

## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

Medieval drama also known as the middle age drama, arose from the ashes of Roman drama while the Renaissance drama is a period of cultural rebirth.

These periods of drama share a diverse relationship. The former centres around religion and Christianity and the latter centres on secularism, humanism, less focus on religion, more materialistic things like art and ordinary human beings.

The Medieval drama, witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire and the eventual ascension of the Christian church into power. Due to this, drama was seized for a long time and actors were categorized prostitutes, thieves and other undesirable elements in the society. At the last stage of Roman drama, just before it evolved into the medieval drama, there was that element of infancy which entered it and which was vehemently opposed by the church. That was why some critics described it as degenerate theatre and its disappearance during the barbaric invasions of the 6<sup>th</sup> century was the immediate aftermath of that degeneration. The drama that emerged after this degeneration was the product of the church, born out of the desire to suppress certain infamous elements of past dramatic traditions, and out of the desire to fashion drama, dramaturgy and service along ecclesiastical lines for the propagation of the Christian faith.

Religious rituals such as Good Friday, the garb of the priest, the church space and celebration of mass advanced the rebirth of Medieval drama. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century extended musical passages called tropes, were added to the celebration of the mass. One of such tropes is the "Queen quaeritis" meaning "whom do you seek" a question asked by an angel to the three Marys when they visited the tomb of Christ.

By 975AD, the trope became a tiny play fostered by the Ethelwood, the Bishop of Winchester England with the introduction of the "Queen Quaeritis" trope, the essential element of impersonation, a necessity for drama appeared in medieval drama. The tropes became independent of the mass and established a secular entertainment through organized groups called Mystery Cycles. The two most popular vernacular drama that sprang up during this period were Mystery Plays which dramatized biblical events, and the Miracle Plays which were based on the lives of saints.

The term Renaissance is used to describe a period of great intellectual and artistic achievements. Renaissance is a French word which means "rebirth" and is the name which has been given to the period of European history which followed the Middle Ages or the Medieval period. This age is marked with a number of inventions, the invention of printing, the establishment of universities and the fall of Constantinople which caused scholars of classical literature to spread all over Europe. The production of *Philologia* by Petrarch indicates the beginning of the

Renaissance age. The Renaissance age was explosive, diverse, created a host of outrageously different individuals each straining for effect.

It had its beginnings in Italy in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and spread through western Europe, reaching England in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Its development has been attributed to a growth in confidence in the potential of men. Leon Battista Alberti, a 15<sup>th</sup> century Florentine architect, said of mankind.

To you is given a body more graceful than other animals,

to you power of apt