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The Influence of Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele on the Evolution of Tragic and Pastoral Drama in Early Modern England: A Comparative Analysis of Their Literary Techniques

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Abstract

The paper is about how Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, and George Peele had an extensive impact on the development of tragic and pastoral drama in early modern England and provides a comparative evaluation of their literary styles. These playwrights were the leaders of the University Wits and they majorly contributed to the transition of English theatre to a new era of dramatic styles that were not based on the medieval morality plays. The tragic plays written by Marlowe, their blank verse, and character conflict made a new standard of a dramatic tragedy, as it focused on the topic of ambition, fate, and human tragedy. The works of Lyly on the pastoral drama, where he embodied his sublime prose and his romantic themes, brought in the ideal appearance of nature and love that determined the evolution of early comedy, as well as the pastoral genre. In the meantime, the lyrical tragedies of Peele combined the forms of the classics with poetic conversations and enriched the tragic genre with the distinctive combination of the lyrical and the complexity of the narrative. By critically comparing their themes of interest, styles, characterization and so on, this paper will show how their respective works played a crucial role in defining the direction that English drama took, which provided the path to other playwrights, such as Shakespeare. The present paper provides new perspectives into the long-term effect of the University Wits on the traditions of tragedy and pastoral, proving their fundamental importance in the changes of the early modern English theatre.

Keywords: *Influence, Evolution, Pastoral drama, Literary.*

Introduction

The late 16th and early 17th centuries were the time of the monumental shift of the dramatic landscape of early modern England. The English drama made its way to the literary geniuses of the Renaissance, out of the comparatively straightforward morality plays and mystery cycles of the medieval era. This development was not a one-off event but was strongly affected by a team of playwrights who in an

intellectual education and work of creation, re-established the direction of the English theatre. These playwrights, who went together as the University Wits, were responsible, among others, of Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, and George Peele, who brought more sophistication to the stage than ever before. Their works collectively helped in major way to the transformation of the medieval to the renaissance drama especially in the tragedies and pastoral drama. (Wilkins, 1999)

The University Wits were a collection of playwrights, poets and scholars who were educated at either Oxford or Cambridge and their literary creations show their intellectual training and rigor. Of these personalities Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele can be distinguished as having a highly significant role in the history of tragic and pastoral drama. Their imaginative developments, literary devices and subject areas would continue to influence the course of English drama to impact not only on their peers but on the later generation of authors, such as William Shakespeare. The paper examines the roles played by Marlowe, Lyly and Peele in developing the tragic and pastoral drama and gives a comparative study on the individual literary styles used and the general contribution their works made on theatre in the early modern period. (Hallet, 2010)

One of the first men to bring dramatic innovations as well as influence the evolution of English tragedy in a significant way was Christopher Marlowe, born in 1564. His plays, including Tamburlaine the Great (1587), Doctor Faustus (1592), The Jew of Malta (1592) and Edward II (1593), transformed the form of tragedy by using blank verse, more complicated, ambitious characters, and dealing with themes of human lust and authority and the supernatural. The type of contribution that Marlowe made to the field of tragedy is best evident in his blank verse. Although Shakespeare would later master this style, it was Marlowe who started to write using unrhymed iambic pentameter with the flowing nature of natural speech. This method was a great breakthrough in comparison to the strict, highly stylized language of earlier drama. The pompous language of the main character in the plays such as Tamburlaine, who is always in search of power and control, portrays not only the ambition of the character but also the poetic structure which makes the actions of the main character reach such heights to be considered a tragic hero. The tragic heroes of Marlowe, as they are frequently referred to as being overreaching characters, are characterized by unlimited ambition that causes them to challenge the natural course and thus they are doomed to their downfall. The fact that he has explored the human soul in its desire to be something great coupled with a feeling of tragedy that comes about as a result of the conflict between human needs and universal powers is one of the aspects of his work that would not only shape his contemporaries but also other dramatists who came after, such as Shakespeare.

