



# **National Open University of Nigeria**

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## **ENG862 - COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN DRAMA**

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**ENG 862**

**COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN DRAMA-Three (3) Credit Units**

**INTRODUCTION**

ENG 862 is a one semester course of three credit units. It has 15 units which cover the basic styles and modalities that will enable the student carry out comparative analysis of drama from different climes and a clear understanding of how other cultures engage in

dramatizing as well as knowing their concerns, ideas and contribution to the growth and development of drama.

The course is a more advanced study of basic drama principles and modes which the student must have studied at the undergraduate level. Emphasis is on the different contexts and climes in which drama evolved and has continued to be practised through various stages and cultures. The comparative study of drama therefore is on a number of levels:

- (i) Cultural contexts
- (ii) Periods
- (iii) Contemporarity
- (iv) Conceptual
- (v) Styles

The material has been broken down into the basics that the student must have grasped during their undergraduate training. The build up to a more advanced level is taken step by step to enable the student grasp both the familiar and unfamiliar contexts, understand cultural differences in drama and performance and further help the student grasp hitherto abstract concepts through simplified explanations and follow up activities.

The course is developed in such a manner that you will refresh your memory on earlier subjects that you have experienced during your undergraduate training and material is added to the advanced training needed to build a basis for research in drama. The step by step guide to the exploration of higher concepts is done systematically to enable you

understand what these concepts are concerned with and the manner in which these concepts, styles, and presentations are different.

Through this comparative approach to drama, you will understand that drama, though a global activity is quite diverse in nature and practice yet it functions to entertain and teach fundamentally.

Drama is a part of everyday living. Drama uses conflict as a major tool for exploring human experience. It also uses everyday situations to move the play through situations, incidents and dramatic incidents all interwoven within the plot of the play. The human condition is explored in the world of drama. How these experiences are then told in stories across Africa and other continents is the focus of the study of ENG 862.

### **COURSE AIMS**

The course is developed to equip you to understand the world of drama and how it is explored in different epochs, societies and communities across the world. The basic principles on which drama operates are also clearly brought out in this course. The course will therefore help you to:

- i. Refresh your memory on basic drama principles, styles and origins.
- ii. Give you an understanding of drama in the West, East, North and South Africa.
- iii. Give you an understanding of drama in other continents: Asia, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and America.
- iv. Give you an understanding of the various epochs of theatre and drama practice
- v. Acquaint you with styles and forms of drama

- vi. Bring out clearly the similarities and differences in writings under different climes.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The course objectives refer to what studying this course will help you to do. Understanding what the objectives are will help you in studying the material in a more focused manner and help you to assess yourself and understand areas where you need to study further and improve yourself. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- i. Identify the various epochs and stages of drama and its evolution over time.
- ii. Carry out a comparison of drama in terms of style and form.
- iii. Carry out a comparison of drama in terms of dramatic writings on the African continent.
- iv. Do a comparative analysis of drama in different continents.
- v. Be able to discuss trends in contemporary drama
- vi. Be able to criticize dramatic writings based on your observation of influences from different climes.

## **WORKING THROUGH THE COURSE**

There are 41 units in this course. At the end of each unit, there is an activity assignment. You must carefully study the contexts of each unit before attempting the task or assignment. Each unit clearly states the objectives of the unit. Study these objectives and be ready with your pen and paper to think and write as you study because the material is designed to enable you be practical in your approach to your study of the

course. The course contains tutor marked assignments which you are expected to complete and submit to your tutor on time. At the end of the course, you are expected to write an examination. The time of the written examination will be communicated to you.

## **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THE COURSE**

You will understand in this course the play and the various forms, style and shape that it could assume depending on the culture, epoch and prevailing trends. You will clearly understand the components of drama, styles and forms. You will equip yourself with studying texts and understanding the trends in writings.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

- 1 Course Guide
- 2 Study Units
- 3 Textbooks
- 4 Assignment Files
- 5 Presentation Guides

## **STUDY UNITS/COURSE GUIDE**

Each study unit comprises the study material and assignment/activity and makes up a week's work which is preceded by the objectives. You are expected to study these objectives before going through the material that comprises the units. This will help you to understand better the purpose of the study and assess whether you have clearly understood the contents. Each study unit contains the reading materials and the self-assessment exercise. Other materials include the tutor-marked assignment and tutorials

which will help you achieve the objectives of the course. The units in the course are as follows:

