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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

It is amazing how significantly various aspects of society can and will change over a prolonged period of time. Between the time periods of the Medieval era and the

Renaissance, one can note numerous significant changes, mainly those pertaining to art and religion. In general, ideals and subjects during the Renaissance became more secular. In Medieval times, people seemed to focus mainly on the church, God, and the afterlife; whereas during the Renaissance, the focus was more secular: humans and life on earth. Although these two eras differ in many ways, the most concentrate differences deal with the realms of architecture, painting, and philosophy.

In an attempt to look at the common and uncommon attributes of the two plays, we will find out that the two have some similarities and differences despite the fact that each one comes from different period.

Medieval drama is any play that comes during the classical civilization from Greece through Italy up to the collapse of the Roman Empire. Historians divided this period into three groups, the mid, the high and the late, beginning in Italy from the 900 C reaching England around 1500 C which results in the works of the playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe and his peers William Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, etcetera.

Medieval drama pays much attention on morality, yet certain elements have been transported into English plays during the Renaissance in the course of adoption. In

this sense, English dramatist Christopher Marlowe has incorporated certain elements of medieval theatre in his play, *Dr Faustus*, in which good and evil are laid side by side to teach moral lesson to humanity. But there are also certain differences that exist between *Everyman* as medieval play and *Dr. Faustus* as renaissance drama.

Medieval dramas are religious presented as mystery, miracle as well as morality plays in which the message is central to Christian beliefs in salvation. It is based on the idea that human being has the ability to choose the good or bad that will determine their life in the hereafter. Life is believed to be of two kinds, the eternal and the earthly. God, Satan and souls live in the eternal or the transcendental which unlike here on earth, there is no beginning or end. So, our life on earth is just an interlude in which everyman will use his little time to make this choice.

In "*Everyman*", like other medieval theatrical plays, allegorical characters are used in which attributes of good and evil are depicted for the protagonist to choose and determine his fate in the hereafter. Everyman focuses much of his attention on wealth living with little or no thought of death and God. Everyman has concentrated on amassing rich, and God is not happy with the ungrateful life he leads on earth. God sees that if he allows him to continue he will be worst than beast. He sends Death to summon Everyman to a pilgrimage to render the account of how he spent every minute and second of his life. He asks other allegorical characters as Friend and Fellowship and the Goods that Everyman loves so much to accompany him. They all refuse to go making Everyman to realize that all such worldly fellowship, friends and wealth are unreliable and deceitful. Everyman quickly realizes his situation that he does not have sufficient good deeds to help him render his account. In the end, Good Deeds agrees to follow him to his pilgrimage although it is very weak and feeble.

Everyman regrets choosing riches and worldly goods, and wishes if he has done much good deeds in his life.

Furthermore, medieval drama uses allegorical characters in which abstract concepts are personified between good and evil, wealth and humble life, which is evident in *Everyman* as medieval play, in which a protagonist representing humanity will succumb to the worldly materials, seductiveness and temptations. The emphasis is on morality in which the good and evil is portrayed in vivid and clear contrast. The purpose of this is to show the sinfulness and wickedness of the vices and evil and its consequences on humanity in the hereafter when everyman will be left to himself and his deeds. The vice characters usually come out to declare their wickedness against the protagonist, thus a warning to humanity to shun away from evil. The good character is shown as a contrast to the evil, that will come to help the protagonist when he realizes his wrong actions in succumbing to evil temptations, and then will repent when he sees the wrath and curse of God he is doomed to face.

Everyman as medieval drama has a clear message. The main idea of the play is in teaching Christian beliefs and salvation which is reinforced by presenting allegorical character in which every human being struggles to live between good and evil. This is for the reader to learn a lesson to utilize his interlude to determine a pleasant abode in the hereafter by upholding good values and following orthodox faith.

However, if we turn to Christopher Marlowe's "*Dr. Faustus*" as renaissance play, we can see some similarities but can also easily make differences from *Everyman* as medieval play. Medieval period starts later after the revival of interest in classical Greek and Rome, and has influences on the renaissance in which the end of the former is the beginning of the latter, starting from Italy reaching English society

around fifteen to sixteenth century. It is a period of reawakening of knowledge with rigorous studies and interest in science, cosmology, art, philosophy and thought, as well as divine things that were unquestionable during the medieval times, having exclusive interpretation and explanation from secular views. Christopher Marlowe came at this time where the world is opened and the attention shifted from the religious view of the universe and heavenly things to a secularized perspective.

