

NAME: UGWU PAUL CHUKWUEMEKA

REG. NO: 2016/235589

DEPT: ARTS EDUCATIO (EDUCATION/ ENGLISH)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

In looking 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 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.

Mystery Plays

- Major form of religious plays
- Stories from the Bible
- Consisted of play cycles - e.g. about 50 playlets in a cycle
- Not presented every year

Each major town had its own cycle

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. It 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 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.

COMEDY

- Started with the antics of villagers after harvest collected – antics of the satyres (half-men/half goats who attended on Dionysus) – fooling and rough horseplay developed into true comedies
- Komoidia – means merrymaking

Plays Were Not Expected To Be Original – the interest for the audience lay in how the dramatist had chosen to deal with the subject matter and assess the quality of the acting and how the chorus had been used. This lack of emphasis on originality was also visible in Medieval and Elizabethan/Renaissance Drama

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.. 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.

Relating Factors

TRAGEDY:

- Concerned with one central figure – a tragic protagonist (we can therefore identify ourselves with this)
- Portrayed as a believable human being – strong characterisation
- An element of hope is disappointed or ambition is frustrated
- The protagonist dies
- It does not propose a solution to defeat and disappointment in life – nor does it see despair and lack of hope as being the only way
- Tragedy asks ultimate questions: why are we here? Does life have meaning? Can life have meaning in the face of so much suffering? – the causes of this

suffering is diverse yet they all agree that through suffering people gain wisdom

Tragedy pushes the individual to the outer limits of existence where one must live or die by one's convictions. 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 *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.

Finally, to reconcile the two plays, it is clear that some 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.