### **Module 1: World Drama**

*Unit 1:* Drama in the Classical Era

*Unit 2:* Medieval through the Restoration Era and 18<sup>th</sup> Drama

*Unit 3:* 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Contemporary Drama

### **Module 2: Modern Drama**

*Unit 1:* Romanticism, Realism and Surrealism

*Unit 2:* Expressionism and Other Movements in the Theatre

*Unit 3:* Poor Theatre and Others

### **Module 3: Dramatic Genres**

*Unit 1:* Tragedy

*Unit 2:* Comedy

*Unit 3:* Tragicomedy and other Genres

### **Module 4: African Drama**

*Unit 1:* North African Drama

*Unit 2:* Southern African Drama

*Unit 3:* West African Drama

*Unit 4:* East African Drama

### **Module 1: Traditional versus Scripted Drama**

*Unit I:* Traditional Drama



## Unit 2: Scripted Drama

### Set/Textbooks/Reference

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Aristotle. *Poetics*. In Dukore, F. B. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. USA: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998.

Ashford, John and Carlson Marvin. *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth- Century Theatre*. (ed) London: Colin Chambers, 2002.

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Guarini, Giovanni Battista. *New International Encyclopaedia* (1st ed.). New York: Dodd Mead 1905.

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Idegu, E. "Between Theatre and Society: The question of understanding". In Egwugwu Illah (ed). *Theatre, Politics and Social Consciousness in Nigeria*. Jos: Leadership Institute, 2002.

Jerzy, Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

- Ker, David. *Literature and Society in Africa*. Abuja: Spectrum Books, 2004.
- Leslie, Richard. *Surrealism: The Dream of Revolution*. New York: Smith mark, 1997.
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- Yerima, Ahmed. *Basic Techniques in Play Writing*. Ibadan: Caltop Books Ltd, 2003.

**Assignment file**

The file contains all the assignments to be done in this course which will be graded by your tutor. The marks from each assignment will be added to the final grade that you will be awarded for the course. Additional information on the assignments will be found in the section on assignment in the course guide.

### **Presentation Schedule**

The presentation schedule has been included in your course materials. This gives you the important dates you are expected to complete and submit your Tutor-Marked Assignment and dates for attending tutorials. It is important to remember that the assignments must be submitted as when due.

### **Course Marking Scheme**

The table gives you a breakdown of the course marks:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Assignment 1-41	The three best marks of the assignment count for 30% of the course
Final exams	The final exam counts for 70% of overall marks
<b>Total</b>	100% of course marks

### **Course Overview**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of Works</b>	<b>Weeks activity</b>	<b>Assignment/end of unit</b>
	<b>Course Guide</b>	1	Assignment 1

### **Module 1**

1	Traditional Drama	2	2
2	Scripted Drama	3	3
<b>Module 2</b>			
1	Tragedy	4	3
2	Comedy	5	4
3	Tragicomedy and other Genres	6	5
<b>Module 3</b>			
1	North African Drama	7	6
2	Southern African Drama	7	7
3	West African Drama	8	8
4	East African Drama	9	9
<b>Module 4</b>			
1	Drama in the Classical Era	10	10
2	Medieval through the Restoration Era and 18 <sup>th</sup> Century	11	11
3	19 <sup>th</sup> Century and Contemporary Drama	12	12
<b>Module 5</b>			
1	Romanticism, Realism and Surrealism	13	13
2	Expressionism and Other Movements in the Theatre.	14	14
3	Poor Theatre and Others	15	15
		16	Review

**How to get the best from the work**

The purpose of writing this module in simple terms is to ensure that you can read and understand the material on your own without the physical presence of the Course Lecturer. This is why the programme is referred to as Distant Learning. In organising your course unit, it begins with an introduction, stated/expected objectives of the unit and it also deals with what you are expected to do after studying the unit. You need to be focused and consistent in doing the activity and assignment which has been carefully prepared for your understanding of the course. ENG 862 is an exciting course that demands your understanding of drama trends across the globe. If you do the activities and follow up assignments you will have a clearer understanding of drama not only as practised within your environment but across the globe.

