

Dr. Faustus Summary and Analysis Scene 11

Summary

At the court of the duke of Vanholt, Faustus asks the duchess, who is with child, if she has a desire for any special dainties. Although it is January, she desires to have a dish of ripe grapes. Faustus sends Mephistophilis after them, and when he returns with them, the duke wonders how this could be accomplished. Faustus explains that he sent his spirit to India for them. The duchess exclaims that the grapes are the best she has ever tasted. The duke promises Faustus that he will reward him greatly for this favor.

Wagner enters with the news that Faustus is soon to die because he has given all of his goods and properties to his servants. He doesn't understand why Faustus continues to feast and to carouse if he is so near death.

Analysis

Once again this scene shows what insignificant feats Faustus accomplishes with his powers. Faustus performs a magical trick of obtaining fresh grapes at the request of the nobility. The learned doctor spends some of his last fleeting moments providing "merriment" and "delight" for the duke and duchess. Faustus succeeds in temporarily diverting himself and others from important concerns of life.

For the first time since Faustus made his compact with Lucifer, this scene returns us to the central idea of the blood bond in which Faustus bartered his soul. Wagner's speech indicates that the time is shortly coming when Faustus will have to face death. At the beginning of the play, Faustus had believed that death did not exist, but now he must face not only physical death but eternal death.

Wagner also comments on the manner in which Faustus faces his forthcoming death. Faustus spends his time in banquets and other physical pleasures. He acts as though he does not know that the final feast is about to come to him.