Servant-Master Relationship in *Doctor Faustus*

One of the basic character relationships and one of the dominant ideas throughout *Doctor Faustus*is that of the relationship between the servant and the master. Faustus' basic desire is that he will never be a slave to anything but that he will be master over the entire world. For this desire he sells his soul. Mephastophilis then becomes Faustus' servant for twenty-four years and has to carry out every wish and command that Faustus makes. The paradox of the situation is that in order to achieve this mastery for these few years, Faustus must sell his soul and thus is, in fact, no longer a free man but, instead, is actually the slave to his desires. Furthermore, when Mephastophilis first appears, he lets Faustus know that there is no such thing as complete freedom. He acknowledges that he now serves Lucifer and that everything in the universe is subjected to something else.

Faustus also is involved in another servant-master relationship with his pupil Wagner. Wagner, the inferior student of the masterful doctor, represents the servant who does not understand either his master or what is happening to him. Wagner tries to emulate Faustus in many things and to take upon himself all the power that his master displays. In his failure, he becomes one of the comic devices in the drama. He tries to use the magical powers to get the clown to serve him, thus establishing another servant-master relationship. On the comic level then, there is even a greater misuse of power. The comic actions of Wagner show that Faustus' essential relationship with Mephastophilis carries a more universal significance. Faustus' actions affect other people, for Wagner tries to imitate his master and only bungles whatever he does.

This master-servant relationship is carried to further comic extremes in the relationship between Robin and Ralph in the comic interludes. Robin gets one of Faustus' conjuring books and tries to force Ralph to become his servant.

Thus, the comic episodes are loosely related to the serious aspects of the drama by this servant-master relationship in which the actions of the master influence the behavior and destiny of the servant.