“Dr Faustus” is a play that tells a story of a religious man who is well-learned in theology but feels the curiosity to know more about the world from a view not strictly religious. He seeks to find a discipline where he could command the four elements: fire, water, earth and air, to make the cardinal points move and have emperors under his control. He blasphemes and abjures the heavenly scriptures to acquire such powers. Dr. Faustus calls Mephistopheles who facilitates the process between Dr. Faustus and Lucifer, the Prince of Devils, in which Faustus will sell his soul to acquire power to perform magic and occultism for twenty-four years. Dr. Faustus struggles with inner feeling after receiving pieces of advice from Good Angel and Bad Angel respectively, but decides to go ahead and signs the deal with his own blood. Dr. Faustus wields magical power and wonders making him famous all over Europe. In the end of the twenty-four years, the Devils come to take his soul where is shown regretting his life and demanding forgiveness when it is too late. It is highly offensive to God to offer coward repentance after death.

In line with the story in *Dr. Faustus*, it can be said that the main concern is not specifically amassing wealth as we have seen in *Everyman*. The thirst for power and curiosity could be regarded as the central themes in renaissance plays which centre around the spirit of intellectualism, curiosity, and individualism of life in thought and religion. Many believed that Dr. Faustus is just a man of renaissance who has

curiosity and interest in knowing more about other fields. As a result, he follows the trend of the Renaissance to satisfy his curiosity. It was a period where knowledge is a powerful tool in explaining the universe. Many discoveries were made during this period. America was discovered by Columbus, another theory of the earth rotation was introduced by Nicolas Copernicus that challenged the Ptolemaic planetary theory of the solar system which held the view that the Earth was at the center of the universe with the sun, moon, stars and other planets revolving around it. Then Galileo also came up with his theory about the globe pattern that contradicted the explanation expounded by the church.

In view of the features we have seen in the two plays, we can say that the plays have similarities in using allegorical characters. *Everyman* uses some characters such as Goods, Beauty, Good Deeds, Fellowship, Kindred, Death etcetera. Similarly, *Dr. Faustus* also uses allegorical characters: Envy, Wrath, Lechery, Sloth, Gluttony, Pride and Covetousness in the form of the Seven Deadly sins as well as Good Angel and Bad Angel. While *Everyman* explicitly preaches morality about wealth and ascetic life which serves as a constant reminder of the power of God through Death, *Dr. Faustus* also implicitly preaches this message hence we see Dr Faustus in the end regretting his rebellion against the religion.

From our reading of the two plays, we have understood that both the unbridled love for wealth in the *Everyman*, and disproportionate thirst for power in *Dr. Faustus*, can be seen as acts that will lead humanity to eternal damnation.

However, although *Dr. Faustus* has some features of medieval drama which is mainly moral lesson reinforcing Christian beliefs in salvation, the main concern in the play is not entirely central to the theme of amassing wealth or its wickedness which makes it different from *Everyman*.

While good and evil vie for human soul in the medieval drama, the thirst for knowledge is the dominant theme in renaissance plays. Dr. Faustus rebellion against religion is nothing but struggling to break the dominance of religion and philosophical teaching in explaining the universe. Therefore it is seen as the reactionary forces against the medieval drama where religious explanations remained unquestioned.

Finally, to reconcile the two plays, it is clear that *Dr Faustus* has some features with *Everyman* in dominant theme of the medieval drama in teaching moral lesson about religious belief and power. Yet, it also maintains its renaissance elements in elevating the power of knowledge in which human being discovered themselves and the universe around them after centuries of darkness aided by the religion which allows only church to offer explanation about the universe.

Architecture noticeably shifted from religious awe to classical reason between the Medieval era and the Renaissance. During the Middle Ages, architecture was aimed mainly at making advancements in the church. Medieval cathedrals had very distinct features, such as pointed spires, which were exactly that -- spires, or steeples, that were pointed and extended upward from the tower area; the rose window, which was a large stained glass window that was located on the front of the tower; and squared-off exterior walls, which were a contrast to the usual rounded exterior designs that people were accustomed to. Overall, cathedrals during this time could have very elegant features due to the excellent techniques of support and stabilization.

