

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

Medieval drama started in dark ages and into the high middle ages, medieval drama preceded by Greek and Roman drama and followed by Elizabethan drama. Medieval drama arose from the ashes of Roman drama the beginning of medieval drama is therefore traceable to the medieval church sermon and mass which had some dramatic characteristic the human impulse to indulge in mimesis which received impetus from the religious tropes, gave birth to the new form of drama prevalent during the medieval era.

Renaissance is used to describe a period of great intellectual and artistic achievements. Renaissance is a French word which means “rebirth”. The renaissance period therefore, means the period of cultural rebirth. It was a period that marked the rediscovery of past heritage, an age which epitomized in the rediscovery of Greek and roman civilization.

Medieval drama continued to grow with the addition of many scenes to church services. Sometimes, it became necessary for the medieval church to look for what might be regarded as setting. The church façade became converted as setting. It was when the façade proved unable to contain the teeming masses that came to watch these plays that medieval drama was forced to leave the church and seek existence outside.

Renaissance age is marked with a number of inventions of printing, the establishment of universities and the fall of Constantinople which caused scholars of classical literature to spread all over Europe. The invention of the printing press made it possible for classical literature to be printed and taken to Western Europe.

Medieval drama brought out three types of plays: mystery, miracle and morality, all three flourished in different areas of Britain and Europe and yet each had a short life. In England for example the plays were either changed or banned as Protestantism came into power. Mystery plays: were based on scenes and stories from the bible and were often performed together in a series called a cycle, the word mystery also means religious truth and also from French mystere meaning secret. There are four intact cycles that remain from the era: Wakefield, York, Chester and N-town. The Wakefield cycle was the most comedia and irreverent of the four, often mentioning contemporary events. Chester was the most faithful to the religious nature of the original stories. In the N-town cycle, N stands for the Latin word "Nomen" which means name. Themes of mystery plays includes: story examples of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, the last supper, the resurrection miracle plays were some of the earliest in the era, developing during the 12th century. In some areas the terms miracle and mystery are interchangeable when describing medieval drama. But miracle plays focus on bible stories; they dramatized the lives, the legends and miracles of Roman Catholic saints. Miracle

plays were eventually banned in England because of their Roman Catholic leanings. Morality plays emerged during the 15th century. Morality plays differ from mystery and miracle in that they focused neither on the bible nor the saints but on the common man. Morality play represents all humanity. The theme of every morality play dealt with the struggle for salvation. Everyman, which is an example of typical morality plays, in everyman, the dramatic personae include such abstractions and generic representations as everyman, death, God, strength and five wits.

In conclusion medieval plays could not have been the motley audience found in Elizabethan theatre, those who came to watch medieval drama at its beginning did not get any message that was not religious, and this is because medieval drama had one major focus the sermonizing focus. Finally it is important to note that medieval drama did not die completely, the truth is that the secular qualities of medieval drama overthrew its religious qualities, and they paved the way to the development of renaissance drama.

In renaissance drama the word neoclassical was used to depict the renaissance age especially in France. The renaissance period was a period of the re-examination of life; it was this state of affairs that gave rise to the spirit of humanism which is usually associated with the renaissance age.