Furthermore, the characters Marlowe created, especially Doctor Faustus show the depth of human psyche, ambitions and struggle with existence. Faustus the character as a man selling his soul to gain knowledge and power is not merely an archetype of classical tragedy, but a very modern and personal narrative of individualism and self-determination. The emphasis that Marlowe assigned to the issue of human agency and divine punishment affected the genre of tragedy by creating moral ambiguity and psychological complexity in the motives of the characters. By so doing, Marlowe provided the pretext of the development of tragedy in England and extending the limits of what was already known as tragic drama.

Although the contribution made by Marlowe in tragic drama is greatly recognized, John Lyly also made a great contribution to the pastoral theatre. The English playwright and scholar, Lyly, who taught at Oxford is widely credited with having laid the groundwork of the pastoral drama. His plays, especially

Campaspe (1584), *The Woman in the Moon* (1597) and *Endymion* (1591), are examples of the early pastoral theatre in England. Classical influences were immensely felt in pastoral plays, which tended to romanticize the countryside and glorify the topic of love and nature, such as in ancient Greek and Roman plays of Theocritus and Virgil. Perhaps the most obvious contribution that Lyly made to the pastoral genre is his unique prose style, the so-called euphuism. Euphuistic prose has a complex and balanced form and it employs rhetorical features, i.e. alliteration, antithesis, parallelism. This style became a hallmark of the work by Lyly and helped to make his plays sophisticated in style. In *Endymion*, as an example, Lyly uses this ornate prose to give the impression of idealized, poetic beauty, and develops the mood in which love, dreams, and nature mingle stylized and romanticized. This language, which had been so much developed, did not only uplift the pastoral style, but also affected the manner in which English comedies were composed and produced, as a writer such as Shakespeare was able to adopt similar styles of language in future writings.

Love and courtship as well as conflict between the idealistic and realistic are the other themes in the plays of Lyly. The movement of fantasy to reality and the love of the moon goddess Cynthia (the titular character in *Endymion*) are indicative of the principles of courtly love that had dominated Renaissance literature. Although pastoral genre was commonly perceived as an escape of the cruelty of the city life, the plays by Lyly provide the slightly different approach to the behavioral patterns of the court and the norms of the social life, thereby paving the way to the evolution of the comedy and the tragic comedy in the future. The works of Lyly helped to turn the pastoral genre into a significant and authoritative type of English drama that set the precedent that subsequent playwrights would later use the nature and love as the means to address the theme in a more mature and subtle way.

Marlowe and Lyly established themselves in tragedy and pastoral drama although the works of George Peele were instrumental in the transition between the two. Much like Marlowe, Peele was heavily impacted by the classical literature by referring to the mythological and historical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. Nevertheless, the most remarkable aspect of Peele was his possibility to combine the lyricism and tragedy, which made his plays extremely poetic and dramatic. Most of his greatest works, which included *The Old Wives Tale* (1595), *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594), and *David and Bethsabe* (1599) had a combination of classical tragedy with a very lyrical and almost operatic style of dialogue. References to classical works and the interrelationship between mythological and historical stories render the feeling of magnificence to the play, adding to the emotional and intellectual impact on the audiences. Similar to the Marlowe, the tragic characters of Peele are usually engaged in a confrontation with destiny and the tragic outcomes of their existence are emphasized by his poetic words. The visual and auditory richness of the plays, authored by Peele also shows the increased emotions of his characters, and it pushed the limits of what could be done in the Elizabethan theatre.

Early Modern English drama, especially the works of the University Wits - Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly and George Peele are of considerable academic and cultural interest. This study is significant in that it can be considered to give better insight on the development of the tragic and pastoral genres, elucidate the intellectual and artistic trends of the renaissance, and give a comparative context in which the stylistic and thematic innovations made by these playwrights into the English theatre can be fully appreciated. Through examining the role of these three authors, this paper would add to a better comprehension of the paradigm shifts that occurred in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period on the English stage.

