

Poetic Elements Portrayed in Doctor Faustus

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Abstract

Marlowe's place and value as a leader among English poets and as the most eminent forerunner of Shakespeare rests mainly on his new conception of tragedy. The new themes of his plays, the high sounding language which he made his characters speak and their innovations he introduced into blank verse which he effectively used as a dramatic meter. He knew the secret of poetic and colourful language and he knew how to yield it to whatever purpose he wanted passionate outburst, lyrical rapture, verbal fury, exalted emotion, vehement declamation and titanic tirade.

Marlowe deliberately made use of a challenging and high toned language. The beautiful apostrophe to Helen in Dr Faustus is certainly not bombastic but bright with rich phrasing, sonorous music, feeling and passion. He is sometimes capable of achieving magical effect with words of everyday speech arranged in a simple sequence of monosyllables as in the lines:

“Have I not made blind Homer sing to me

Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death”

One of the methods which Marlowe employs to secure poetic effects is reference to mythological legends and use of classical names but he uses these for their picturesque association and the opportunity they give him for producing both melody and beauty.

Key Words: The Medieval allegory, the Renaissance Soliloquy, Blank verse and Irony

Introduction:

Marlowe's contribution to blank verse consists in the many ways. He found the heroic line of his time monotonous. He left it various in form and structure, sometimes having redundant syllables, sometimes deficient and animated by unexpected emphasis and changing in the pause. He grouped his lines according to the sense, allowing the thought to dominate the form and carrying the melody through several verses linked together by rhetorical modulations.

His metre assumed diversity of cadences, the beauty of which depended on their

adoption to the current of his ideas. He produced thus the double effect of unity and contrast; maintained the fixed march of his chosen rhythm and yet by alteration, the pauses, speed and the grouping of the syllables by changes in emphasis and accents he made one measure and represented a thousand.

Marlowe may be rightly called creator of the blank verse. Marlowe's verse is one of earlier derivatives. Marlowe took advantage of the powerful melody of Spenser and got a new driving power by reinforcing the sentence period against line period. Marlowe's blank verse is a living thing. It

has fluidity and moment born of the sheer rush of imagination.

Dr Faustus gives ample evidence of Marlowe's mastery of the new dramatic measure. The blank verse in Dr Faustus is pliable. There is a new conversational tone in the dialogues of Faustus with Mephistopheles. The speeches of chorus are straight towards utterances, regular in their consistency and producing an effect of stately rigidity. In contrast to this elasticity, simplicity and change in beat and pause in the following lines may be well marked.

“What a world of profit and delight
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence
Is promised to the studious artisan
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command” (Act 1 Scene 1)

This soliloquy equates Dr Faustus with Tamburlaine. Just as Tamburlaine started to increase his territory indiscriminately, Dr Faustus also started to possess mastery over all arts indiscriminately. Dr Faustus has a great yearning for knowledge and learning, its love of beauty and hankering after sensuous pleasure of life, its brave spirit of adventure, its sky high ambition and supreme lust of power and pelf in this world.

For acquiring unlimited knowledge, he pursues necromancy, abuses knowledge and the power of God and ultimately is given the severest penalty in the form of mental uneasiness and unrest till the end of his life. He gets moral degradation, spiritual lapses and incapacity for repentance or prayer to God. He makes contract with Lucifer which brings about his damnation. Faustus's

inordinate desire to attain super human power is absolutely in keeping with the adventurous spirit of the age of renaissance.

For emotional utterances and sheer lyrical beauty, there is nothing in the play to match the lines: -- “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium

Sweet Helen makes me immortal with a kiss.....”

In the above lines there is a note of irony with it

The following passage expresses its intensity in unforgettable cadences:-

“The Stars move still, times run, the clock will strike

The devil will come and Faustus must be damned”

I will leap to my God

See! See! Where Christ's blood streams in the firmament.

One drop would save my soul, half a drop, Ah my Christ.(Act V, last scene)

In the above lines Faustus appeals to Christ desperately. Marlowe presents the most awful doctrine of Medieval Christianity, namely that any person dabbling in forbidden knowledge like the knowledge of necromancy must be penalized in long run with damnation in hell. There is brilliant use of dramatic verse articulating the mental agony of the tragic protagonist, Dr Faustus.

CONCLUSION:

In Doctor Faustus, Marlowe combines two unique techniques from two separate time periods in one play. Marlowe presents the

medieval allegory and the renaissance soliloquy at his best. It proves that Marlowe was quite the theatrical innovator. Marlowe declared his determination to redeem

English drama from jiggling reins of rhyming mother-wits and conceits as clown age keeps in play.

References:

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