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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND
RENAISSANCE DRAMA**

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 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 medieval play and 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.

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 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 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.

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, Renaissance play, we can see some similarities but can also easily make differences medieval play. Medieval period starts later after the revival of interest in renaissance in which the end of the former is the begging of the latter, starting from 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.

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. Mephistopheles who facilitates the process between power to perform magic and occultism for twenty-four years 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. Wields magical power and wonders making famous all over. 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.

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 center around the spirit of intellectualism, curiosity, and individualism of life in thought and religion. Many believed that 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.

Key Relating Factors

- Liturgical Dramas – symbolic e.g. throne = Herod's palace; acted on platforms representing something (mansions/houses) situated around the Church; using space as an acting area; mingling of actors and audience; congregation stood around the platforms
- Moved outside the church eventually – plays became more elaborate with more actors; laymen became more involved

- Different methods of staging developed
- Comedies

Static Presentation

- Stages fixed in one place – mansions
- Mansions could be spread out in a church or town square
- Audience moves between mansions
- Or mansions could be grouped together to form one long stage in front of church doors
- Some towns built arenas – rounds, or sometimes put the mansions in the centre
- Each scene performed by different guilds

Special effects – stage machinery

In view of the features we have seen in the two plays, we can say that the plays have similarities in using allegorical characters..

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 can be seen as acts that will lead humanity to eternal damnation.

However, 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.

While good and evil vie for human soul in the medieval drama, the thirst for knowledge is the dominant theme in renaissance plays 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 features 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.