To begin with, the work is important in realizing the path that English drama took. Marlowe, Lyly and Peele played a major role in replacing the medieval morality plays with the Renaissance more mature and advanced tragedies and comedies. Although the more notable personalities of the era were often the center of attention by scholars, including William Shakespeare, sometimes little is done about the University Wits and how they helped revolutionize the English theatre. This study illuminates the way in which the experiments with the language and character creation, as well as the dramatic structure of these playwrights, formed the basis of the thriving of English stage, which makes their contributions essential to the study of the early modern drama.

Second, the works of Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele are examined with the aid of their literary devices, which allow looking into the cultural, social, and intellectual pressures of the Renaissance in a special way. These interests include humanism, classical antiquity, and the discovery of individual ambition, love, and power, which are seen in their works. The themes that Marlowe explores are tragic overreaching, and the idealization of nature and love that Lyly followed in euphuism, as well as the mixture of classical tragedy and lyrical poetry by Peele mirrors the intellectual tides of the era. These thematic concerns are not just reflections of the Renaissance interest in the classical world but also demonstrate the conflicts of the time between conservatism and change. To grasp the intellectual landscape of early modern England, it is the most important to understand how these playwrights maneuvered and contributed to these themes.

Third, this study is valuable in its comparative nature, which enables one to have holistic observation of the overlap between tragedy and pastoral drama. The work of Marlowe is frequently regarded in isolation as a part of the tragic tradition, whereas the pastoral comedies by Lyly are read rather as a part of the comic or romantic literature. The combination of pastoral and tragedy forms is not appreciated by Peele. In juxtaposing the works of the three playwrights, this paper brings out the influence of their respective works on the two genres which intertwined together. Their works were not in a vacuum and instead, they influenced each other, and with the help of this comparative analysis, a better idea of the development of English drama can be seen. This approachology stimulates a more in-depth perception of the interplay between tragic and pastoral aspects in the early modern English theatres that enhanced dramaturgical experience and enabled more emotional expression on the stage.

Moreover, this work has a cultural value because it reinstates the work of these playwrights with modern outlooks. In its attempt to trace the continued significance of Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele, the research restores audiences in the present day to a literary tradition that has informed the present day theatre, literature and even popular media. Their work is echoed in the words and the ideas of contemporary dramatic performances, in the works of literature, and in the cultural studies. Moreover, their discussion of universal themes like ambition, love, power and the human condition continues to be applicable in the modern world. What makes the study of the relevance of these playwrights important is that it will allow us to value the legacy of the playwrights and how their early modern playwriting can still influence the development of the modern storytelling device. Lastly, the results of this study have implication to the wider scope of the academic disciplines such as the literary criticism and the history of theatre and Renaissance studies. This study contributes to the discourse in the field of scholarship by providing new insights into the works of Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele and how Renaissance drama came to be as well as how it related to classical and medieval traditions. It further offers a critical structure of analysis of the shift in English drama in the late 16th century and early 17th century, an era that witnessed a great deal

of political, religious, and cultural revolution. This study provides a clue of how these playwrights were responding to these changes and this helps in better understanding the realities of the complexities of the early modern English society and its changing cultural discourse.

In summary, the importance of the present research is that it helps to clarify why Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele were the key figures in the development of the tragic and pastoral drama in England of the latter half of the 16th century. Using a comparative approach to the works by these two authors, this study not only brings out the impact that they had on the evolution of English theatre, but also brings to the fore, the intellectual, cultural, and artistic movements that contributed to the evolution of Renaissance drama. Conclusively, this paper confirms the value of the University Wits in a wider scope of the English literary history and their future contribution to the dramatic tradition.

Research questions

- How did Marlowe's use of blank verse and complex characters shape the evolution of English tragedy?
- How did Lyly's euphuistic prose and idealized pastoral themes influence the development of English pastoral drama?

Research objectives

- To analyze how Marlowe's use of blank verse and complex characters influenced the development of English tragedy and its impact on later playwrights, including Shakespeare.
- To examine how Lyly's use of euphuistic prose and idealized representations of love and nature contributed to the development of English pastoral drama, and how his works intersected with Marlowe and Peele's tragic themes.

