

Drama

The Medieval Theatre

In the late Roman Empire

there are no great dramatists

plays written were closet dramas

read while actors mimed

theatre is kept alive via other entertainers

acrobats, dancers, mimics, animal trainers, wrestlers, ballad-singers, storytellers

Christians are forbidden to attend or act in theatrical performances

Medieval theatre

develops from the liturgy

begins in the church building with the *Quem Quaeritis?* drama

expands to Easter and Christmas dramas

develops further to a pageant on the life of Christ

still in Latin

with scenes throughout the church building

moves to the vernacular

leaves the church building

Quem Quaeritis?

Parallels with the expansion of the dithyramb

Expands to earlier and later Bible scenes

Expands to the full Bible

Expands to saints and martyrs

Expands to Morality play

Church

altar with Crucifix is center

SR is Heaven

SL is Hell

prophets speak lines from pulpit

on each side of the central nave are places for scenes (called mansions, houses, or booths)

central *platea* is playing-place, like the *skene* in Greek theatre

Outside the church building (England 12th c., Spain 15th c.)

overcrowding

bawdiness

Static performances

stages in line or semi-circle, and audience moves

Perambulating performances

audience stays in place

scenes performed on carts which move about the town

guilds perform scenes related to jobs

Comic scenes

medieval play is tragedy with happy ending

first comic characters

go back to the *Quem Quaeritis?* plays

merchants selling spices

figure in Nativity pageant

Mak the Sheepstealer

other biblical characters

Satan

putting lost souls in the Hell-Mouth

Staging

cranes

mechanism of the Hell-Mouth

trapdoors

Costumes as elaborate

hats

jewelry

fabrics

Depiction of violence

realistic

Livestock

Emotional content

juxtaposition of disparate and rapidly cycling emotions

Secular drama

Mayday games

Mumming