

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

Drama is a work of art which delineates human life and activity through the presentation of actions by means of dialogue between groups of character. Aristotle defines drama as a story acted out by people on stage before an audience. Though a literary work, drama is only designed to be performed or acted on a stage. That is why it is referred to as the playwright's art. Drama encompasses all written plays irrespective of form or genre. There are so many events that occurred in dramatical periods that developed drama. Periods like the medieval and renaissance period.

### *Medieval Drama*

Medieval drama arose from the ashes of roman drama. The fifth century witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire and the ascension of the Christian church in power. The Christian church abolished drama and categorized actors with prostitutes, thieves and other undesirable elements. Since, there was no record of playwriting from the death of Seneca in the beginning of the Middle Ages; the only people that kept theater alive during this period were the minstrels i.e. traveling musicians, mimes and jugglers. At the last stage of roman drama before it evolved to medieval drama there was that element of infamy that entered it which was strongly opposed by the church. That was why critics saw it as a degenerate theater, its disappearance during the barbaric invasions of the sixth century was the immediate aftermath of that degeneration.

The origin of medieval drama is therefore traceable to the medieval church drama sermon and mass which had some dramatic characteristics. The idea to indulge in mimesis has received rights from the religious tropes, to give rise to the new form of drama prevalent during the medieval era. The religious rituals of the church had dramatic elements like the Good Friday and the celebration of the mass that advanced the rebirth of drama. By the ninth century extended musical passages called tropes were added to the celebration of mass. The *Quem Quaeritis*, a latin name for "whom do you seek" was later added into the introduction to the Easter Sunday mass. This trope became a tiny play and its period of change was fostered by Ethelwood the bishop of Winchester, England who wrote stage directions for this tiny play. With the introduction of *Quem Quaeritis* trope the essential element of impersonation, a necessary element for drama appeared in medieval drama. Medieval drama grew with addition of many scenes to the church's services, Sometimes, it became necessary for the church to look for setting.

The church's façade became converted as setting. It was when this facade could not contain the teeming masses that medieval drama was forced to leave the church. When the trope became independent on the masses they became established as secular entertainment through organizations like the Mystery Cycles. Two popular dramas that sprang up during this period were the Mystery Play and the Miracle Play. The Mystery Plays dramatized biblical events while the Miracle Plays dramatized the life of saints, the morality plays were also introduced to teach moral lessons through allegorical characters. Therefore, the audience that came to watch medieval drama at its beginning could not get any message that was not religious. This is because medieval drama had one focus "the sermonizing focus". The stage contraptions of the medieval drama seemed wholly geared towards the peculiarities of certain church celebration.

The religious drama eventually declined as a result of numerous church factors. The church eventually withdrew its support from them because they felt it weakened the church, in 1548 religious drama was outlawed in Paris. Protestants regarded them as a tool for the propagation of catholic doctrine, as a result Queen Elizabeth I banned it in England. Despite all this, the medieval drama did not die completely but its secular qualities overshadowed its religious qualities which paved way for the development of the renaissance drama.

### ***Renaissance Drama***

The term renaissance is used to describe a period of great intellectual and artistic achievements. Renaissance is a French word for "Rebirth" therefore, renaissance period means the period of cultural rebirth. During the 16th century, we see a re-birth and growth in every area of the arts. As theorist evolved a set of guidelines for playwrights to follow, artists and architects design new theatres from seating arrangements to scene design to the mechanics of scene shifting. Women performed onstage for the entire period. As a result, the practice of allowing women to perform spread throughout Europe. The Renaissance began in the 1300s and co-existed with the Middle Ages/Medieval Thinking. The Renaissance did not dominate until the 16th century. A number of things brought about the Renaissance:

1. The decline in feudalism,
2. The increased growth of cities,
3. increased power of princes/rulers,
4. The lessening influence of the church over learning and life,
5. The invention of the movable type printing press.

As the Renaissance began, there were 3 forms of drama: Tragedy, Comedy, and Pastoral. The Renaissance began after the plague in the 14th and 15th centuries and was fueled by soldiers returning from the Crusades. There was renewed interest in ancient Greek and Roman art. Artwork was no longer just depictions of holy topics. There was new interest in science, the environment and philosophy. The following helped in the development of renaissance drama.

The Printing Press “Grand Invention”: Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1445. This invention changed the lives of people in Europe and all over the world. Prior to its invention, books were made by hand. Words were copied and illustrations were all drawn on parchment paper and animal skins that were dried and scraped until they were smooth. This made books very expensive. The printing press could produce books very quickly with little effort. Books were therefore much less expensive and many more people could afford them. With the knowledge imparted in the books, many more people were empowered and as a result many changes began to occur.

Architecture: In the middle ages, churches were no longer shaped like crosses. They used the circle to represent the perfection of God. Symmetry became important. In homes, some of the features of the period were courtyards, columns as support structures and domed roofs (a very difficult architectural task).

Painting: Renaissance painters used more realistic depictions than artists in the Middle Ages. The human figure was drawn as realistically as possible, often with backgrounds of nature. There was less emphasis on religious art. Gone were the pictures that had people arranged freely and in came symmetrical groupings. Science helped artists understand the concept of perspective, where objects that were drawn smaller actually looked as if they were farther away. Use of light

made figures look real. Famous artists of the time include these men: Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo.

Music: Science also played a part in the creation of music. Musicians learned how the pitch changes by lengthening or shortening the size of the string on stringed instruments. Once again, symmetry became a part of the music they created. Musicians studied the Greek drama and tried to create music that would go with the words of their stories. This was the beginning of opera, where music and theater are combined.

Renaissance literature started with a renewed interest in the classical Greek and Roman learning. The invention of the printing press and the weakening of the Catholic Church's influence on the daily lives of the people, among other things, enabled Renaissance writers to express their beliefs in new ways. There was an explosion of writing, some of which is deemed the greatest of all time, by these authors and more: Martin Luther's, John Calvin, Nicolaus Copernicus, St. Ignatius Loyola, Leonardo da Vinci's, Niccolo Machiavelli and William Shakespeare.