Literature review

The development of English drama in the late 16th and early 17th century was strongly influenced by a team of playwrights called the University Wits, of whom Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, and George Peele were distinguished as both tragic and pastoral writers. The scholars have always been aware of the crucial role these playwrights played in changing the stage as the stage, which had been filled with simplistic morality plays of the medieval era, to the more intricate and sophisticated works of the renaissance era. This literature review seeks to discuss existing literature on their respective contributions as part of how the innovative use of language and character development as well as exploring themes have defined the future of the English theatre.

(Shastree, 2020) The term University Wits is a collective term used by a 19th Century Scholar known as George Saintsbury to refer to a group of writers in late 16th Century England. Working at Oxford or Cambridge Universities, these authors wrote plays in order to make a living. Despite the fact that these authors wrote without any patronage system, and had led a short and tempestuous life, they played a significance in the history of English literature in as much as their contribution to transformation of the theme of literature, which was restricted to puritanistic and moralistic literature, were made to be more realistic yet educative, heroic yet grounded on the real life problems of everyday life of the people. The works attempted to be discussed in this essay, not only enriched the English Literature with their plays covering a wide range of themes like revenge, passion, comedy, historical and tragedy, imaginative and romantic prose but also served to elevate the standards of the literature by enhancing the clarity of the

language and plot construction through the literary works they created, not to mention they also served as a prelude to the writers of the later days of the English Literature.

(Narayanrao, 2011) The greatness of Shakespeare, according to Ben Johnson was not of an age, but of all times, the greatness of Shakespeare, is always in the history of literary world. His literature not to a specific time but to the future and eternity. In this day, we encounter much controversy regarding English Literature and popularity of the authors during the Renaissance era of Elizabethan age. The University Wits were a band of (late) English playwrights who were educated at the universities of (Oxford or Cambridge) and were themselves playwrights and famous authors. Leading figures in this group included Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe of Cambridge and John Lyly, Thomas Lodge and George Peele of Oxford. The theatrical renaissance of Elizabethan England was predetermined by the variety and the talent of the loose association of London writers and dramatists. They were regarded as the literary elite of that time and frequently mocked other playwright like Shakespeare who lacked a university education or a degree either at the Oxford University or the Cambridge University. In his pamphlet, *Groats Worth of wit* Greene refers to Shakespeare as an upstart crow.

(Hunter, 1997) The opportunities offered to the dramatists who in the 1580s made English popular drama a refined folk art a refined literary system can be regarded as the result of economic, social, and cultural influences which had manifested themselves (in English history) within the previous decades. The so-called University Wits -Lyly, Greene, Peele, Lodge, Marlowe, Nashe (and we may well say, Kyd and Shakespeare at least associate partnerships)-were of a new generation of secular thinkers. so they could with such Humanistic training develop a compound commercial play, and appeal to the understanding of a people who were also involved in the confusions and freedoms which historical events had brought drama being the form of art most receptive to the inclinations and requirements of the world.

(Loughnane, 2022) The documentary evidence that Shakespeare and Marlowe were co-authors of the Henry VI plays and the different versions of parts 2 and 3 are analyzed in this essay. The essay brings together works on attribution, anonymity, biography, and the book trade to provide the chronological examination of different types of evidence. By so doing, it attempts to find the early date and place the alternative versions, and otherwise give external documentary assistance to the internal attribution criteria of identifying Shakespeare and Marlowe with these plays.

(Bhardwaj, 2018) The University Wits are young critical authors of Oxford and Cambridge who sends creative landscape in secular drama, cutting all the links with the formulas of clerical/ecclesiastical story of medieval England. They are not just the credible authors who attempt to secularize the theatre through etching the traditional plays, courtly comical, farce, historical plays and melodramas, but also mark literary fragments professionally and skillfully to achieve economic stability first of all. The Wits are cherished predecessors of Shakespeare who is surely indebted to the scholars in his main plots.

