

# **The Relationship Between Medieval and Renaissance Drama**

The term 'Middle Ages' or 'Medieval period' refers to the century which witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire and the ascension of the Christian church into power. This period was later replaced by the Renaissance period and has been described as a period of rebirth where ancient techniques were revived and new ones developed leading to more success in the art industry. Artists were inspired by the recovery of Greco-Roman heritage from the East and the importation of Byzantine examples to the West. This essay discusses the relationship between Medieval drama and Renaissance drama.

One relationship between Renaissance drama and Medieval drama is in their convention. From the classical Greek drama to the Renaissance, the story of the drama is "one of rebellion and reaction, with new forms challenging the old, and the old forms in turn providing the basis for the new" (Styan xi). It is through conventions that one allows one event to be translated in terms of another and one specific period of time to be contained in a shorter one" (Berker. 5), the establishment of new forms of drama during the Renaissance period does not eradicate the idea of convention in dramatic practice. What happened is that new conceptions of dramatic reality gave rise to new theatre conventions. This evolution of new conventions demonstrates

the fact that “drama is not a commodity, but an activity that needs to be in ceaseless contact with the realities of the world and inner necessities of our lives” (Hamilton.10).

The chorus that chanted and danced in the Orchestra during the Medieval period was equally a common feature of the Renaissance theatre. Although the theories of the number of the chorus conflicted the chorus that appeared in the Renaissance drama, yet, they played the fundamental roles of helping to establish the social as well as the ethical framework of the Renaissance drama. They also served as an ideal audience, always reacting to the actions of characters as the playwright would hope the audience might. Conventionally, music and dance were integral part of the drama. The Greek associated particular kind of music or dance to particular emotion or idea.

Another relationship is in the reserve of religion by the actors. The Medieval drama was furnished by great traditions of the Dionysian and Phallic songs. The product of both the Medieval and the Renaissance period was fashioned for the propagation of their different religions. Thus, the religious rituals of the church during the Medieval period had dramatic elements that advanced the rebirth of drama during the Renaissance period. Such elements include: the symbolic events during Good Friday, the garb of the priest, the church space and the celebration of the mass. In fact, the Christian church in the Renaissance sieved from Medieval drama the elements which they

considered good to their religion. For instance, there is extension of musical passages called tropes and were added to the celebration of mass. The Quem Quaritis trope found its way into the introduction to the Easter mass.

### **Works Cited**

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