

Symbolism of doctor faustus



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The history of Doctor Faustus was a play to depict the life and times of Doctor Faustus. It was directed by Christopher Marlowe. The story revolves around the portrayal of a Faustus giving his soul to evil forces in exchange for power. The story was however published years later after the demise of Marlowe. It was also published 12 years later after the first screening. Dr. Faustus's play has attracted a lot of controversy; comparable to Shakespeare's works. Dr. Faustus play has also had a lot of controversies about the date of publication and composition of the content of the play. The time of the play's composition is also in contention. The contribution of the works to Western history hasn't yet acquired a definitive characteristic yet (Wells 52).

Imagery

The play was performed 25 times within a three year old span between the periods of 1594-1597. Additional elements to the play were also confirmed with extra payments to Samuel Rowley who was an additional contributor to the works. The effect of the play's imagery is eminent in the legends that surrounded the play soon after its screening. For example, *Histiomastix*, a polemic to react to the Faustus drama went on record to show that actual demons appeared on stage. This was accompanied by a huge astonishment on the part of the actors and the audience alike. It was also alleged that part of the spectator crowd almost went mad. The sight evidently distracted most of the audience (Sister M. Theresa of the Cross Springer).

In Leonard H. Frey's analysis of the play, he identifies that the soliloquies in the beginning and at the end of the play provided an important element in

captivating the audience on an imaginative cognition of the play. This can be easily manifested in the translation of Faustus's inner thoughts and feelings in the soliloquies. These thoughts are centered on his ability to give himself up to the forces of evil (Stamm 29). The soliloquies provide various concepts to the whole aspect of the introductory and conclusion parts of the play. At the introductory part, Faustus ponders on his life and career while at the conclusion part; he accepts the consequences to his earlier decision to take the evil path in his life. When Faustus meets Satan, he demands that he changes his face because his image was too horrifying. This is a blatant use of Satan's imagery to depict an unpleasant being.

Symbolism

The play was also showcased on a comic platform with most people assuming the comic version as an addition of extra scenes by the production crew. This perspective was however changed by scholars who portrayed the comic aspect as a critical part of the play. The comic aspect scales down the ambitions which Faustus strived for. It suggests that Marlowe oversaw this component in the play. The clown depicted in the play was a symbol for the comical dimension to the play.

Marlowe also modified the original play to add some additional symbolic components; like Faustus's soliloquy which symbolizes the vanity evidenced in human science. He also added the inclusion of angels who were either good or bad to symbolize the two-fold dimensions of good or bad spirits. It also symbolized the presence of evil forces in the prevalence of goodness. In addition, he flexes his intellectual muscles and curiosity to scale down on

Faustus's vices. This is to symbolize a sense of Renaissance aura to the twist in the story's plot (Marlowe 202).

The prologue to the play is a symbol of the contents of the play. From its analysis, the audience is able to eliminate the perception of the play as war type or romantic love. It therefore symbolizes the life and times of Faustus as a noble, common citizen. Notably, this is also deviation from medieval traditions. Moreover,, in the opening part of the play, the first hint of Faustus downfall is shown and likened to the fate of Icarus who undertook an initiative of flying to the sun but met his death when his wax-made wings melted off. This is also a symbol to the ideology behind the negative traits of pride that characterized Faustus's downfall at the end of the play (MacDonald 5).

When Faustus is awarded the doctorate certificate, it symbolizes his idea of having reached the highest level in the academic scale. It also symbolizes his intelligence and wisdom in the academic field. Faustus also symbolizes the incorporation of logic in normal conversations as a tool for arguments and the practice of medicine as invaluable unless it has the ability to be an immortal tool and can raise people from the dead.

The use of divinity is also contradicted in the play as a mockery to its principles because all humans sin and are punished by death. He symbolizes this to mean what is meant to be, will happen (ICON Reference 198).

Faustus's two magicians Valdes and Cornelius also symbolize the good and bad angels who give Faustus advice on how he should live his life. Valdez is a depiction of the bad angel who advices Faustus to dedicate his life to magic

and believe that great things can happen from a man of his stature while Cornelius is a symbol of the good angel who advises Faustus against this move (Gibson 15).

Conclusion

The use of symbols and imagery in the play is meant to emphasize various noteworthy aspects of the play. The use of image is observed to stress or emphasize on various dimensions of the play or actors' personality as can be seen with the depiction of Satan's unpleasant face. The use of symbolism is meant to give a hidden dimension to the play which is not openly expressed. The symbolism of doctor Faustus is therefore a great symbolism of excellent literary work.