

## **СТРУКТУРНІ ТА ЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ П'ЄСИ "EVERYMAN"**

*У статті розглянуто та проаналізовано структурні і лінгвістичні особливості середньовічної п'єси мораліте "Everyman" крізь призму цінностей епохи Середніх віків. У центрі п'єси – християнська доктрина про грішність та спасіння людини. П'єсі притаманна структура зростання-спадання, що стосується самої дії п'єси, семантичного наповнення прологу і епілогу, рими та римування. П'єсі властиві також мовна економія та урочиста і позбавлена емоційності мова.*

**Ключові слова:** *середньовічна драма, п'єса мораліте, структура зростання-спадання, схема римування, урочиста та беземоційна мова.*

## **СТРУКТУРНЫЕ И ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПЬЕСЫ "EVERYMAN"**

*В статье рассмотрено и проанализировано структурные и лингвистические особенности средневековой пьесы моралите "Everyman" через призму ценностей эпохи Средних веков. В центре пьесы – христианская доктрина о грешности и спасении человека. Пьесе присуща структура рост-падение, что касается самого действия пьесы, семантического наполнения пролога и эпилога, рифмы и рифмовки. Пьесе свойственны также языковая экономия и торжественная, лишена эмоциональности, речь.*

**Ключевые слова:** *средневековая пьеса, пьеса моралите, структура рост-падение, схема рифмовки, торжественная и лишена эмоциональности речь.*

## **STRUCTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES OF THE PLAY “EVERYMAN”**

*The article deals with analysis of structural and linguistic peculiarities of medieval morality play “Everyman” through values, beliefs, mentality and socio-cultural attitudes of such epoch as the Middle Ages. The play focuses on Christian doctrine of human sinfulness and salvation which became the central notions of this era. The typical feature of this drama is two-part structure – descent-ascent pattern which is obvious in dramatic action, semantic content of prologue and epilogue, rhyme scheme. Through the two-part structure the pattern deepens the importance of the doctrine and evokes the inevitable emotional tension. Solemn, serious and non-emotional but at the same time economic language is inherent of the drama “Everyman”. Every idea or thought is expressed in as little words as possible and repeated only once in the flow of the speech. The most prevalent use of structure can be found in the rapidly successive rhyming verses shared between characters involved in dialogue. The distribution of rhymes throughout dialogue provides insight to the pace and flow of the scene. The use of punctuation is unusual. The heavy use of commas breaking up the first half of thoughts elevates tension and creates a sense of building up and up until a reader comes to a certain point. The structure and the language of the play fulfil a didactic function to make a reader think and learn a lesson.*

**Key words:** *medieval play, morality play, descent-ascent pattern, rhyme scheme, Solemn, serious and non-emotional language.*

Morality play is a distinctive genre of medieval drama that emerged in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in England, gaining almost immediately wide acceptance and becoming one of the most prolific literary genres not only in the Middle Ages but also in the following epoch. It has a more or less settled structure and highly ideological content pertaining to the central morality theme of the Church, the doctrine of man's salvation [3, p. 3].

The term “medieval” has potential to conjure up several images in the mind. Ideas of castles and feudal societies, or cathedrals and religious rule have an appropriate place in our conception of the past. What is seldom clear when pondering medieval history are the cultural attitudes, shared beliefs, and the overall mentality of the age as experienced by the people that actually lived during these times. It is still difficult to filter out one’s own modern concepts of society and history in order to gain understanding and acceptance of what it actually must have been like to be alive and a part of this drastically different cultural age. The study of theatre as a cultural institution can be a tool in understanding cultural mentality. This is because the nature of theatre reflects the socio-cultural attitudes of the age and presents them in relatable symbols, images, and language. The theatre, therefore, is a useful tool for looking into and understanding the past [2, p. 2].