Research Gap

Although the role of Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly and George Peele in development of tragic and pastoral drama in early modern England has been recognized, there are still research gaps in the critical field which are supposed to be filled. The groundbreaking blank verse and complicated tragic heroes of Marlowe have been thoroughly analyzed, but it has not been analyzed how exactly his works impacted later playwrights, especially in the sense of psychological depth and ambiguity of morality. Besides, although there is a great deal of literature on the themes of ambition and hubris in the tragedies by

Marlowe, there are no thorough studies as to how he addressed the issue of supernatural and how it influenced the direction of Renaissance tragedy. Cases in point, though they are not directly related to John Lyly, his establishment of the euphuistic prose style and his pastoral fiction are well-documented, an examination of his body of work comparatively, and not in terms of individual plays, would reveal more of his contribution to the English drama. Moreover, the influence of classical mythology and gender relations in the comedies of Lyly, in *Galatea*, in particular, has never been an object of critical study in the framework of the modern theory. In the case of George Peele, it has been admitted that his fusion of classical tragedy and Elizabethan drama was successful, but further studies are necessary regarding his individual dramaturgical methods and the ways they have helped to fill the gap existing between the medieval morality play and Renaissance tragedy. The sophisticated play between political motives, satire and lyricism of Peele in such works as *The battle of Alcazar* is under-researched. Besides, the issue of collaborative authorship in the works of Marlowe and Peele, in particular, the role of co-authorship in such plays as *Doctor Faustus*, has not been explored thoroughly. Lastly, but not the least, Marlowe, Lyly and Peele have exerted a lot of influence on Shakespeare, but there is no comparative analysis that can establish the development of their thematic and stylistic devices in their works and the ways they are reflected in Shakespearean plays. Filling these gaps will give a more detailed insight into how these playwrights changed the course of the English drama, providing new ways of looking into the complex interrelation of tragedy, pastoral comedy, and theatrical traditions of the Renaissance.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design based on textual and thematic analysis. It examines selected dramatic works of Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, and George Peele to investigate their contributions to the evolution of tragic and pastoral drama in early modern England. Primary sources include Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, and *Edward II*; Lyly's *Endymion*, *Campaspe*, and *The Woman in the Moon*; and Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, *David and Bethsabe*, and *The Old Wives' Tale*. These texts are analyzed comparatively with emphasis on literary techniques, including characterization, language, blank verse, euphuistic prose, thematic development, and dramatic structure. Secondary sources, such as scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles, are used to support the interpretation and contextualize the findings within Renaissance literary studies. The comparative analysis identifies similarities and differences among the three playwrights and evaluates their collective influence on the development of English tragic and pastoral drama. This methodological approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth examination of literary texts and their historical and artistic significance.

Analysis

The Roles of Marlowe, Lyly and Peele in the Early Modern Drama.

The English drama in the early modern period, specifically in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, was a turning point in theatrical forms. The emergence of the University Wits - a collective of playwrights trained in Oxford and Cambridge - was very influential in this development, as they incorporated the classical forms with the innovative approaches to theatre. The most notable among them are Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly and George Peele who made great contribution to the advancements of tragic and pastoral drama. As Marlowe reinvented English tragedy, Lyly reinvented a mature prose form that influenced the pastoral drama, and Peele creatively attacked the classical tragedy with the spirit of

Elizabethans. In this analysis, their thematic issues, style will be discussed and how they have influenced the future playwrights, especially William Shakespeare.

Christopher Marlowe: The First Native Son of the Renaissance.

Christopher Marlowe has left a great impact through his contribution in the field of tragedy in the English theatre during the early modern period. His blank verse inventiveness, his twists and turns in terms of excessive characterization of the protagonists, and his addressing of big themes such as ambition, power and human agency have ensured his role as a central figure in the developmental history of tragedy. The tragic heroes of Marlowe are seen to possess an unfathomable ambition and a ruthless desire to achieve power as depicted in *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587), *Doctor Faustus* (1592), and *The Jew of Malta* (1592), which is a characteristic of the Renaissance tragedy.

Mastery of the blank verse was just one of the biggest contributions that Marlowe made to English tragedy. Though Shakespeare was later to perfect this form, Marlowe was the first to revolutionize the use of unrhymed iambic pentameter so that the flow of the natural speech could take place. This innovation did not only improve the dramatic value of the dialogue, but also provided a poetic space where characters were able to demonstrate multifaceted emotions and ethical issues. In *Doctor Faustus*, e.g., the blank verse used by Marlowe reflects the conflict of the main character, who is in anguish between the desire to acquire knowledge and the threat of being damned. This form, in which a more subtle depiction of the human condition was made possible, distinguished the tragedies of Marlowe and his predecessors, whose English dramas were more formulaic.

