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TOPIC

**Areas of convergences and divergences of
Jacobean revenged tragedy and restoration
comedy using John Webster's 'The Duchess of
Malfi' and Aphra Behn's 'The Rover' respectively.**

**AN ASSIGNMENT
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BY

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INTRODUCTION

Jacobean literature (1603-1625) comes from **Jacobus** which is the Latin name for James. We usually use it to refer to the works of arts practised during James's era in England. In other words, literature in practise after the death of queen Elizabeth of England.

1660-1700 marked the era of restoration comedy when Charles II came back from France with other royalist and assumed power thereby restoring the old theatre and the monarch in practise before **Oliver Cromwell** brought in republican government. And for this reason, it is called restoration comedy. It deals with the sophisticated lives of the aristocratic society of England and social lives of the people dating back to **17 century**.

Meanwhile, there are some areas of convergences and divergences between these two periods mentioned above which we shall concentrate on in this book.

CONCEPTUALISATION

JACOBEAN REVENGED TRAGEDY- Revenged Tragedy was introduced by A.H. Thorndike which consists majorly of literature written after the death of Queen Elizabeth and during the reign of King James. We should understand also that revenged did not come from the Romans as in the case of Seneca's 'Octavia' but has its origin from the Greek. **These works largely**

ignore the implication of human disaster and focuses on the pathos of individual. It also focuses on superfluous violence, sexuality, secret murder, mask and disguises and concealed identity. Usually in the end we see multiply death with no resolution. 'The Duchess of Malfi' is a good example of this Jacobean Revenged Tragedy.

In this work, any evil one commits must be paid for, unlike in restoration comedy where the individual may go scot free without suffering for his evil. Highly satirical

RESTORATION COMEDY

1660-1700 marked the era of restoration comedy when Charles II returned from France and then restored the original monarch and theatre in England which Oliver Cromwell as mentioned above jettisoned. His return brought **happiness and awful restoration of comedy**. It is also marked by a highly *sexual sensational because people have been denied of enjoyment* by the republican government of Cromwell. *Sex becomes the king of the theatres and also other social lives of the people.*

In this era, *a professional female actress emerged, prior them, boys acts as female on the stage. Aphra Behn as a professional female writer also emerged with his play 'The Rover'. It is less satirical than Jacobean Revenged Tragedy.* At this time, people care not of **ascetic life anymore**, they

cared much on *entertainment, singing, dancing, drinking wine and burlesque.*

'The Rover' is a good example of restoration comedy.

COMPARING THE TWO PERIODS (JACOBEAN REVENGED TRAGEDY AND RESTORATION COMEDY) USING 'THE DUCHESS OF MALFI AND THE ROVER'

Both plays possess **Thomas Hobbes's** view of human being and as well Machiavelli's view of human being. For Thomas Hobbes, **'Human being is innately selfish and is ruled by desire and emotion not reason'**. Machiavelli believes that one can get anything he or she wants by any means either in a **lawful** way or in a **forceful** way. In 'The Duchess of Malfi', which is a **Jacobean Revenged Tragedy**, we see Ferdinand and cardinal as possessing Hobbian qualities of selfishness for asking their sister (Duchess) not to marry because of their selfish interest to possess her wealth and property. They are quite aware of her getting children who will acquire her wealth if she gets married. Duchess in other words is a Machiavellian figure, she knows her brothers will never permit her to get married in a lawful way and so she get married forcefully in an unlawful way without letting her brothers know. That is Machiavellian view of one getting what he wants either lawfully or forcefully. Coming to **'The Rover'** which is a restoration comedy, we see also Hobbian and Machiavellian characters. Florinda's father wants her to marry Don Vincentio just for his selfish interest of acquiring his wealth and property. He feels that Vincentio is of high quality and he has more wealth. Don Pedro also

wants her Florinda to marry Antonio because of his selfish interest towards Antonio's wealth. Meanwhile Florinda knowing full well that her brother is against her marriage with Belvile has to look for an alternative way of marrying Belvile by force. This concurs with Machiavellian view of getting what you want forcefully or lawfully. She later married Belvile as she planned. From the explanation above, we can see a Hobbian and Machiavellian figures in both plays as regards to Jacobean Revenged Tragedy and Restoration Comedy.