The brightest example of medieval English drama is a morality play “Everyman”. Many consider Everyman to be an influence on several twentieth century writers. George Bernard Shaw acknowledged that Ann Whitefield in “Man and Superman” began for him as a female equivalent to “Everyman”. Other connections drawn by scholars include the evolution of allegorical characters into the stylistic symbolism developed by German expressionism. Further still, the parallels present in “the images of humankind consigned to dustbins and wheelchairs in Samuel Beckett’s “Endgame” are reminiscent of the initial paralysis of Good Deeds in “Everyman” [2, p. 23].

Over the past few decades, the English morality play “Everyman” has undergone literary reevaluation by David Bevington, Robert Weimann, Robert Potter, Miklós Tóth, Szabados Ádám (1, 8, 4, 6, 5) and others who have investigated its structure and themes, its differentiation from the “popular tradition of the theatre”, its development and influences.

The object of our study is the play “Everyman” and the subject is its structural and lingual peculiarities. So, the aim was to decode the text of the play and analyze it in the light of medieval values and beliefs.

The structure of *Everyman* constitutes a complete and continuous pattern, both movements of which receive simultaneous visual summation at the end of the play when *Everyman* enters his grave to attain Heaven. The pattern gives value to the play through its function of organizing the numerous elements of the action into a form which provides order by keeping each element in its proper sequence and provides coherence by according each element its proper amount of emphasis. The pattern further succeeds in enriching the play's materials by balancing the rising action against the falling action: instead of standing alone, the various elements, in reflecting upon one another, work together to produce a rather complex experience. Finally, the structure is intimately involved in the play's success, for the descent-ascent pattern intensifies both its doctrinal significance and its dramatic effectiveness [7, p. 470].

The structural pattern of *Everyman* intensifies both the religious and the ordinary dramatic interests by expanding the focus of the action to universal dimension. As with style, so with structure. The artistry which finds a style expressive of its content finds and develops as well a structural equivalent. *Everyman* surpasses numerous other works which achieve form through some variation of a descent-ascent pattern because the dramatist has seen much of the pattern's potential and has given it dramatic solidity. [7, p. 472] T. S. Eliot has described *Everyman* to be perhaps the only English drama within the limitations of art. He argues that in order for religious drama to be successful, it must combine its doctrine with ordinary dramatic interest. The human action and its allegorical significance together form a distinct structural pattern which not only imposes discipline but also contributes its own intrinsic meaning. Through this twofold function, the pattern simultaneously deepens the doctrinal content and evokes the indispensable emotional tension. [7, p. 472]. The structural pattern is suggestively defined by the somewhat superfluous prologue and epilogue. In the prologue, the Messenger reiterates "transitory we be all daye." The speech is overall negative with the focus on how death and the destructive nature of sin is inevitable. The epilogue, narrated by the Doctor, contrasts the prologue greatly by stressing the

positive element of the second half of the play and by focusing on the character concept of Good Deed and how he did not desert man. The Messenger leads up to the threat posed by God's call for a reckoning, but the Doctor concludes by affirming Everyman's ultimate end: "*he that hath his accounte hole and sounde, Hye in heuen he shall be crounde.*" [9, p. 31]

The prologue and epilogue clearly distinguish a two-part structure shown in movements. The first movement that takes place in the first half of the play begins at the highest schematic level in Heaven in God's presence and falls from there to where Everyman is greeted by Death and he is sent into despair where he sees his eternal damnation. The second movement, in contrast, is the rising action where he is carried from his nadir to salvation which is symbolized in the words of the Angel. The falling action is split into episodes which show significance in multiple ways. The first is when each of Everyman's worldly possessions turn their backs on them when he calls for their assistance. The second is through the conversion of Everyman's complacency into despair. The third and most important is that Everyman going to such companions such as Fellowship and Goods proves the point God makes in his opening speech. In between each episode, Everyman is the single one on stage to represent his loneliness [7, p. 468 ].

