

Everybody & Everyman

A dramaturgical analysis

Everyman Background

- Late 15th century morality play
 - Liturgical dramas -> cycle plays -> morality plays
 - All characters allegorical; movement away from Biblical characters
 - Limited evidence of stagecraft/production values
 - Performed anywhere there was room for an audience
- Based on Dutch play *Elckerlijc*
 - Scholarly debate settled in '80s
 - Conclusion: *Everyman* is simpler in verse and form than *Elckerlijc* but both accomplish didactic purpose
- Purpose: reflect and reaffirm the teachings of the church

England in the 15th Century

01

Catholicism

Just before the Reformation –
95 Theses posted in 1517

03

Plague recovery

“Demographic catastrophe”

02

Changing economy

Depressed agricultural
economy, merchant/trade
economy growing

04

Theatre

Morality plays originating
in churches, secularly
adapted by theatrical
troupes

First known print of *Everyman* published in 1510

≈500

years after publication of *Beowulf*

100

years before premiere of *The Tempest*

≈500

years ago

None excule may be thow for every man
Alas howe shall he do than
For after deth amendes may no man make
For than mercy and pyte dothe hym forsake
If his rekenynge be not clere whan he do cr
God wyll say ite maledicti in ignem eternu
And he that hath his accounte hole and sou
Hye in heuen he shall be crounde
Unto whiche please god bynge vs all the
That we may lyue body and soue togyder
Therto helpe the trinite
Amen saye ye for saynt charyte.

¶ Finis.

¶ Imprinted at London in fletestrete at
Sygne of the George by Rycharde Pynl
pynter vnto the Kyngs noble grace. ¶

Everyman, 1515 edition

Three Main Thematic Changes:

Everyman -> Everybody

15th century England -> 21st century U.S.A.



1

Transition from monolithic belief in God to pluralism and wide atheism/agnosticism

2

Transition from emphasis on humanity as a collective to emphasis on individuality

3

Evolving value systems

Wide belief in God -> pluralism, wide atheism/agnosticism

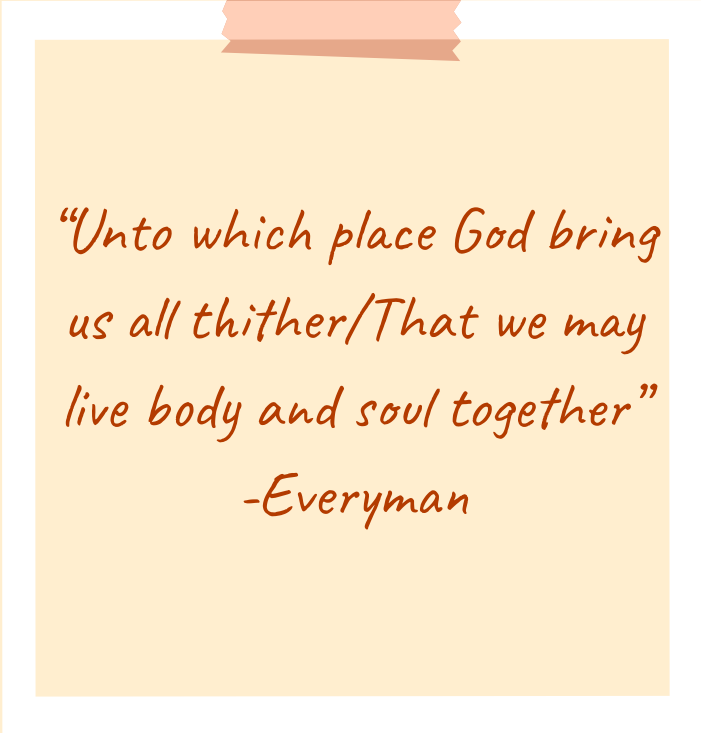


Everyman, 1528 edition

- The revelation that God is real: now a much bigger deal
- God's attitude towards humanity is softer in *Everybody*
- The lesson of *Everyman*: we must repent for our sins before we die
- A lesson from *Everybody*: we must be kind to one another and lead with understanding because we don't know what comes next

Humanity as a collective -> individuality culture

- Everyman is the sole representative for humanity, whereas Cousin helps Everybody understand that each individual will reckon before God in their own time
- Rationale for the Somebodies
- The Somebodies continually challenge Everybody, checking their ego and sense of self-importance



*“Unto which place God bring
us all thither/That we may
live body and soul together”
-Everyman*

Evolving system of values

- Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Five-wits -> Beauty, Strength, Mind, and Senses
- Good-Deeds, Knowledge, Confession -> Love and Understanding
- Goods -> Stuff
 - Major differences between these two, even though they may look similar



Everyman, 1535 edition

Silly things!

- The Usher
 - Usher's transformation into God is a way of showing, not telling God's original monologue
 - Whimsy of the usher proceeds from messenger's lines like "Look well, and take good heed to the ending, / Be you never so gay!", i.e. the messenger/usher wants the audience to pay attention, but have fun
- Kinship's stubbed toe
 - In *Everyman*, Cousin uses "the cramp in his toe as an excuse for why he can't come along - shows the flightiness of the kinsmen



Everyman, 1535 edition



Everyman

Religious tool
instructing viewers
on how to achieve
Christian salvation

Everybody

Modern meditation on
theatre history,
love, death, and
understanding

Recommended reading

1. *Everyman* - Fordham University Medieval Sourcebook
2. Phoebe S. Spinrad - Chapter 4 of *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (1987)
3. Signature Theatre's website - An Interview with Branden Jacobs-Jenkins and Lila Neugebauer



Elckerlijc, 1500 edition

Thank you!

- Comparison spreadsheet:
ES 5 Everybody ->
Dramaturgy -> Everybody
vs Everyman Scene
Breakdown Comparison
- Email:
elena_freck@emerson.edu