A critique on marriage institution is predominant in the two plays. Marriages carried out in both plays are not lawfully done. Most of the characters married secretly without consulting the priest or the both families involve. **In** 'Duchess of Malfi' which is a Jacobean Revenged Tragedy, Duchess married Antonio secretly without consulting a priest or the both families involve. Also in 'The Rover' which is a Restoration comedy, Florinda and Belvile married secretly without consulting their families. From our explanation so far, there is a critique of marriage institution in these two periods because their marriage are not usually done in a supposed manner.

The issue of class and status are also predominant in these periods. The characters care much about their reputation and image. This attention to reputation becomes the reason for their pretence and feign. Ferdinand in 'The Duchess of Malfi' reminds Duchess of her reputation when he realised that the Duchess has given her love to a man. They discussed reputation but the Duchess reminds him that his reputation is still held at a higher esteem but

Ferdinand rebuked her by telling her that she don't even know what reputation entails. Page 36.

He puts it thus:

Dost thou know what reputation is?

I 'll tell thee, to small purpose, since the instruction comes now too late

Upon a time Reputation, Love and Death,

Would travel o'er the World; and it was concluded

That they should part, and take three several ways.

Death told them, they should find him in great battles,

Or cities plague 'd with plagues; Love gives them counsel

To inquire for him 'mongst unambitious shepherds.

Where dowries were not talk'd of, and sometimes

'mongst quiet kindred that had nothing left

By their dead parents; stay, quoth Reputation,

Do not forsake me; for it is my nature,

If once i part from any man I meet,

I am never found again. And so for you;

You have shook hands with Reputation,

And made him invisible. So, fare you well;

I will never see you more.

This expression shows us that the characters consider the status of someone before they allow their child to marry. In Restoration comedy, Don Pedro warns

his sister (Florinda) to consider Don Vincentio's fortune which is also the reason behind their father's consent for Vincentio to marry Florinda. Pedro's friend is also of high class, base on the issue of class, Pedro recommends that his sister marries him if she cannot marry Don Vincetio. Class issue appear also in the case of **Angelica** who is being rated high as a whore, she is highly expensive in her whore business. She is considered as being in a high class to this makes even guys fight because of her. The issue of class revolves around the Jacobean Revenged Tragedy and Restoration comedy respectively as shown in the two plays.

Visard, Mask, Disguise and Conceal of identity features in both plays.

*I agree with **Ralph Waldo Emerson's** view on mask. For him 'There is no privacy that cannot be penetrated. No secret can be kept in the civilized world. Society is a masked ball where everyone hides his real character and reveals it only through hiding.* In page 47 of 'The Duchess of Malfi', Bosola appeared to the Duchess wearing a mask. He came to tell her that she will not see her husband again. 'The Rover' also features this because almost all the characters put on mask when coming out. **In page 40**, When Pedro fought with Belvile, he could not realise that he is not Antonio initially because he puts on a mask and has Antonio's sword. Florinda stayed with Belvile for a while but he couldn't realise is her till she left after giving him a picture. Hellena defended Willmore when he discussed with Angelica but Willmore could not also recognise Hellena initially. When Willmore saw Angelica coming to kill him, he

thought she could be his Hellena not knowing that Angelica has come to take revenge on him. Characters disguise themselves to hide their identity throughout the whole plays.

Sex, Lust, Marriage/Relationship and Lewd Images have great influence on both periods although it has greater influence on restoration comedy. In Restoration era, sex becomes the king of the day because many people are already tired of living an ascetic life. Let us take '**The Rover**' as an example, **Willmore** dated **Hellena** and had sex with Angelica after making advances to her without paying anything. **Belvile** dated **Florinda** which led to their marriage. Fredrick dated Valeria and so on. Prostitution becomes a work for some people as regard to whore in the country. These prove the extent of sexual immorality practise in that country. Julia in '**Duchess on Malfi**' also is Cardinal's mistress not minding that she is not his wife. Julia also had a lustful interest on Bosola before he killed her. We see this lustful desire in the periods using these plays.

The issue of stock characters are also predominant in the two plays as well. Bosola in 'Duchess on Malfi' remained a killer till he died. Also in 'The Rover', Will more never changed, he continued to play his love life even as he dates Hellena.

