

# Doctor faustus



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The sin 'greed' remains a seductive force in both texts leading to the downfall of Faustus and the three men and even the Pardoner to an extent. Faustus embodies the Renaissance man, who as R. M Dawkins puts " had to pay the medieval price for being one" he follows a humanist attitude and openly questions religious theology. For example, Faustus deems the idea that " the reward of sin is death" as unacceptable, because all men are sinful in his eyes.

Faustus takes pleasure in questioning the unquestionable, as a renaissance man he wants to know more than in his reach, he is not content with the gift of immense knowledge he has been give from god, and it is because of this he sells his soul to the devil so he can " perform what desperate enterprises" he wishes. In contrast, when Chaucer wrote his Pardoner's tale, it was during medieval times where man was deemed to be secondary to god. The tale is written as a morality poem, through the narrative of a sermon.

Sermon's typically had a biblical theme " radix malorum est cupiditas" with a moral story to tell based on this. The story of the three men is typical of the period; the men are seduced by the sin of greed, and take pleasure in pursuing money. This said there was still a strong disgruntlement towards the church; a Marxist reading of the church sees it as a social - human structure which held enormous power over people both spiritually, and economically.

The Pardoner's tale is written as a didactic satire on the clerics who took pleasure in conning people with fake relics such as a " latoun a shoulder boon". Typical of Aristotle's tragedy, Faustus starts the play with good

intentions. He wishes to learn more about " lines, circles, letters and characters" however, his hamartia is his hubris. The reader sees this in the way Faustus speaks, he is very arrogant to begin with and this foreshadows his downfall.

He speaks in the 3rd person and mentions himself 8 times during his first soliloquy " settle thy studies Faustus" this shows Faustus' immense pride. Furthermore Faustus' speeches are extremely long and as Santanyana writes he doesn't listen to the good angel in A1 S1, " the good angel, in the dialogue, seems to have so much the worst of the argument" instead Faustus is more inclined to agree with the bad angel because it agrees with him " think of honour and of wealth".

Faustus is easily seduced by Mephistopheles because of his pride, his greed for knowledge and power as Davis puts, " leads him to taste the fruit of the tree that shaded Adam and Eve" we see this in the way Faustus immediately starts talking about money and power which eventually takes over knowledge as his motivation; " O' what a world of profit and delight... of power... and omnipotence". Similar to this is how the three men are seduced in the Pardoner's tale. They initially wish to find death to take revenge for a lost friend.

However, they are sidetracked when they find " florins fine of gold" and immediately start to plan their future lives, forgetting their original intentions. Contextually however, some people have argued that a love of money was only natural due to the hardships of the time. Life in Medieval England was a struggle for most people. Europe suffered the Great famine

between 1315 - 1322, the Peasant's revolt in 1381 broke out about taxes and the Black Death killed a third of the population. This said, the three men are still sinful, and like Faustus have their pursuit driven by greed.

Reminiscent of Faustus and the three men, the Pardoner also takes pleasure in the pursuit of money. Furthermore he is similar to Faustus who tricks the horse corser into buying a fake horse " in any case ride him not into the water". The Pardoner shows no guilt over conning people using his rhetoric " O glutonye full of cursednesse! " in order to sound more persuasive in his speaking, as long as he " winne[s] gold and silver for [his] leche" this said, other readers have suggested The Pardoner like the three men merely uses the means at his disposal to survive in a system that keeps people economically subjugated.

It could also be argued he takes more pleasure in tricking people into buying his relics as he is clearly " wrooth" when the pilgrims do not wish to buy his relics anymore. The Pardoner's pleasure of pursuit is his thrill of conquest, despite not having a clear downfall like Faustus and the three men; he is upset because he failed to trick people into buying his relics and therefore does have a downfall.

It is obvious to the reader Faustus' pleasures of pursuit were greater than the thrill of his conquest. Faustus spends 24 years conjuring up illusions such as Helen of Troy " the face that launch'd a thousand ships" he has so much power he does not know what to do with it, a Christian reading is that power can only come from god and this is typical of the renaissance vs medieval

values of the time. Faustus was doomed to start with and should have " given ear to" the old man and the good angel.

His downfall is foreshadowed in the prologue which gives reference to Greek myth of Icarus " waxen wings did mount above his reach" Faustus' punishment for his greed is to " die eternally", by the time he exerts pity and sees his wrong doings " Ay, pray for me, pray for me" which is typical of a renaissance play, it is too late, the reputation and use of commas create the image of vulnerable and frightened Faustus which contrasts with the arrogant Dr the reader sees at the beginning of the play.

Like Faustus, the three men also see a consequence in their pleasure of pursuit. It is ironic that they originally search for death where in reality death finds them. In the context of a sermon this is typical; the message could be seen as similar to Marlowe's the bible says " the wages for sin is death... but the gift of god is eternal life" the men go against god through the sin of greed, and therefore are punished like Faustus was.

The two writers place greed as a seductive force which leads the characters to commit further sins in the form of treachery, and gluttony. However there is a sense of poetic justice as the characters are punished for their behaviour, Faustus is damned to hell, the three men are killed and The Pardoner fails in his art of deception.