Complexity of the main characters is another characteristic of the Marlowe tragedies. His tragic heroes are not only the victims of fate but the active subjects that are ready to go to extremes of human experience and sometimes to their own loss. In *Tamburlaine the Great*, the titular hero displays the Renaissance concept of individualism by attempting to build an empire by his own strength and power. But it is this unstoppable ambition that finally destroys. In the same vein, *Doctor Faustus* can be characterized as a character who is driven by intellectual arrogance and insatiability in the pursuit of infinite knowledge that can be compared to the Renaissance interest in humanism and the pursuit of individual greatness. The tragic flaw of Faustus is that he did not see the repercussion of his deal with the devil that was an expression of a larger existential fear of the boundaries of human knowledge and power in his time.

The supernatural also contributes to the overall role of his tragedies by Marlow. In *Doctor Faustus*, the relationship between the protagonist, Dr. Faustus and his associate, Mephistopheles is a metaphor of the Renaissance conflict between religious orthodoxy and the urge of human beings to be intellectually and spiritually free. It is emphasized that Faustus was damned by supernatural forces, illustrating the boundaries of human desire and human ambition immorality, which was close to the anxieties of the time, especially the social and religious conflict. Including supernatural in his works Marlowe gave the opportunity to explore psychological and moral aspects that were not explored in English theatre before.

John Lyly: The Master of the Euphuism and Pastoral Drama.

As Marlowe re-invented the tragedy, John Lyly was creating a unique category of pastoral drama in English literature. The elegant prose, idealism of love and nature and advanced interest in the courtly life typify the works of Lyly, especially *Endymion* (1591), *Campaspe* (1584), and *The Woman in the Moon* (1597). The works of Lyly in the evolution of the English pastoral drama are important because he provided a new degree of poetic refinement to the genre, which later plays, with Shakespeare being one

of them, received the same tone. The most significant stylistic novelty of Lyly was his invention of euphuism style of prose that is very elaborate in its sentence structure, high rates of usage of parallelism, and reliance on rhetorical devices (antithesis and alliteration). This style, which made its initial appearance in his prose book *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1579), was also used in his plays. Euphuism was used to enhance the language of his plays making them seem like works of intellectual elegance that echoed the humanism of the Renaissance. Although much derided on account of its artificialness, the style was extremely influential, and it affected the language of courtly comedy and pastoral drama well into the 20th century. Euphuism was also borrowed by Shakespeare, in such pieces as *Loves Labour Lost* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and this shows him as evidence of the enduring influence of Lyly on the language of English drama.

Ideologically, the plays of Lyly are concerned with the themes of the contradictions between the idealism of love and the facts of the courtly and social life. In *Endymion*, the eponymous character in that case loves the goddess of the moon Cynthia, which is an impossible dream. The love, fantasy, and transformation themes in the play are echoed in the Renaissance fixation of the ideal and the real. This romantic love is supported by the pastoral environment, which focuses on nature, and they are given a chance to experiment with the limits between reality and fantasy in the pastoral setting. Using the pastoral genre enabled Lyly to satirize the social order of his era in a manner that specifically targeted the strict customs of courtly conduct. His dramas are filled with humorous lines and plots which in some ways amuse and make one think of love as it is and how the society expects it to be.

George Peele: A combination of Tragedy and Lyricism.

Another of the important Elizabethan figures among the University Wits, George Peele, was a master of the mixture of lyricism and tragedy. *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594), *The Old Wives Tale* (1595) and *David and Bethsabe* (1599) show that he was capable of combining classic tragic elements with the Renaissance theatrical traditions. The works of Peele in English drama, and especially in the use of classical allusions and lyrical dialogue, made him distinctive among his contemporaries.

