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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

Medieval drama was preceded by Greek and Roman drama. After the fall of the Roman Empire, and the ascension of the Christian church in the fifth century, drama went extinct because the Christian condemned drama. They considered such activities as pagan practices. The only people that kept drama alive were wandering minstrels (medieval travelling entertainers) and they were constantly attacked by the church. There was no record of playwriting until the middle ages. The medieval drama evolved from roman drama but was redefined by the church. The medieval drama was mostly religious. This was because the roman drama had some elements that were unacceptable to the church so medieval drama was born out of their desire to suppress some of these infamous elements. Also because the religious rituals of the church had dramatic elements that brought about the rebirth of drama, such elements can be seen in the mass and symbolic events during good Friday.

Medieval drama also gave birth to medieval mystery plays which dramatised biblical events and morality plays, which represented the human struggle to choose between vice and virtue. Drama in the middle ages could be associated with christian feast days and was not performed in permanent theatres but in public and private buildings, in open spaces like

church yards or in the streets. Another characteristic of this age is that the plays were often of anonymous authorship and they were not performed by professional actors but by ordinary town folks. The medieval age was devoted to expanding religious philosophy. The morality play for instance, was introduced to teach important moral lessons through allegorical characters which can be seen in the play "everyman".

By the ninth century, the Quem Quaeritis (whom do you seek?) tropes were introduced to the Easter Sunday mass. With the introduction of Quem Quaeritis trope the essential element of impersonation appeared in medieval drama. Medieval drama continued to grow and the church could no longer contain the number of people coming to watch the plays, so drama was taken outside the church. As a result of this, medieval drama took on some secular qualities and this overshadowed the religious qualities thereby paving the way for the development of renaissance drama.

Renaissance is a French word which means rebirth and it refers to the period of cultural rebirth and great intellectual and artistic achievements. The renaissance period marked the rediscovery of Greek and Roman civilization. During this period, drama began to change. Genres like tragedy, comedy and satire replaced the mystery and morality plays of the middle ages. This age saw the development of dramatist like Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and Jonson, each of them having distinctive writing styles. In this period, the identity of the individual playwright became important unlike middle ages or the medieval period where the plays were characterized by anonymous authorship. There was also a shift in focus, from the religious values of the middle ages to the humanist values and this led to the creation of the flawed hero as can be seen in plays like Othello, Hamlet, King Lear and Machiavellian villain for example Iago in Othello.

Medieval and renaissance drama, though they are distinctively different, are still connected no matter how elusive.

Renaissance drama came about due to the decline of the medieval drama, this was possible because of the independence of the Quem Quaeritis trope. The Quem Quaeritis being a religious group had to leave the church because of the inadequacy of the church setting to contain the masses. In their effort to move somewhere more accommodating, the Quem Quaeritis trope lost its religious values. They got established as secular entertainment through organised groups called mystery cycles. This brought about the mystery plays. The restructuring of Quem Quaeritis facilitated the birth of the renaissance drama.