

DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA IN ENGLAND

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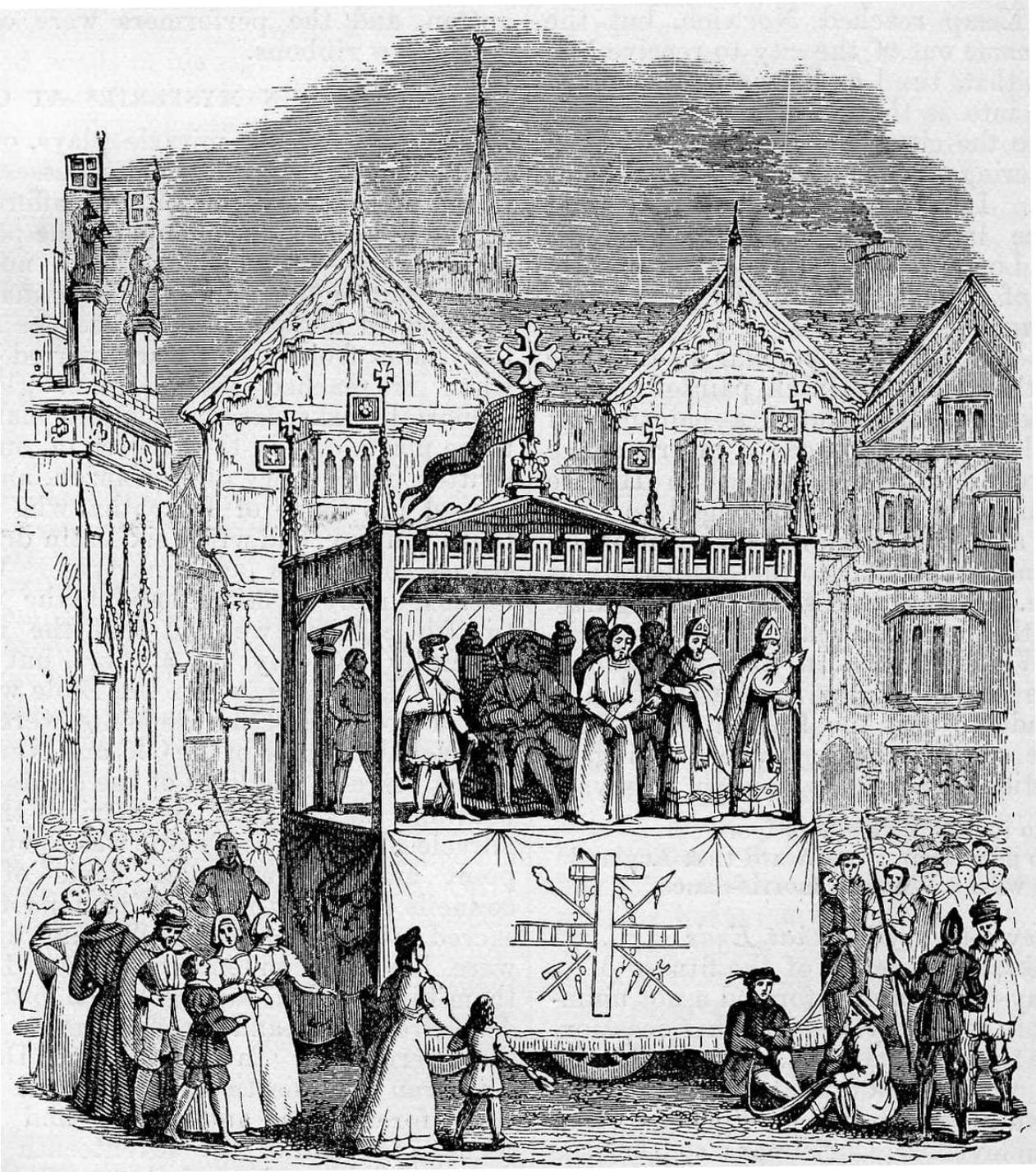
- Dramatic representations were a part of the liturgy.
- The Church had Drama under their control.
- Rapid additions were made in successive years.
- By 14th century, they had evolution of complete cycles of plays, covering the history of the world from Creation to the Day of Judgement

- **Mystery Plays** – Plays with Biblical stories.
- **Miracle Plays** – Plays dealing with saints' lives.
- This distinction was common in Europe, but not in England, where all plays were known as Miracle plays.
- Plays were performed inside sacred buildings
- Priests were actors
- Latin was the language used

- Due to its increasing popularity stages were moved from choir to the nave of the Church
- Then, from interior of the Church to the porch
- Then from porch to the Church yard
- Finally to Village green or to City streets
- Laymen superseded the clerical actors
- Vernacular tongue substituted Latin

- Religious drama in England reached its height during Corpus Christi festival, when miracle plays were staged at all major towns.
- Trading guilds became responsible for the production
- Each guild took on an episode from a cycle
- Chester cycle – 25 plays
- Wakefield – 31 plays
- York – 48 plays
- Coventry – only 2 surviving

- Plays were performed on a two decked cart or pageant





Morality Plays:

- Didactic stories
- Virtues and Vices were presented as allegorical creations
- Abstract qualities appeared as characters.
- Vice – direct forerunner of clown of Elizabethan stage

Interludes:

- Short, satiric dramatic pieces
- Introduced Real characters, of humble rank

REGULAR COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

- Writers started reading classics for inspiration.
- Comedies of Plautus and Terence, and Tragedies of Seneca were studied at Universities.
- Writers learnt about dramatic form, structure, technique from classics.
- First Comedy – “Ralph Roister Doister” (1551) by Nicholas Udall
- First Tragedy – “Gorboduc” or “Ferrex and Porrex” (1562) by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton

TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA TILL 1566

First recorded dramatic performance in England, “Ludus de S. Katherina” - 1110

Institution of the festival of Corpus Christi – 1264

York Cycle – About 1340

Chester Cycle – mid 14th century

Wakefield Cycle – middle of 15th century

Coventry Cycle – 15th century

Earliest extant Morality play, “The Castell of Perseverance” – Middle of 15th c.

Interludes – Early 16th century

“Ralph Roister Doister” – 1550

Many translations of Seneca’s Tragedies – Second half of 16th century

“Gorboduc” – 1561

“Gammer Gurton’s Needle” (by John Still, Second English Comedy) - 1566