Peele frequently relies on classic mythology and historical incidents and incorporates them into the tapestry of the Elizabethan plays. *The Battle of Alcazar* is a historical tragedy that incorporates the aspects of classical Greek and Roman tragedy with the modern Elizabethan issues related to power, destiny and individual contribution to history. The depth of the presentation of history in the play and the exploration of the theme of heroism and moral struggle are indicative of the interests of Peele in connecting to the past and his desire to form a hybrid between the classical and the realities of his own era. His lyricism, especially in his manner of creating dialogue, intensifies the emotional nature of the play and the characters are able to bring out a deep sense of psychological and moral conflict. The method of tragic grandeur and poetic beauty is a technique that was used by later playwrights and which led to the evolution of the tragic form in English theatre.

Similar to Marlowe, Peele was interested in the conflict between human agency and fate of a god or history. In *David and Bethsabe*, the Old Testament tale about a King David and his affair with Bathsheba, is re-created as the tale of lust, guilt and redemption. The power and power aspect of the play is a manifestation of the Renaissance interest in the individual and their role in the making of history and the moral obligations of power. The way Peele approached these themes, coupled with the fact that he used lyrical verse, offered him a unique platform to analyze all the intricacies of human behavior and how individual choices could have more significant effects on a historic or ethical level.

Enhancing the dramatics with lyricism, which Peele did, was also instrumental in the creation of tragicomedy. His plays, which sometimes combine both the tragic and comic, reveal the possibilities of drama to find interest in the broadest spectrum of human experience. The *Old Wives Tale* by Peele is a farce, which incorporates some aspects of classical tragedy in it, making the play swing between comedy and tragedy. This mixture of tones would also come to be a characteristic of the English later drama and especially of Shakespeare who would mix the aspects of comedy and tragedy in some of his plays such as *The Winter Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Conclusions

Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly and George Peele have had a long lasting impact in the evolution of the early modern English drama. These playwrights contributed to the development of the Renaissance theatre through their original use of language, examination of numerous issues and new drama styles. Marlowe transformed the genre of tragedy through the blank verse, ambitious and overreaching heroes and the exploration of the supernatural, prefiguring the work of later English playwrights, including Shakespeare. Lyly, through his invention of euphuistic prose and idealized pastoral worlds, transformed the genre of comedy and the idealized pastoral drama, both in style and form, of subsequent playwrights. By adopting a mix of classical tragedy and lyrical poetry, Peele first introduced the phenomenon of tragicomedy and added even more emotional and intellectual depth to the Elizabethan drama. Although the playwrights themselves succeeded in their own way, the collective contribution of the three of them seems to be a joint development of the styles of drama, which transcended the limits of genres. The tragedies of Marlowe did not stand alone of the comic and pastoral experiments of Lyly and Peele; instead, they overlapped in such a manner as to enhance the English stage so that it was possible to explore human desires and moral dilemmas, as well as the societal conventions, in greater detail. The pastoralism of Lyly and the refinements of his language and the extreme psychologicalism of the tragic characters of Marlowe were the needful foil to the traditionalism of the classical allusions and the reliance on Elizabethan sensibilities introduced by Peele to both tragedy and comedy an additional complication of lyrical subtlety.

But as the present paper has demonstrated, there are still major gaps in the knowledge of the overall impact of the works of these three playwrights on the subsequent development of the English drama. Although a great deal has been done in terms of studying their respective contributions, a comparative approach to their respective styles and the subjects mattering to them may present a better insight regarding the long term contribution. Also, insufficiently explored are such research issues as the role of classical mythology in pastoral literature by Lyly, the subtleties of the collaborative authorship in the works by Marlowe and Peele, and more detailed examination of the role of gender and sexuality in the works.

In conclusion, the writings of Marlowe, Lyly, and Peele went beyond their era and made way to the prosperity of the English theatre. Not only did their innovations transform dramatic scene of the renaissance but they also formed the base of what is known as the modern stage. Their impact lives on today as we are reminded of the timelessness of the English drama of the early modern era to deal with all human issues and do so with a multifaceted complexity and emotional nuance.

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