



NECROMANCY IN DOCTOR FAUSTUS: UNVEILING THE DARK ALLURE OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract: In this profound research endeavor, we embark on a journey to explore the acclaimed theatrical masterpiece of Christopher Marlowe, the illustrious play titled "Dr. Faustus." Our focus lies unwavering on the central theme of necromancy, an arcane art that beckons the boundaries of human comprehension. Within this tragic opus, we encounter Dr. John Faustus, a man of extraordinary talent and erudition, whose prodigious gifts he recklessly misapplies, leading inexorably to his damnation. With unyielding determination, we delve into the protagonist's unquenchable thirst for ultimate dominion through the murky realms of dark arts, meticulously analyzing Faustus's enchantment with necromancy and its inexorable repercussions. Our quest is to shed light upon the play's scintillating portrayal of the beguiling allure that forbidden knowledge possesses, and the tragic descent that befalls those audacious enough to dabble in the occult.

Key Words: Necromancy, quest, forbidden knowledge, dark arts, tragic, and damnation, etc.

I.INTRODUCTION

In this scholarly treatise entitled "Necromancy in Dr. Faustus: Unveiling the Dark Allure of Forbidden Knowledge," we embark upon a riveting expedition into the esoteric realms of forbidden knowledge and the malevolent arts portrayed in Christopher Marlowe's poignant and lamentable drama, "Dr. Faustus." This magnum opus, wrought in the crucible of the late 16th century, ensnares our inquisitive minds as we delve into the odyssey of Dr. John Faustus, a man of scholarly brilliance and unrestrained ambition, disenchanting by the limitations imposed by conventional learning.

Driven by an insatiable desire to transcend the confines of human understanding and ascend to the zenith of omnipotence, Faustus delves unreservedly into the occult domain of necromancy, an arcane practice of communicating with the departed and conjuring ethereal spirits. In the crucible of our inquiry, we explore the profound significance of necromancy in the tapestry of this theatrical epic, its intoxicating allure for Faustus, and the profound moral quandaries it imparts.

Upon traversing the trajectory of Faustus, we witness his fateful encounter with the diabolical Mephistopheles, the consummate mastery he attains over the dark arts, and the calamitous ramifications that befall his unhallowed pursuits. Within this erudite exposition, we surmise that necromancy serves as a metaphor, an allegorical manifestation of humanity's relentless ambition, the perilous path of lusting for dominion without heeding the ethical boundaries that safeguard the soul. A discerning gaze into Faustus's internal strife and the toll he pays for his insatiable thirst for forbidden knowledge unravels the underlying messages that the sagacious Marlowe envisioned to impart to his discerning audience.

II. MEANING OF NECROMANCY

The term "necromancy" itself finds its etymological genesis in the Late Latin "necromantia," a linguistic bequest from the venerable post-Classical Greek "nekromantía." Indeed, necromancy embodies the arcane art wherein mortals seek to commune with the deceased, summoning their ethereal forms as apparitions or visions, all in pursuit of divining the future, uncovering veiled wisdom, or garnering profound insights through the conduit of divination. Unquestionably, at times, necromancy finds itself in the ominous embrace of black magic and witchcraft, emblematic of the esoteric realm where the cosmos and the ethereal converge.

The eminent historian Strabo, in the annals of history (Strabo, xvi.2, 39), renders homage to necromancy as the preeminent form of divination amongst the discerning populace of Persia, a testament to the enduring allure and influence that this mystic art has exerted upon civilizations of yore.

Within the confines of the play's inception, the Chorus, with eloquence and grandeur, acquaints the audience with the exalted state of Faustus, reveling in the opulence of erudition's golden bestowals, yet lamenting his indulgence in the accursed realm of necromancy. In sooth, Faustus stands forth as a veritable polymath, mastering the intellectual pursuits deemed legitimate for scholars of his era. Alas, despite this vast treasury of knowledge, he languishes in discontent, for it yields no dominion, no palpable power to satiate his voracious ambitions. Alas, the avenues of logic, rhetoric, and disputation, hitherto esteemed pursuits of intellectualism, appear barren of worldly gains to Faustus. It is in this disquieting disillusionment that he turns his gaze toward the shadowy expanse of necromancy, that sinister realm of black magic and mystic arts, a wellspring of forbidden potency.

In fine, Faustus perceives in magic the paramount route to opulence, fame, and dominion, a path for which he is willing to barter the very essence of his eternal soul. Unfazed by the breadth of worldly wisdom he has amassed, he eschews contemplation of the boundaries of knowledge, resolute in his unyielding pursuit for more, for might and splendor. Notwithstanding early entreaties within the play, urging him to tread the path of sagacity through the study of Scripture, Faustus spurns such arduous enlightenment, opting instead for the path of hedonism and dominion.

