

Example of reviews

movie review

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Oedipus the King

Oedipus The King tells the story of Oedipus, a young king who comes to wrestle with his past and his destiny, involving the inadvertent and unknowing murder of his father, and the marrying of his own mother. When searching for the murderer of the former king Laius, he finds out that he had, in fact, killed the man in a brawl some time ago, and taken his wife and kingdom as reward for another journey. He settles into life with Jocasta and the kingdom of Thebes, not knowing what he had truly done. Eventually, he learns that Laius was his father, making Laius' wife (now his own) his mother.

Oedipus the King features characters that are undone by their tragic flaws. Oedipus' tragic flaw is the blindness he demonstrates towards the nature of his reality and the relationship with his mother. He is shown to be a benevolent king toward his people, making his eventual downfall all the more tragic - “ I would be blind to misery not to pity my people kneeling at my feet” (Sophocles, line 14). Upon learning the truth, he symbolically stabs his own eyes out with the pins of the dead Jocasta's dress. This is evidence of Oedipus' ultimate understanding and comprehension of the situation, and

also his rejection of it. He laments having seen this truth, as it is a terrible one that has led to the death of his parents by his own hand, and as such he does not want to see it anymore. He removes his own ability to see as punishment for the sight he has experienced.

Everyman

Everyman is normally considered one of the best morality plays, a fine example of this particular genre of medieval drama. In this unattributed work, the eponymous Everyman, is sent to God by Death to answer for the materialism and shallowness of himself and the human race. Everyman, wishing to bargain for more time in order to make proper account for his life, consults with the various people/forces that are important to him to find companions on his journey. On its surface, the play is a standard morality play that emphasizes the importance of being a good person, loving God and eschewing material wants - however, its treatment of Death and the afterlife also says important things about the finite nature of life, and the crucial nature of individuality, something I think is very important.

As Everyman starts to learn the true way of life, and the values that he needs to place on Good Deeds and other virtues, he learns an interesting secret about Death, one which we are privy to near the beginning; Death has a great deal of power over the material world, is not able to influence God's choice over whether or not dead men go to heaven. God, in his rules and laws for living, presents the choice to beat Death by at least being allowed into heaven, something that permits him to escape Death's final choices. By the end of the play, Everyman has chosen God, and is informed by an Angel that he will live with them and be saved: " Thy reckoning is crystal-clear.

Now shalt thou into the heavenly sphere, unto the which all ye shall come that liveth well before the day of doom" (p. 31). This demonstrates for the audience the way to truly beat Death: live for God, follow His word, and focus one's life on Good Deeds (for they are the only thing they can take with you).

Uncle Vanya/Vanya on 42nd Street

Louis Malle's 1994 semi-documentary *Vanya on 42nd Street* is an innovative and interesting interpretation of the classic Anton Chekov play *Uncle Vanya*, rewritten by acclaimed playwright David Mamet and performed by a distinguished cast of New York actors in street clothes. The film is really fascinating to me; the plot blends seamlessly between documentary and the performance of the play itself. I was greatly affected by how quiet the movie is in general; the director has little to no music in the film, and not even the stage - he just films the performance of the play as actors in a location, keeping everything bare except for the performance. The film attempts to update this old play for a modern audience, and tries to find new ways to apply the traditional and universal themes of the work in the 20th century, including the usefulness of art, the constant family conflict that every generation can relate to, and more.

Because of the adaptation of the material, I was able to relate to the problems that these old Russian characters had; the cast, including Wallace Shawn and Julianne Moore, are able to give intense performances keep the audience invested in the anxieties of Vanya, Astrov, and the other characters of the play. By keeping the stage extremely bare, Malle seems to just infuse these real people with this theatrical dialogue, making it far more realistic. The result is an interesting and ambitious way to film a play; Malle shows us

that less is more when it comes to capturing the feel of American theater in motion pictures.