

6- المسرح :بطل العصور الوسطى دراسات نقدية

Critical Essays Faustus — Medieval or Renaissance Hero

Certain aspects of the drama can be used to support an interpretation of Faustus as a Renaissance hero and other aspects suggest he is a medieval hero. According to the medieval view of the universe, Man was placed in his position by God and should remain content with his station in life. Any attempt or ambition to go beyond his assigned place was considered a great sin of pride. For the medieval person, pride was one of the greatest sins that one could commit. This concept was based upon the fact that Lucifer's fall was the result of his pride when he tried to revolt against God. Thus, for the medieval person, aspiring pride became one of the cardinal sins

According to the medieval view, Faustus has a desire for forbidden knowledge. In order to gain more knowledge than he is entitled to, Faustus makes a contract with Lucifer, which brings about his damnation. Faustus then learns at the end of the play that supernatural powers are reserved for the gods and that the person who attempts to handle or deal in magical powers must face eternal damnation. When we examine the drama from this standpoint, Faustus deserves his punishment; then the play is not so much a tragedy as it is a morality play. The ending is an act of justice, when the man who has transgressed against the natural laws of the universe is justifiably punished. The chorus at the end of the drama re-emphasizes this position when it admonishes the audience to learn from Faustus' damnation and not attempt to go beyond the restrictions placed on humanity

The character of Faustus can also be interpreted from the Renaissance point of view. At the time of this play, there was a conflict in many people's minds, including Marlowe's, as to whether or not to accept the medieval or the Renaissance view. The Renaissance had been disappointed in the effectiveness of medieval knowledge because many scholastic disputations were merely verbal nonsense. For example, arguments such as how many angels could stand on the head of a pin dominated many medieval theses. The Renaissance scholars, however, revived an interest in the classical knowledge of Greece and the humanism of the past. They became absorbed in the great potential and possibility of humanity

According to the Renaissance view, Faustus rebels against the limitations of medieval knowledge and the restriction put upon humankind decreeing that he must accept his place in the universe without challenging it. Because of his universal desire for enlightenment, Faustus makes a contract for knowledge and power. His desire, according to the Renaissance, is to transcend the limitations of humanity and rise to greater achievements and heights. In the purest sense, Faustus wants to prove that he can become greater than he presently is. Because of his desire to go beyond human

limitations, Faustus is willing to chance damnation in order to achieve his goals. The tragedy results when a person is condemned to damnation for noble attempts to go beyond the petty limitations of humanity

Critical Essays Faustus as Dramatic Character

When we first meet Faustus, he is a man who is dissatisfied with his studies in dialectics, law, medicine, and divinity. Even though he is the most brilliant scholar in the world, his studies have not brought him satisfaction, and he is depressed about the limitations of human knowledge. In order to satisfy his thirst for greater knowledge, he decides to experiment in necromancy. He wants to transcend the bonds of normal human life and discover the heights beyond. One might say that he wants to have godlike qualities

Faustus is willing to sell his soul to the devil under the terms of a contract by which he will receive twenty-four years of service from Mephistophilis and, at the end of this time, will relinquish his soul to Lucifer. At first he is potentially a great man who desires to perform beneficial acts for humanity, but as a result of his willingness to exchange his soul for a few years of pleasure, he begins to sink toward destruction. He allows his powers to be reduced to performing nonsensical tricks and to satisfying his physical appetites

At various times throughout the drama, Faustus does stop and consider his dilemma and comes to the verge of repentance. He often thinks about repentance, but he consciously remains aligned with Mephistophilis and Lucifer, and never takes the first steps to obtain forgiveness

By the end of the drama, when he is waiting for his damnation, he rationalizes his refusal to turn to God. Throughout the drama, internal and external forces suggest that Faustus could have turned to God and could have been forgiven. In the final scene, the scholars want Faustus to make an attempt to seek the forgiveness of God, but Faustus rationalizes that he has lived against the dictates of God, and he makes no effort to invoke God's forgiveness until the appearance of the devils. By then, he can only scream out in agony and horror at his final fate

Critical Essays The Character of Mephistophilis and the Concept of Hell

Mephistophilis is the second most important dramatic personage in the drama. He appears in most of the scenes with Faustus. When he is first seen by Faustus, he is horrendously ugly. Faustus immediately sends him away and has him reappear in the form of a Franciscan friar. The mere physical appearance of Mephistophilis suggests the ugliness of hell itself. Throughout the play, Faustus seems to have forgotten how ugly the devils are in their natural shape. Only at the very end of the drama, when devils come to carry Faustus off to his eternal damnation, does he once again understand the terrible significance of their ugly physical appearance. As Faustus

exclaims when he sees the devils at the end of the drama, "Adders and serpents, let
".me breathe awhile! / Ugly hell, gape not

In his first appearance, we discover that Mephistophilis is bound to Lucifer in a manner similar to Faustus' later servitude. Mephistophilis is not free to serve Faustus unless he has Lucifer's permission. Then after the pact, he will be Faustus' servant for twenty-four years. Consequently, the concepts of freedom and bondage are important ideas connected with Mephistophilis and Faustus. In other words, no person in the entire order of the universe is entirely free, and what Faustus is hoping for in his contract is a complete and total physical, not moral, freedom. It is paradoxical that the brilliant Dr. Faustus does not see this contradiction in his views about freedom and .bondage

In most of the scenes, Mephistophilis functions as the representative of hell and Lucifer. Only in a few fleeting moments do we see that Mephistophilis is also experiencing both suffering and damnation because of his status as a fallen angel. In the third scene, he admits that he is also tormented by ten thousand hells because he had once tasted the bliss of heaven and now is in hell with Lucifer and the other fallen .angels

Upon Faustus' insistence to know about the nature of hell, Mephistophilis reveals that it is not a place, but a condition or state of being. Any place where God is not, is hell. Being deprived of everlasting bliss is also hell. In other words, heaven is being admitted into the presence of God, and hell, therefore, is deprivation of the presence of God. This definition of hell corresponded to the newly founded doctrine of the Anglican church, which had just recently broken with the Roman Catholic church. But Marlowe also uses a medieval concept of hell for dramatic purposes. As the devils appear in the final scene and as Faustus contemplates his eternal damnation, there are strong suggestions and images of a hell consisting of severe punishment and .torment, where ugly devils swarm about and punish the unrepentant sinner

Critical Essays 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. Mephistophilis 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 Mephistophilis 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 Mephistophilis carries a more universal significance. Faustus' actions affects 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