

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PERIOD IN DRAMA

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REG NO. 2016/233027

EDUCATION ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

RENAISSANCE DRAMA

The Renaissance theatre was composed of professional actors, among who were those who specialized in tragic roles and others in comic roles. These actors were not members of guild, a requirement for workers, so they placed themselves under the patronage of royalty; in this way, they would then be considered servants and therefore, be allowed to perform. Renaissance theatre encompasses the period between 1562 (performance at the Inner Temple during the Christmas season of 1561 of Gorboduc, the first English play using blank verse) and 1642 (ban on theatrical plays enacted by the English Parliament).

It was a “professional” theatre; that is, no attempt was made to convince the audience that they were not present in a theatre. It was a unified theatre, allowing all social classes to attend. It was an intimate theatre as actor was no more than forty feet from his audience.

MEDIEVAL DRAMA

Medieval dramas were essentially amateurish endeavors in which clergy or various trade guilds participated. Medieval drama is one which thrived in the Middle Ages from the 5th century to 15th century and paved way from the great Elizabethan theatre and was developed out of liturgical Ceremonies. It is in the church in fact, and in its rituals that the origin of medieval plays is found. Medieval theatre refers to theatrical performance in the period between the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D. and the beginning of the Renaissance in approximately the 15th century A.D. Medieval Theatre covers all drama produced in Europe over that thousand-year period and refers to a variety of genres, including liturgical drama, mystery plays, morality plays, farces and masques. The most famous examples of medieval plays are the English cycle dramas, the York Mystery Plays, the Chester Mystery Plays, the Wakefield Mystery Plays and the N-Town Plays, as well as the morality play, Everyman. One of the earliest surviving secular plays in English is The Interlude of the Student and the Girl (c. 1300).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

The major relationship between medieval drama and renaissance drama is, medieval drama paved way to renaissance drama. Medieval drama

gave birth to renaissance drama. Medieval theatre refers to theatrical performance in the period between the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D. and the beginning of the Renaissance in approximately the 15th century A.D. Medieval Theatre covers all drama produced in Europe over that thousand-year period and refers to a variety of genres, including liturgical drama, mystery plays, morality plays, farces and masques. The most famous examples of medieval plays are the English cycle dramas, the York Mystery Plays, the Chester Mystery Plays, the Wakefield Mystery Plays and the N-Town Plays, as well as the morality play, *Everyman*. One of the earliest surviving secular plays in English is *The Interlude of the Student and the Girl* (c. 1300). The most famous examples of medieval plays are the English cycle dramas, the York Mystery Plays, the Chester Mystery Plays, the Wakefield Mystery Plays and the N-Town Plays, as well as the morality play, *Everyman*. Medieval drama covers variety of genres including liturgical drama, mystery plays, morality plays, farces and masques. It was very religious and moral in its themes, staging and traditions. It is known for its highly stylized character and action, its verse and religious themes and as the time progressed, it introduced the use of music, chants and other effects. All this give life to the gradual evolution from liturgical drama to miracle and morality plays. Miracle plays were some of the earliest in this era, during the 12th century and could also be called mystery plays. They background image dramatized the life, legends and miracles of Roman Catholic saints. It was characterized by realism, simplicity of diction, absence of metaphors and sentimentalism. Morality plays on the other hand emerged during the

15th century; it is different from Mystery play in that they are neither focused on the Bible nor the saints but on the common man. The main character in a Morality play represents all humanity, example is seen in Everyman. The theme of this play dealt with the struggle for salvation. Allegory is often seen in medieval drama, where a message or meaning is expressed through symbolic representation; ideas and values, vices and virtues become personified. In Everyman, there is use of abstract qualities like Beauty, Knowledge to address the themes of that age. Renaissance drama, which lasted from approximately 1500-1700, was the rebirth of interest in theatre across Europe. In fact, the Renaissance drama introduced many of the elements that were not available in the Middle Ages: indoor theatres, an arched stage, a curtain dropped between scenes, more elaborate set design. All of these changes were implemented during the Renaissance. More importantly, the purpose of drama transitioned from stories told by the Church to stories made primarily for entertainment for both royalty and commoners. Whereas medieval dramas were essentially amateurish endeavors in which clergy or various trade guilds participated, the Renaissance Theatre was composed of professional actors, among who were those who specialized in tragic roles and others in comic roles. These actors were not members of a guild, a requirement for workers, so they placed themselves under the patronage of royalty; in this way, they would then be considered servants and, therefore, be allowed to perform. Background image Medieval mystery plays, for example, dramatized Biblical events, while morality plays allegorized the human struggle to choose between vice and virtue.

Drama could be associated with Christian feast days, and was not performed in permanent theatres, but in public or private buildings, in open spaces like churchyards, on temporary structures like 'scaffolds' and pageant wagons, or in the street. Plays were often of composite or anonymous authorship, and some plays, like the mystery plays were performed not by professional actors but by ordinary townsfolk. During and after the Reformation, the drama began to change. Genres like tragedy, comedy and satire replaced the mystery and morality plays of the middle ages. The human impulse to indulge in mimesis which receives impetus from the religious troupe gave birth to a new form of drama prevalent during the medieval era. The transition from the medieval drama to Renaissance drama paved a way for the development of drama and exploration of all the possibilities that can be achieved as related to life and its transfer to other genres of literature. As the plays moved away from the church they took on more and more the attitude of the common people. Humor found its way into the story telling. Contemporary language and references were liberally mixed into ancient events. "The ancient Jews and Romans who figure in the stories become contemporary Englishmen, the soldiers Medieval knights, Noah's wife are cognizably English shrew whose good gossips or friends celebrate in song the virtues of apostle of Malmsey, a favourite English beverage." Alardyce Nicol, British Drama Renaissance drama is the re-birth of drama. Anything that undergoes rebirth could be seen as something that has been dead before or that died. Whereas Medieval dramas were essentially amateurish endeavors in which clergy or various trade guilds participated, actors were

always men in England, women would occasionally be allowed on the stage in Europe. The Renaissance Theater was composed of professional actors, among whom were those who specialized in tragic roles and others in comic roles. These actors were not members of a guild, a requirement for workers, so they placed themselves under the patronage of royalty; in this way, they would then be considered servants and, therefore, be allowed to perform. Theaters became established and profitable (admission was charged). At first theaters were performed in inns with tables put together as the stage. People could stand on the balconies of their rooms and watch. Later on, they were constructed to three stories high and built around an open space at the center.