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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE

DRAMA

Medieval drama arose from the ashes of Roman drama. At the last stage of Roman drama, just before it evolved into medieval drama, there was that element of infamy which entered it and which was vehemently opposed by the church. The beginning of medieval drama is, traceable to the medieval church sermon and mass which had some dramatic characteristics.

Morality plays were also introduced to teach important moral lessons through allegorical characters during the medieval era.

The medieval stage at the time when drama was with the church was by no means crude, but it was a stage that was wholly devoted to expounding religious philosophy and nothing else.

Medieval authors were unfamiliar with either classical tragedies nor the dramatic theories of Aristotle and Plato. Hence it was devoted to adumbrating themes from the Bible as well as Christian orthodoxy.

On the idea of stage resourcefulness and richness, the medieval stage and drama could neither be compared with the Greco-Roman tradition, nor could it be compared with what followed it, from the Elizabethans to the modern.

background image

Medieval drama specifically rose out of the desire to propagate faith through drama, and so many things, including theatricality and thought, were subsumed under it.

Medieval drama had one major focus – the sermonizing focus. Dialogue, for example, had nothing of the liveliness and richness of Elizabethan drama; neither does it achieve the grandeur of classical drama. The stage contraptions of medieval drama seemed wholly geared towards the peculiarities of certain church celebrations. Obviously, with the drama leaving the church, the curve towards the renaissance started. Finally, it is important to note that medieval drama did not die completely. The taught is that the secular qualities of medieval drama over threw its religious qualities and thus paved the way to the development of Renaissance drama. E.g. Of a medieval work *Every Man*

THE RENAISSANCE PERIOD

The term 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 civilizations. The renaissance 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 invention of the printing press made it possible for classical literature to be printed and taken to Western Europe.

The Renaissance age was explosive, diverse, created a host of out ravenously different individuals each straining for effect. The word neoclassical was also used to depict the Renaissance age. The neoclassical age went back to the ancients, particularly Greece and Rome, to review or adapt their practices. There was the rise of perspective secretary, the introduction of the neoclassical ideal, and the birth of the comic form, commedia cellaret.

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. Example of a renaissance work. “Richard III by Williams Shakespeare.

Although medieval and renaissance were different periods in drama. They had a relationship Medieval drama gave birth to renaissance drama borrowed some traditions from medieval drama. Medieval drama was religious in nature.

Medieval mystery plays dramatize Biblical events, while morality allegorized the human struggle to choose between vices. The plays were not performed in permanent theatres but in open spaces like churchyards. Plays were often of composite or anonymous authorship and some plays like the mystery plays were not performed by professional actors but by ordinary townsfolk. Renaissance drama borrowed from these traditions and transformed them. The playwright borrowed from classical authors of genres like tragedy, comedy and satire and replaces the mystery and morality plays of the medieval period. While plays were anonymous in medieval drama, the identity of the individual playwright became known in Renaissance drama.

In medieval drama, the themes were religious. While themes renaissance drama was secular theatre in medieval drama were open spaces but in renaissance drama permanent theatre were built. Plays in medieval drama were acted by ordinary folk, in renaissance drama there was professional acting companies.

Medieval and Renaissance drama made use of theme, plot, actors, playwright and theatres.