Verily, dear reader, herein lies the crux of our expedition, where wisdom and folly intertwine, and where the interplay of ambition, forbidden knowledge, and tragic downfall shall unfurl before our discerning eyes, thus exposing the multifaceted tapestry of human nature that Marlowe, the sagacious playwright, so masterfully crafted for his sagacious and perceptive audience.

III. UNCONTROLLABLE NECROMANTIC PASSION

Dr. Faustus, the great visionary and dreamer, finds himself enthralled by the alluring fantasy of wielding necromantic powers to conquer the entire world. Driven by this intoxicating illusion, he rashly enters into a pact with Satan, attempting to turn his dreams into tangible reality. Yet, this realm of blissful ignorance and illusion can lead even the wisest astray, as it did with Dr. Faustus.

In stark contrast, reality emerges with undeniable force, demanding acknowledgment. The greatest fools may succumb to the delusion that fantasy is indeed reality. On the other hand, the courageous individuals firmly close the door to fantasy and open their hearts to embrace the bitter truths of reality. They are prepared to endure the brutal pain it may bring, unwavering in their determination.

The wise, however, never let themselves be fooled by the illusions of fantasy. Dr. Faustus may have envisioned achieving immortality and resurrecting the dead, but the limitations of his power force him to bid farewell to this grandiose pursuit in the realm of medicine. His contemplation of the enticing world of profit, power, honor, and omnipotence as a magician reveals his insatiable curiosity, desire for wealth and luxury, nationalistic pride, and hunger for dominion—qualities emblematic of the Renaissance era. It becomes crucial to distinguish between mere "Knowledge" and true "Wisdom," for knowledge misused can indeed pose a grave threat to humanity.

Within the realm of literature, several examples illustrate the consequences of deviating from the path of morality. King Oedipus's hasty judgment led to devastating errors, Macbeth's vaulting ambition resulted in his tragic downfall, and Othello's pride and jealousy contributed to his own destruction. Similarly, Dr. Faustus's insatiable thirst for knowledge led him to choose the path of evil, selling his soul to obtain forbidden knowledge. Such tragic declines can be attributed to a fatal "error of judgment" or "Hamartia," the tragic flaw inherent in these characters.

Christopher Marlowe masterfully portrays the descent and downfall of a human soul, born from excessive pride and unbridled ambition. Dr. Faustus stands as the epitome of the Renaissance "new man," characterized by skepticism, boundless curiosity, and the pursuit of knowledge. In the end, his tragic tale serves as a cautionary reminder of the perilous consequences that await those who let their desires and ambitions blind them to the boundaries of morality and wisdom.

Upon successfully completing his academic journey at the venerable German university of Wittenberg, Faustus embarks on an ardent quest to ascertain a suitable vocation, one that would satiate his insatiable appetite for suprahuman aspirations. Dismissing philosophy, medicine, law, and theology with a discerning eye, he discerns that these fields can never quench the flames of his yearning desires. Medicine, dubbed as "physic," may proffer ephemeral healing, but it pales in comparison to the unattainable prospects of bestowing eternal life or reviving the departed from the clutches of death. Henceforth, Faustus, in a moment of epiphany, gravitates towards necromancy—a realm woven with magic and the dark arts—acknowledging it as the solitary conduit to attain "omnipotence" and ascend to the exalted echelon of a "mighty god."

IV. SEDUCTION OF DR FAUSTUS BY NECROMANCY

Ah, the famous adage, "Knowledge without wisdom is a load of books on the back of an ass," finds its veritable embodiment in none other than the erudite Doctor Faustus. Seduced by the seductive allure of necromancy, he anticipates a bounteous harvest of untold riches, influence, and the all-encompassing mantle of omnipotence. Verily, this anticipation of worldly rewards serves as a chilling testament to his tragic ambition, an ambition that, as if by a malevolent spell, eclipses his lucidity and renders him blind to the ominous consequences that lurk in the shadows.

"O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honor, and omnipotence,
Is promised to the studious artisan!"
-Dr. Faustus (Act 1, Scene 1)

With each passing moment, Faustus's fervor burgeons, fueled by visions of necromancy's potential to fulfill his every desire. His yearning for absolute dominion over life and death epitomizes the dangerous obsession that courses through the veins of his pursuit.

