, perhaps the latest of the Freudian-Marlovians, resorts to psychoanalysis in order to establish that the difficulties of interpreting the writings of Marlowe could be considerably reduced by taking into account the alleged homosexuality of the playwright as a person. Writing on Doctor Faustus, however, Kuriyama argues that the 'import' of the play is 'not only historical, philosophical, or theological, but also emotional and psychological'. The 'psychological tension' that 'infuse the play' issues, in Kuriyama's view, from Faustus' difficulty in choosing between 'omnipotence' and 'impotence'. This,

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14 Philip K. Wion 'Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, the Oedipus complex, and the Denial of Death', Colby Library Quarterly 16 (1980) pp. 190-204.
according to Kuriyama, leads to the dilemma that is central to the play. She then proceeds to explain the dilemma in terms of the concept of 'negative identity' borrowed from Erik H. Erikson. In brief, negative identity is a collection of man's evil self caused by his perverse fixation on 'those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, has been presented ... as most undesirable and dangerous and yet also as most real.'  

Kuriyama argues that the attitude of the subject to his 'negative identity' is often 'contradictory', because the subject would 'affirm the necessity' of the identity and be 'critical of it' at one and the same time. Hence, Faustus' failure to make up his mind as to whether he should repent or not is the result of his fixation to the 'negative identity' of his that never allowed him to be fully convinced regarding the efficacy of repentance.

The present work, however, is concerned neither with questions of authority or date, nor with debates relating to the theological, biographical or political significance of the play-text and not even with any of the existing psychoanalytical approaches to the play that seek

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either to render the text, as neatly as possible, as an allegory of one or more Freudian themes, or to explain the text in terms of the findings from the psychoanalysis of Marlowe. Rather, the present work seeks to produce a somewhat different reading of the text, one that is carried out with regard to a fundamental problem raised by Jacques Lacan's reading of the writings of Sigmund Freud, a problem invariably emerging out of, or led to by, the Freudian enterprise, to which, though in its own way, the play-text of *Doctor Faustus* seems to be especially responsive.

Freud's writings are always aimed at unveiling an unspoken desire, the Oedipus complex of man, for example. Jacques Lacan finds it strange, therefore, that neither Freud nor the Freudians knew that Freud's writings were always aimed at articulating, or giving a name to, an unnamed desire. In the nineteenth century, the desire giving form to the Oedipus complex was more unnameable than unnamed, which led Freud to try, stubbornly out of necessity, to restore the same to its name. Thanks to the perspicacity of Freud, readers at large are now quite comfortable with his thoughts. Rather, readers such as the literary critic would feel distinctly uncomfortable if such Freudian terms as 'unconscious' - usually referred to by critics as the 'subconscious' which is not a Freudian term - 'ego', 'phallus' and so on were to be withdrawn from his vocabulary. But that does not mean that the efficacy of psychoanalysis is in the
identification of the Oedipus in each text. Psychoanalysis is not narrowly concerned with naming the unnameable in the sense of making the subject to speak what is unspeakable. Rather, it is concerned with naming what is unnamed, which is what makes it a forever impossible enterprise. Oedipus is a step to this enterprise, an integral step to be precise. But the Oedipus is not all. Freud had identified the Oedipus complex in 1897, and he laboured hard to familiarise the world with the term. After the initial resistance to it had settled down, Freud found himself in the company of an ever increasing band of faithful followers. When every Freudian had learnt the first lesson well enough to find it everywhere they looked into, Freud announced, in 1920, that that was not all, that there was a 'beyond' to the pleasure principle and that the beyond was primary. This beyond marks the end of the Freudian dialectic. It consists of the darkest resistance to psychoanalysis by the ultimate unnameable. Lacan contends that nothing would emerge from the unnamed beyond until a name was introduced in its place, and proceeds to conclude that the unconscious is structured like language.\footnote{Jacques Lacan, \textit{Écrits : A Selection}, tr. Alan Sheridan (London : Routledge, 1977) pp. 81-2, 159-64 and 234.}

In the first part of the thesis comprising of the first three chapters, I would like to argue that Lacan's statement - 'the unconscious is
structured like language' - does in no way screen the fact that language, at the point of its inauguration in the living being, is structured by the unconscious. In the second part of the thesis comprising of the next three chapters, I would try to examine how the first quarto edition of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* re-defines the question of structuring of language by the unconscious, at the levels of both Faustus' desire and the language that is employed to name it.