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ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY DR. FAUSTUS

Christopher Marlowe's 1604 play Doctor Faustus traces the tragic fall of an ambitious German scholar, Faustus, from his heroic pursuit of knowledge to his collapse into self-indulgent mediocrity. The play also illustrates contrasts between European medieval and Renaissance values. Medieval values centred around Christianity, saints and the relationship between human beings and divinity while Renaissance values shifted toward humanistic ideas celebrating individualism and the scientific exploration of nature. Marlowe's play both reflects and questions this shift in values. It focuses on an ordinary man, rather than a king or noble, whose pursuit of knowledge at first seems admirable. However, Faustus's swelling pride leads to his downfall, as revealed cautions against seeking avaricious, limitless personal power and knowledge because that pursuit, although tempting has its limits

As the play begins, Doctor Faustus is in his study, rejecting medieval scholarship: he has grown dissatisfied with the limits of traditional forms of knowledge and wants to learn more. Feeling that he knows all that human understanding might offer, he wants to explore magic to control nature and gain knowledge, wealth and political power. Although Faustus's unhindered pursuit of knowledge and power will become corrosive, Marlowe imbues certain magnificence to his quest.

In the play's inciting incident, Faustus uses magical marks and chants to guide and chants to summon Mephistophilis who will become his guide and source of power and understanding. Faustus tells him that he wishes to sell his soul to Lucifer, if Mephistophilis will serve him for twenty-four years. This event marks the beginning of Faustus's quest to seize personal power. Mephistophilis warns him of "ten thousand hells" that await him, yet Faustus presses on, exhibiting his characteristic blindness and pride-fatal flaws-that propel him into darkness. Faustus's internal conflict is revealed; once he sells his soul, a desire to repent inevitably will plague him as his fear of hell grows. His deal with Lucifer creates a conflict symbolized by the good and bad angels on his shoulders who urge him in opposing directions, a representation of his divided will.

The rising action comprises Faustus's study of dark magic and his initial conversations with Mephistophilis. He teaches Faustus about the nature of the World but refuses to reveal who made the Universe. With access to knowledge of higher things denied him, Faustus is cut off from God, the Creator of the Universe according to Christian understanding, perhaps Marlowe's reminder that greatness only comes through God. Meanwhile, Wagner, Faustus's servant, uses his master's books to learn how to summon devils and work magic; he convinces a clown named Robin to serve him and embarks on his own misadventures. Wagner and the clown offer common and absurd counterpoints to events, and the clown's

absurd behaviour initially contrast with Faustus's grandeur. As the play continues, however, Faustus's behaviour comes to resemble that of the clown.

As the play moves towards its climax, Faustus's internal conflict, a growing fear that he should repent, leads to personal paralysis. His good and bad angels, representing this inner indecision, symbolize his uncertainty about giving his soul away. In the climax, Faustus nevertheless seals the pact-a deal signed with blood-that promises his soul to Lucifer. Faustus's interests diminish as he acquires new powers-a stark departure from his ambitious pursuits at the onset of events. As his heroic ambitions degrade, he resembles a clown more and more, and his world becomes inverted: Lucifer replaces God, and blasphemy replaces piety. In short, as Faustus gains absolute power. He is corrupted and paradoxically falls into mediocrity, resorting to trickery and petty scheming.

Throughout the falling action, Faustus continues sinking into absurdity as he travels the world to perform magic for various rulers. For example, he voyages to the Pope's Court in Rome and plays tricks, such as making himself invisible, disrupting a banquet, and boxing the Pope's ears. He becomes notorious in Europe, and is eventually invited to Charles V's court in Germany, where he entertains the Monarch. Nothing of substance emerges from Faustus's magic. He casts simple charms and becomes pathetic. Faustus's pursuit of knowledge and personal power has led him to become an entertainer for those who hold actual power.

As the play reaches its resolution, Faustus fails to achieve what he wanted, true power and knowledge. As the twenty-four years come to a close, he dreads his impending death. Marlowe compresses time, underscoring the fact that Faustus's life is quickly slipping away, and Faustus summons Helen of Troy. Scholars pray for him, and, on his final night, he begs for mercy, although it is unclear as to whether he truly repents. He concludes that any sinner will be damned; overlooking passages of the New Testament that speak to the hope of repentance and Marlowe emphasizes this fact in the final scene. Faustus spends his final moments believing that certain sins cannot be forgiven, and the play concludes with a suggestion that it is too late. At midnight a host of devils carry Faustus's soul to hell. Scholars find his limbs and decide to hold a funeral for him.