Buttresses, simple extensions of the cathedral wall to enhance support, and flying buttresses, stone structures set away from the cathedral wall and attached at the top, contributed to the excellent support that Medieval cathedrals experienced. While architectural advancements during the Middle Ages were concerned mainly with making elegant reformations in the structure of the cathedral, architecture during the

Renaissance was much less religion-centred, and revolved more around classical reason and secularity. Architecture in this time was concentrated mostly with the design of castles, such as the home of the prevailing Italian Medici family, perhaps the richest family in Europe. Architectural focus had changed from the cathedral in the Medieval era to other, more classical and secular subjects, such as castles and homes of significant rulers.

The style, subjects, and overall attitude of painting was something that underwent very significant changes during the progression from Medieval times to the Renaissance.

Generally, paintings became more secular, and less focused on aspects of the church, as the Renaissance approached. Medieval paintings seem to be focused almost entirely on religion and are given heavenly attributes, while paintings of the Renaissance consist mainly of secular subjects and contain much more realism, especially noted in human subjects. In Giotto's *Madonna With Child*, a Medieval painting, any observer will obviously notice that the child and woman are very awkwardly proportioned, indicating the lack of realism. However, in the *Mona Lisa*, by DaVinci, and *The Marriage of the Virgin*, by Raphael, both paintings of the Renaissance, it is evident the amount of realism that the artists were attempting to portray. Both of these paintings are extremely realistic, seemingly three-dimensional, very well-proportioned, and involve large amounts of shading to accentuate the realism. When considering the subjects of Medieval painting, the majority of them were religious oriented or somehow involved the church, whereas religion or the church was seldom involved in Renaissance paintings. Rather, paintings of the Renaissance involved mostly secular subjects, as seen again in DaVinci's *Mona Lisa* and also Raphael's *The School of Athens*. In the case of the *Mona Lisa*, the

subject is a typical woman with a very sublime smile, but with no apparent religious association whatsoever. The same applies to The School of Athens; it is a painting of a group of philosophers in a barrel-vaulted and domed hall: no religious connection can be made here, either. On the contrary, the Medieval painting, The Annunciation, deals with exactly that: an annunciation, a religious event in which many Christian churches commemorate the announcement of the incarnation of Luke. As shown in these examples, painting took a very secular turn in the Renaissance from the religious-based paintings that were found in the Middle Ages.

Perhaps the greatest and most evident way in which the Medieval and Renaissance time periods differ is found in the opposing premises of philosophy.

Rights of Egyptian Women Throughout written **history**, women have experienced status subservient to the men they lived with. Generally, most cultures known to modern historians followed a standard pattern of males assigned the role of protector and provider while women were assigned roles of domestic servitude. Scholars speculate endlessly at the cause: biology, religion, social custom. Nevertheless, the women were always subordinated to the men in their culture. Woman's Struggle for Independence Women have had to fight for their independence. They have been repressed for a long period of **history**. Only recently have women started to gain respect as equals and individuals. Even today women are still looked down upon for their sex. From the beginning of **history** women have been viewed as a lesser sex. In the time Mesopotamia women were in charge of the children and the home. In Ancient Egypt women had no power or authority. Women were viewed as property.

Porgy and Bess Porgy and Bess symbolize the end of the black musical tradition that flourished in the early part of this century. The play showed the height of white appropriation of what had previously been a black cultural form. All the creative

talent backstage was white. This development had been occurring slowly, throughout the 1920s, but black artists had often worked in a variety of creative capacities.

Prince William Prince William tries to live a normal life, but being royalty makes it just too hard (Morton, Diana: Her True Story, 79). He is the most fascinating person of 1997, says Walters (Unknown, Facts on Prince William, 1). Prince William lives an active life where he deals with disappointments of the past, but family members help him deal with the future. In Paddington, London William was born at St. Mary's Hospital (Gilmer, The Royal Archive, 1). Prince William Arthur Phillip Louis .

Queen Elizabeth Queen Elizabeth I In England, the period between the Gothic and Renaissance styles is known as the Elizabethan age. It reached its peak in the late 1500s, toward the end of the long reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and is often considered the last phase of the long- lasting Tudor style. Although the Elizabethan age produced a certain amount of characteristic sculptures and paintings, the Elizabethan style can best be seen in the period's architecture.

In conclusion, to reconcile the two plays, it is clear that *Dr Faustus* has some features with *Everyman* in dominant theme of the medieval drama in teaching moral lesson about religious belief and power. Yet, it also maintains its renaissance elements in elevating the power of knowledge in which human being discovered themselves and the universe around them after centuries of darkness aided by the religion which allows only church to offer explanation about the universe.