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**(INTRODUCTION TO
DRAMA)**

TOPIC:

**DISCUSS THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND
RENAISSANCE DRAMA**

BY

IBEKWE, CHIDINMA GIFT

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**LECTURER: MR. ODOH
ONYEKA**

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Medieval drama was preceded by Greek and Roman drama, and it followed by Elizabethan drama. Greek drama in line with its being the fountain head of modern drama was brought buoyant, full of ideas and was essentially theatrical. It was furnished by the great traditions of the Dionysian and the phallic songs.

Medieval drama arose from the ashes of the Roman drama. The fifth century witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire and the eventual ascension of the Christian church into power. The Christian church abolished drama and categorized actors with prostitutes, thieves and other undesirable elements in the society. Hence, there was no record of playwriting from the death of Seneca to the beginning of the medieval or middle age.

Medieval drama is all about religion and Christianity. After the church abolished drama, the

only people that kept theatre alive during this period were wandering minstrels, mimes and jugglers.

The beginning of medieval drama is therefore traceable to the medieval church sermon and mass which had some dramatic characteristics. The human impulse to indulge in mimesis, which received impetus from the religious tropes, gave birth to the new form of drama prevalent during the medieval era (which is called the Quem Quaeritis). With the introduction of quem quaeritis trope, the essential element of impersonation, a necessity for drama, appeared in medieval drama. Medieval drama continued to grow with the addition of many scenes to church services. Sometimes it became necessary for the medieval church to look for what might be regarded as setting. It was when the façade proved unable to contain the terming masses that came to watch these plays that medieval drama was forced to leave the church and seek existence outside it.

In the medieval drama, the morality plays were also introduced to teach important moral lessons through allegorical characters , as exemplified in the play 'everyman' which is an example of a typical morality play and also it is under medieval

drama. In the morality play, medieval drama nearly spurned its biblical and theological frame clothes, but this was not achieved because principles explored in these plays can be heard in any Sunday sermon. Medieval has one major focus, which is sermonizing.

Finally, it is important to note that medieval drama did not die completely; the truth is that the secular qualities of medieval drama overthrew its religious qualities and thus paved the way to the development of renaissance drama.

Renaissance drama: The term 'renaissance' is used to describe a period of great intellectual and artistic achievements.

Renaissance is a French word which mean "rebirth", so for rebirth to take place, it shows that something was once dead.

The renaissance drama therefore is the drama that has to do with cultural rebirth. When people refer to renaissance drama, they most likely mean the early modern stage performances and playwriting of Elizabethan DRAMA.

However, after the great rediscovery of the classical civilizations during A.D 1500-1660, men began creating what is now looked upon as renaissance drama. Though they are both forms of writing, their history as a part of society greatly differed from contrasting philosophies of life, leading to two different personalities.

In contrast to the religion-driven aspects of drama found during medieval times, Renaissance thinkers reverted back to the idealism of classical civilizations during A.D 1500-1600. Instead of focusing on the dreams of the future, renaissance men and women were concerned with the "here and now".

In renaissance drama, feelings and emotions were the key to illustrating humanism, with the story more oriented on the characters rather than the adventure. Renaissance drama revolved more around having a real humanistic protagonist with a story to tell. For example, John Milton (A.D 1608-1674), in his notorious epic poem "Paradise Lost"

illustrated a more humanistic and prideful Lucifer who craves power in Heaven. This represents the change in ideas from the religious medieval drama into the secular themes of Renaissance drama. Plays under Renaissance drama include Macbeth, Doctor Faustus etc.

The relationship between the two dramas is that Renaissance drama grew out of the established medieval tradition of the mystery and morality plays. Medieval and Renaissance drama were influenced by two completely different eras in human history. During the middle ages, (A.D1066-1500) the toils of daily life affected the mindset of those at this time, as a result, these ideas found its way into the making of medieval drama.

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