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TOPIC:

COMPARE AND CONTRAST JOHN
WEBSTER'S "THE DUCHESS OF MALFI" AND
ALFRA BEN'S "THE ROVERS" AS A JOCOBAN
REVENGE TRAGEDY AND A RESTORATION
PLAY RESPECTIVELY

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**COMPARE AND CONTRAST JOHN WEBSTER'S "THE DUCHESS OF
MALFI AND APHRA BEHN'S "THE ROVER" AS A JOCOBAN REVENGE
TRAGEDY AND A RESTORATION PLAY RESPECTIVELY**

Before showing the similarities and differences that exist between these above mentioned works of literature and the period in which they exist, I will like to briefly discuss those periods first which I believe will help us to understand the play more and how they are connected to those periods respectively.

THE RESTORATION AGE OF NEO-CLASSICAL PERIOD

The period from 1660 to 1700 is known as the restoration period or the age of Dryden. Dryden was the representative writer of this period. The restoration of the king Charles II in 1660 marks the beginning of a new era both in the life and the literature of England. The king was received with a wild joy on his return from exile.

The change of government from common wealth to kingship corresponds to a change in the mood of the nation. In this period, the renaissance delight in this world and the unlimited possibility of the explanation of the world, and the moral zeal and the earnestness of the puritan period could no more facilitate the people of England, Moody and Lovett remarked; but in the great part of the restoration period, there was awareness of the limitation of without faith in the extension of

resources. There was a disposition to accept such limitation to exploit the potentiality of strictly human world.

The historical event like the restoration of King Charles II in 1660, the religious controversy and the revolution of 1688 deeply influenced the social life and the literary movement of the age. During the period gravity, moral, earnestness and decorum in all things which distinguished the puritan period were thrown to the winds. The natural instincts were suppressed during the previous era came to violent excesses. The king had a number of mistresses and numerous children.

RESTORATION COMEDY OF MANNER

Restoration comedy of manner is also known as comedy of manner. These comedies express a reaction against Puritanism and the sexual repression it had attempted to enforce.

Fashionable intrigues, sex, romance, marriage and adultery were treated with cynicism, with worldly wit and a sense of comedy of life. The characters in the plays no doubt owed much to the courtiers, the wits and the men about the town as well as to ladies of fashion, citizens, wives and country girls.

The plays of this kind does not inculcate moral lesson. The offender/culprit always goes free. This is no shedding of blood. They equally treat marriage as a contract rather than a sacred institution.

THE SIMILARITIES THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE RESTORATION COMEDY OF MANNER AND APHRA BEHN'S PLAY "THE ROVER"

The play was built on love making, romance, relationships, highly sensational and equally features some elements of betrayal, prostitution and rape.

In the beginning of the play, Hellena, a young woman about to enter a convent, questions her sister Florinda about whom she loves. Florinda admits she loves Belvile an English Colonel but her father is determined that she would marry the elder Don Vincentio while his brother Don Pedro wants Florinda to marry his friend Don Anthonio. All these arguments centre on marriage which is a major theme of comedy of manner.

The titular character in the play is a raffish naval captain, Willmore. He falls in love with Hellena whom is determined to experience love before her brother Don Pedro sends her to the convent. Hellena falls in love with Willmore but difficulties arises when a famous courtesan, Angelica Bianca also falls in love with Willmore. Within these two characters, we can figure out a great deal of love, romance and betrayal in this side of Willmore which are also features of comedy of manners.

Another character in the work Lucett by name seduced Blunt and Blunt on the other hand accepted to make love with Lucett. Unknowingly to Blunt that Lucett is a prostitute and a thief.

Angelica is another important character in the play. It was Fredrick that discussed her with his friend Willmore, and Belvile and they went to make love with her but were disappointed because they don't have the money to buy her (she is a prostitute). It was only Don Pedro and his friend Don Anthonio that she accepts because they were rich men.

Under betrayal/adultery and rape, Willmore operated. He loved Hellena and even made a vow to her not to betray her but he later did not only fall in love with angelica but tried to rape Florinda when he was drunk. Lucett also betrayed Blunt, played prank on him and stole all his money. Blunt on the other hand wanted to rape Florinda when she was running from Willmore and hid in Belvile's house without knowing that Blunt was there and he (Blunt) wanted to rape her in revenge to what Lucett did to him.

The play like every other restoration comedy of manner does not teach or inculcated any moral lesson. It exposes the high level of sex and sexualities seen in England during the period of Charles' restoration.