"How am I glutted with conceit of this!
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?"
-Dr. Faustus (Act 1, Scene 3)

V. FAUSTUS'S ALLIANCE WITH DEVILS

Unrestrained by the bounds of piety, Faustus, in audacious defiance, seeks alliance with devils, eschewing any semblance of a notion to seek solace in the benevolence of God and good angels. Immersed in the labyrinthine world of magic, particularly the alluring allure of necromancy, his spirit soars with renewed vigor. He bares his soul, revealing his fervent yearning for knowledge that transcends the mundane realms of conventional understanding. Undoubtedly, he craves for the mantle of divine-like power, convinced that necromancy stands as the ethereal gateway to celestial realms.

"These metaphysics of magicians
And necromantic books are heavenly."

-Dr. Faustus (Act 1, Scene 1)

Nicholas Brookes, in his discerning interpretation, perceives the play as an inverted morality, a mesmerizing tapestry that exalts the values of the infernal realms. Faustus, as a figure of immeasurable greatness, forges an irrevocable path of rejection, a resolute rejection of what he perceives as the stifling presence of a restraining God.

VI. FAUSTUS'S LUST FOR VAST TREASURES OF GOLD AND SHINING PEARLS

Like Barabas in "The Jew of Malta," Faustus harbors a consuming dream of wielding perfect dominion over the spirits. His aspirations are nothing short of grandiose, envisioning the spirits flying to distant lands like India, unearthing vast treasures of gold and shining pearls from the ocean's depths. Faustus's ambitious plan extends to sending the spirits to America, where he envisions amassing wealth and raising a formidable army to vanquish the Spanish General and claim sovereignty over all provinces. The allure of necromancy grips Faustus, despite his astute theological acumen, compelling him to embrace this dark path.

"A sound magician is a mighty god."

-Dr. Faustus (Act 1, Scene 1)

In this profound utterance, Faustus echoes his fervent belief in the god-like prowess a skilled necromancer possesses.

Seizing the opportunity, Faustus forges a pact with the demon Mephistophilis, offering his soul to Lucifer in exchange for twenty-four years of earthly pleasures, wealth, and honor. His agreement sealed in his own blood, Faustus's journey into the realm of demonic power begins.

However, Faustus soon learns that even the might of the infernal realm has its limitations. He seeks a wife but is granted an indulgent array of prostitutes, a temptation he readily embraces. Mephistophilis entices him with knowledge of astronomy and cosmology, momentarily stirring Faustus's conscience. Yet, each time, the alluring parade of the Seven Deadly Sins captivates him, causing him to forget any qualms and remain steadfast in his unholy bargain.

With the assistance of spirits, Faustus yearns to possess ethereal and beautiful damsels, envisioning pleasures beyond mortal comprehension. He seeks treasures from distant lands and envisions himself as the absolute and all-powerful monarch of the world. Such aspirations find expression in his soliloquy, where he muses about commanding spirits to fetch treasures from India and the ocean's depths.

Undeterred by the looming uncertainty and ambiguity of his path, Faustus continues his perilous pursuit, even calling upon the spirits of the dead, willing to risk his own doom. He commands Mephistopheles to be his loyal attendant, ready to fulfill his every command, no matter how extraordinary or dangerous.

Faustus's insatiable passion draws him into the labyrinthine corridors of uncertainty and ambiguity, where the meaning of the universe and human existence becomes shrouded in enigma. The allure of ultimate power and the pursuit of forbidden knowledge drive him ever deeper into this enthralling and dangerous realm.

The esoteric art of necromancy encompasses far more than mere resurrection or, dare I say, the animation of long-deceased cadavers and communion with spectral entities. Instead, it embraces a myriad of disciplines, each distinct yet intricately linked. The accomplished necromancer is well-versed in all and aspires to achieve mastery over several. These enchanting wizards are renowned for their dominion over matters of death, an inclination that places Faustus in opposition to society as a whole, his mystical craft perceived as a profane transgression against the natural order.

VII. FAUSTUS EMBARKING ON A PERILOUS PATH

Once empowered with the mystic forces of necromancy, Faustus embarks on a perilous path. Through his arcane arts, he shows no reverence for any authority, not even the venerable Pope. From the hallowed Vatican in Rome to the imperial German court and even to the lowly realm of horse-trading, Faustus demonstrates the extent of his powers. In Rome, he employs invisibility to play mischief on the head of the papacy, liberate the pontiff's adversary Bruno, and bewilder an assembly of ecclesiastical figures. With audacity, he beguiles Emperor Charles by invoking the spirits of historical luminaries like Alexander the Great and Darius. Faustus even delights in having his jest with the Pope and a congregation of tonsured monks, exposing their folly to his own amusement. He calls for invisibility to stay undetected in Rome, a request readily fulfilled by Mephistopheles.