The most prevalent use of structure can be found in the rapidly successive rhyming verses shared between characters involved in dialogue. Scholars of Everyman consider such verses a function to serve both the actor and audience. For the actors, the distribution of rhymes throughout dialogue provides insight to the pace and flow of the scene. An example of this can be found in the following exchange between Everyman and Fellowship [2, pp. 26]:

*FELLOWSHIP: Sir, I say as I will do in deed.*

*EVERYMAN: Then be you a good friend in need. I have found you true herebefore.*

*FELLOWSHIP: And so ye shall evermore; For, in faith if thou go to hell, I will not forsake thee by the way.*

*EVERYMAN: Ye speak like a good friend; I believe you well. I shall deserve it, if I may.*

*FELLOWSHIP: I speak of no deserving by this day!* [9, p. 15]

The syllabification is inconsistent, ranging from seven to eleven syllables per line. To say these were iambic would be misleading, as the stressed syllables seem completely random. In the above example, the only line representing standard iambic pentameter is last one. Yet the rhyme scheme is very apparent; and the two characters playfully share rhymes almost as if it were a game of verbal call and response. This suggests that perhaps the syllabification is not important to this particular scene; rather, actors should pay attention to the rhymes in order to skilfully drive the pacing of the scene [2, p. 26].

Careful attention to the structure found in soliloquies can show the actor the intended moment to “present pause for thought.” A powerful and moving example is Everyman’s prayer [2, p. 26]:

*O eternal God, O heavenly figure,  
O way of righteousness, O goodly vision,  
Which descended down in a virgin pure  
Because he would every man redeem,  
Which Adam forfeited by his disobedience;  
O blessed Godhead, elect and high divine,  
Forgive me my grievous offence!  
Here I cry thee mercy in this presence* [9, p. 30].

Here the rhyme scheme is not as apparent, and the use of consistent syllabification almost non-existent. What is striking then is the use of punctuation. Essentially, the above passage is only two complete sentences. The heavy use of commas to break up the first series of thoughts elevates tension and creates a sense of building up and up until we come to the point: “*Forgive me*” at which point both actor and audience can pause to catch their breath. Interestingly, this structure is repeated twice more as Everyman continues his prayer [2, p. 27].

The play of Everyman seems homogenous concerning the style. It is mostly written in a solemn, serious and non-emotional language, using only one stylistic registry disregarding the character speaking. A few exceptions can be found,

though, of the style being changed into more colloquial one, such as in the following scene [3, p. 21]:

*BEAUTY: I take my tappe in my lappe and am gone.*

*EVERYMAN: What, Beaute, whyder wyll ye?*

*BEAUTY: Peas! I am defe. I loke not behynde me,*

*Not & thou wolde gyue me all the golde in thy chest [9, p. 18]*

The unity of style in Everyman comes hand in hand with its abstract and economic language. Every idea or thought is expressed in as little words as possible and repeated only once in the flow of the speech. The passage on the criticism of the Church can serve as a graphic instance of this phenomenon [3, p. 22]:

*But whan Iesu hanged on the crosse with grete smarte,*

*There he gaue out of his blessyd herte*

*The seuen sa*

*craments in grete tourment;*

*He solde them not to vs, that Lorde omnypotent.*

*Therefore Saynt Peter the apostell dothe saye*

*That Iesus curse hath all they*

*Whiche God theyr Sauyour do by or sell,*

*Or they for ony money do take or tell.*

*Synfull preestes gyueth*

*the synners example bad:*

*Theyr chyldren sytteth by other mennes fyres, I haue harde;*

*And some haunteth womens company*

*With vnclene lyfe, as lustes of lechery.*

*These be with synne made blynde [9, p. 5]*

As for the linguistic means, it would be instructive to have a look at the passage concerning the lecherous life of the priests. The author decided to use two images to concretize the abstract situation of fornication –one of children brought up by foster-parents, and the other of priests haunting women to win pleasure [3, p. 25].

One more important strategy concerning the structure of this passage is addition of particular motifs. There is a reminiscence on the first epistle of Saint Peter, where it is written: Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled [3, p. 25].

Thus, both the linguistic and structural peculiarities of “Everyman” seem complicated and inaccessible to modern audience because of the socio-cultural attitudes of the age encoded in images, allusions and symbols. But we clearly see that the structure and the language of the play fulfil a didactic function – to teach a reader a lesson about the Christian idea of salvation and make him realize his sinfulness.

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