They made use of disguise. When Don Pedro and don Anthonio went to meet Angelica, they were disguised. Also when Hellena caught Willmore with

Angelica, she was disguised. Disguise and hypocrisy played dominant roles in the play.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PLAY, “THE ROVER” AND THE RESTORATION COMEDY OF MANNER

When King Charles II was restored, he came back and started planting the type of life he had seen in France. Those pleasures he had experienced was transplanted in England and the people of England liked it because it is a means of easing them the puritan’s fanatic tension which reduce their level of freedom and enjoyment. They save the pleasure and cherished it. It was on this pleasure oriented period that Don Pedro is sending her sister Hellena to convert, there by restricting her from enjoying her life. This particular act of Don Pedro contradicted the restoration period.

Also in this period of infidelity, lack of loyalty and restriction in marriage that Florinda’s father is choosing a husband for her. She says no and then went for a man of her choice. Her father’s act also contradicts the period.

JECOBAN REVENGE TRAGEDY

Jecoban drama is named after Jacobus the Latin translation of James. The scholars use this term to refer collectively to the theatrical works created during the reign of James I (1603-1625) in England. The Jocaban plays evolve out of Elizabethan

dramas but around 1610 began to show a marked shift from the previous era's theatrical tradition.

The plays from the Jacobean period are decadent, spectacular and bizarre, scholars and critics have often deemed them to lack the same substance and five wit of their predecessors. The Jacobean label often encourage the dramatic works written during the reign Charles I as well which ended in 1642 and signified the completion of English renaissance.

The later examples of Jacobean drama often rely on false start, sudden change of motivation and gratuitous accidents. The artificiality of these devices reflects a different emotional tone. These works largely ignore the implication of human disaster for society or for humanity as a whole and focused instead on the pathos of the individual. These plays tend to be cheaply sensational featuring sexual deprivation and superfluous violence.

These plays were often intended to evince pessimism and cynicism from their audience. Many are satire and/or feature a great deal of irony, masks, disguise and concealed identities are ubiquitous themes.

In most of these revenge tragedies, the avengers are always killed. The tool villain and accomplices that assist the avenger are killed. The supernatural in form of ghost always urges the protagonist to enact vengeance. It features madness also,

disguise, violent murders. In the final act, many characters are often killed, multiple corpse on the stage. There is always a horror.

In the later Jacobean revenge tragedy, the protagonist is more often a villain than a hero.

THE SIMILARITIES THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE JACOBAN REVENGE TRAGEDY AND JOHN WEBSTER'S "THE DUCHESS OF MALFI"

In the beginning of the play showed the duchess, a widow who her two brothers Ferdinand and Cardinal came to visit from Rome, but before they return to Rome, they told Duchess not to marry again, they lectured her about the impropriety of remarriage. She told them that she will not marry again. But she later married to Anthonio, violating the advice of her brother which they later came for revenge.

The revenge of the violation of their advice leads to the death of Duchess and her two children. This brutal act of Ferdinand became too much for Bosola when he was told to find Anthonio and kill him also, but he said no that he will find Anthonio and help him avenge the death of his wife and children. He later did it and this led to the death of Ferdinand, Cardinal, Anthonio and Bosola himself. Though Anthonio did not go for revenge, but reconciliation when he was mistakenly murdered by Bosola who died also with them.

In the play, there is a picture of horror when they brought the tomb of a dead man to duchess telling her that her husband is dead that it is his tomb.

Also, the last scene of the play feature dead bodies on the stage like every other revenge tragedies.

The Heroine of the play, Duchess, was killed by her own brothers which is a feature of revenge tragedy.

DIFFERENCES THAT EXIST BETWEEN JACOBAN REVENGE TRAGEDY AND JOHN WEBSTER'S "THE DUCHESS OF MALFI"

Play of this type does not feature sensation and love making but Duchess had passion or was eager to get into marriage. Also cardinal had a mistress by name Julea who even was married but still was in love with Cardinal.

In most of the revenge tragedies, the protagonist is always a villain but Duchess was a heroine. In most of the Jacoban revenge tragedies, there is always no hope of regeneration while in Duchess, there is a hope of regeneration because of the first son of Duchess who was saved as served as a hope of keeping the dynasty of her mother's leadership when he grows up.

In most but not all of the revenge tragedies, it is always the spirit/ghost of the protagonist to urge another character to avenge his or her death.

Revenge tragedy does not feature reconciliation but in Duchess of Malfi, Anthonio, after her wife being killed, came for reconciliation instead of vengeance.

CONCLUSION

These plays reflect the ages in which they exist. After King Charles I was restored, he came back to England and started transplanting all what he had learnt. These acts of love of pleasure ease the people of fanatic lifestyle of the Puritan. All the people of England pursued pleasure and the writers of this age in a way of satire, include these acts in their writing. Also John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* purely reflect and follow Seneca's pattern of revenge tragedy which tries to teach that what a man does today, he must reap the consequence.