The Vatican experience continues with Faustus's comical interactions with the Pope and his attendants. He taunts and bewilders them with his supernatural antics, snatching dishes and cups from their very hands, all the while concealing his identity. The Pope and his entourage are perplexed, attributing the mischief to a departed soul seeking pardon, leading to hilarious chaos and a series of outlandish events.

As Faustus's journey progresses, he toys with the Duchess of Inhaled, providing her with out-of-season grapes. He assumes the role of a court jester, delighting in hoodwinking rustic yokels, much to his own mirth and the amusement of the ducal assembly. However, as the climax nears, the atmosphere takes a dark turn, transitioning from farce to horror and the infernal.

VIII. THE MAGIC OF HELEN OVER FAUSTUS

A righteous Old Man, embodying divine mercy, implores Faustus to repent and escape the eternal torments of hell, even in his eleventh hour. Despite the warning, Faustus succumbs to the sin of despair and entreats Mephistophilis to conjure the haunting image of Helen of Troy, her visage intertwined with the fires of hell. Kissing Faustus, her lips ensnare his very soul.

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium!
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."

In a fateful act of union with Helen, Faustus seals his doom, forsaking redemption even as he cries out for more time. Lucifer, Belzebub, and Mephistophilis, a malevolent trinity, lead him offstage towards unending torment, the portrayal of his damnation unfolding in both worlds.

In the climactic finale, Faustus epitomizes transfiguration and impact. Tormented and anguished, he yearns for salvation as he is inexorably dragged towards the abyss of hell. He finally comprehends the unattainability of immortality through human means, realizing that only divine intervention offers a glimmer of hope. As the pact with the devil nears its dire conclusion, Faustus grapples with the ephemeral nature of human existence, desperately clinging to life and seeking escape from eternal damnation—a poignant portrayal of the tragic consequences of his unbridled necromantic passion.

"A man's life's no more than to say 'one'."

-Dr. Faustus (Act 5, Scene 1)

In this haunting utterance, Faustus reflects upon the ephemeral brevity of human life, a mere utterance of the number 'one' capturing the fleeting essence of existence. His realization underscores the profound truth of mortality, epitomizing the inexorable journey towards the inevitable—a chilling testament to the consequences of his insatiable necromantic yearnings.

"Why this is hell, nor am I out of it."

-Dr. Faustus (Act 5, Scene 2)

The potent impact of these concluding words befits that of a tragic hero. They resonate deeply within the audience, offering profound insights into the human condition.

IX. CONCLUSION

As Thomas Aquinas aptly stated, "Greed is a sin against God, just as all mortal sins, in as much as man condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things." Faustus finally confesses his insatiable "Greed for worldly pleasure," a relentless pursuit of earthly desires. This insidious Greed compels actions such as hoarding, theft, and manipulation of authority, all driven by a lust for temporal riches. Even simony, the audacious attempt to buy or sell sacred sacraments and positions of power, finds its place in the realm of Greed.

Within Christopher Marlowe's play, "Doctor Faustus," the unfolding narrative portrays the trajectory of a power-hungry scholar who delves into necromancy to attain his ambitions. Faustus's ascent and downfall depict his unyielding thirst for power and renown. Despite numerous opportunities to repent and seek divine forgiveness, Faustus persists in rejecting God's intervention, driven solely by self-interest. His dalliance with necromancy and indulgence in the Seven Deadly Sins condemn his soul to eternal damnation.

The consequences of Faustus's choices warrant no pity, for he willingly ventured down the treacherous path of necromancy, inviting rightful retribution. His supposed dedication to Christianity is overshadowed by his blatant disregard for its teachings. The Chorus aptly compares him to Icarus, whose hubris led to his downfall when his wax wings melted in the sun. Faustus's arrogance and thirst for power birthed his tragic demise.

John D. Cox's perspective sheds light on the characters of Lucifer and Faustus, portraying them not as willful rejecters of goodness but rather as victims in a power struggle. Faustus, a once virtuous soul, succumbs to the allure of necromancy and the devil's temptations. Amidst the trappings of power, wealth, and servile devils, Faustus remains discontented, seeking solace through luxury and indulgence but finding no true happiness or salvation. His tragic fate is a culmination of his unending thirst for wealth and his descent into despair.

Ultimately, each human possesses the freedom to choose between righteousness and the path of destruction. Faustus's tale serves as an epic illustration of this principle, a reminder that we are accountable for the choices we make. His journey into darkness warns against the allure of power and the perils of forsaking the path of goodness, a poignant message resonating throughout time.

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