Both plays can be studied with ONOMASTICS study of the characters. In other words, names of the characters determine the role they

perform in the play. From the above similarities, one can understand that there are many similarities between the Jacobean Revenged Tragedy and Restoration comedy or comedy of manners. Let us talk on the differences as we proceed.

CONTRASTING THE TWO PERIODS (JACOBEAN REVENGED TRAGEDY AND RESTORATION COMEDY) USING THE TWO PLAYS 'THE DUCHESS OF MALFI' AND 'THE ROVER'

These two periods as we said earlier have some areas of divergences. We shall treat those areas they differ from each other.

In a Jacobean revenged tragedy, one applies Machiavellian or Hobbes view but cannot go scot free, he usually pay for his altitude but in Restoration comedy, one goes scot free after being selfish or mischievous, he does not pay for his evil. In Revenged Tragedy, there must be a revenged where someone retaliate for evil someone has committed. It can be a **property revenge** where the avenger has been denials of his property or **personal revenge** where the avenger avenges the death of a dear one (Tomazo avenges Alonze death in The Country wife) or a **reverse revenged** where an anti-hero avenges the loss of the victim. 'Duchess of Malfi' presents Ferdinand and Cardinal as being selfish by not allowing their sister to marry because of their selfish interest to acquire her fortune, they killed her because she married Antonio. After killing her, many things start to happen in the play. Ferdinand became mad, Cardinal became annoyed throughout the play and lastly both of them died as they could not enjoy life. This is as a result of killing their sister and so they could not go scot

free. Bosola who is in charge of death in the palace later intends killing Cardinal by himself but he insisted he will shear his belongings to him although Bosola refused. Throughout the play, we see the death of Duchess being retaliated. Cardinal and Ferdinand died a miserable death as they indirectly pay for their sister's death. In 'The Rover' which represents Restoration Comedy, Don Pedro's selfish interest ended up amicably. He never pays for what he did to his sisters instead the play ended in a peaceful manner when all of them married unlike in Revenged Tragedy where he must pay for his selfishness. Florinda's father also goes scot free after being selfish that his daughter should marry DonVincentio because of his wealth. None of these evils are being retaliated. Our explanation above proves that the both period possess some discrepancies. In Restoration, man posses more freedom than in Jacobean Revenged tragedy.

Secret murder multiple deaths at the end are predominant in Jacobean Revenged Tragedy while in Restoration comedy, there is nothing like murder or death. The play ends in a happy mode. In 'The Duchess of Malfi', the Duchess died secretly in the hand of the executioners his brother brought and so this led to several deaths at the end of the play. 'The Rover' presents us with no secret murder or death, the play ends in a happy mode. At the end of the play, all character resolve to happy amusement. Belvile married Florinda; Willmore married Hellena and so on.

There is no resolution in Jacobean Revenged Tragedy but in Restoration Comedy there is always resolution and a happy ending.

Revenge usually end in a chaos manner unlike Restoration Comedy that relies on happiness for its ending. 'The Duchess of Malfi' ended in a chaos manner while 'The Rover' ended in happy mode as they represent Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and Restoration comedy respectively.

Jacobean Revenge Tragedy deals on serious issues while Restoration is based majorly on entertainment and enjoyment because people have been denied of pleasure during Oliver Cromwell's reign. When Charles II returned he then reopened theatre thereby allowing people to enjoy life again. In 'The Duchess of Malfi', there is no sign of carnivals, enjoyment or pleasure but in Restoration Comedy, Florinda, Hellena and Valeria attended a carnival where they met their loved one. Willmore, Belvile, Fredrick and other people also attended the carnivals. Belvile and his friends usually go to restaurant to drink wine and woo whores as well. Sex became the king of the day in Restoration Comedy. All these are not obtainable in Jacobean Revenge Tragedy as it deals on serious issues and most at times the characters do not have time for enjoyment and pleasure.

Female character acted on a stage on Restoration Comedy but in Jacobean Revenge Tragedy, female are not allowed to act on a stage but men represents female.

A female writer coming to write started in Restoration Comedy with the emergence of 'The Rover' by Aphra Behn. Jacobean Revenge Tragedy never

permits women to write anything. Men are the chairman and chairwoman of everything that has to do with arts.

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