**Tutor-Marked Assignment (TNA)**

ENG 862 is a course that deals with comparing styles, forms and structures of drama across periods, continents and within Africa. The Tutor-Marked Assignments are submitted at the end of every unit. You are expected to do all the assignments. Before you meet for tutorials you are equally expected to do all the activities listed in the unit to help you as you meet with your tutors/facilitators. Your assignments will be based on your clear understanding of the forms and styles of the dramatic genres and your ability to explain the basic drama concepts related to different forms and styles.

Your completed assignments must reach your facilitator before the stated deadline. The best three assignments that have the highest grade will be counted as 30% of your total course worth. Assignments in the units in this course are contained in the assignment file. You will need to use the information and materials contained in the text books and study units to complete your assignment. You also need the material contained in the references to broaden your knowledge of the subject.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination for ENG 862 will be for three hours and you are expected to answer four (4) questions. Three questions will carry twenty marks (20) each while only one question will carry ten (10) marks giving a total of seventy (70) marks. The tutor marked assignment carry thirty (30) marks in addition to the seventy marks for the examination making a total of hundred (100) marks (i.e.  $30 + 70 = 100$ ).

The pattern of questions in your examination will follow the same pattern as your tutor-marked assignments. It is advisable that you spend time reading the different dramatic forms, styles and comparing the trends in different parts of Africa and globally well before the date of your final examination.

### **Tutors and Facilitators**

There are ten tutorial hours for this course. The date, time, location and phone number/email addresses of the tutorial facilitator for ENG 862 and your tutorial group

will be communicated to you. Feel free to relate with your facilitator. The facilitators will mark and correct your assignments, then monitor your attendance/performances in all tutorial-marked assignments. Feel free to contact your facilitators by phone or email if you encounter any problems understanding the contents of the course material.

## **SUMMARY**

ENG 862 is specially designed to equip you with an understanding of drama on a comparative basis. This material has been arranged in a systematic manner to help you understand the basics of drama, styles and form. Various concepts and styles have been simplified to help you understand drama as practiced in different parts of the world. The course explores a range of topics from traditional versus scripted drama, scripting for different media (stage, TV, radio, film) dramatic genres, African drama (West, East, South and North), Western and Eastern Europe; Asia (India, China, Japan and American drama). The module further looks at modern drama and trends.

It is hoped that you will enjoy reading and studying the different ways drama is experienced across the globe. At the end of the course, you should be able to answer such questions as:

- i. How did Drama emerge?
- ii. What are the differences between Scripted and Unscripted Drama?
- iii. What are the differences in the conventions of writing African Drama in comparison to the rest of the globe?
- iv. What are the different forms of Drama?



## **MODULE 1: WORLD DRAMA**

### **UNIT 1: DRAMA IN THE CLASSICAL ERA**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0 - Introduction

- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
- 3.1 - Drama in Primitive Times
- 3.1.1 - Drama in Egypt
- 3.1.2 - Drama in Greece
- 3.1.3 - Drama in Rome
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to expose you to the foundation history of world drama. The classical era is the first phase of world drama and it is intended that this will give you a base in the study of drama. This is very imperative as it will equip you with the knowledge of what informed drama and theatre and how they all started. This foundation is expected to enable you build your knowledge of contemporary drama upon.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Understand what classical drama represents.
- ii. Identify the various traits that characterise drama in Egypt, Greece and Rome.
- iii. Attempt an assessment of major dramatists of the classical era vis-à-vis their works.

- iv. Evaluate the contributions of drama in the classical period.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 DRAMA IN PRIMITIVE TIMES**

Human beings living on the earth have always had some form of drama experience. This is in line with the human nature theory of Aristotle postulated in his *The Poetics*. According to Aristotle, drama is imitation of action “Since the objects of imitation are men in action and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type” (Poetics, II). The explanation of Aristotle reiterates the fact that it is the daily life that people live, which ends up as drama. Primitive man lived in caves and shared his environments with the animals and beasts of the forest. As far back as the beginning of time, man has always resorted to some form of rest, entertainment, performance, re-enactment, drama, dance, mime, pantomime, and singing, all to unwind and relax.

##### **3.1.1 DRAMA IN EGYPT**

Egyptian society was ritualistic in nature. Drama in Egypt was based on ceremonies associated with the worship of Isis and Osiris, the major gods/deities in Egypt. Annually, the people in Egypt would converge at Abydos to carry out ritual activities, chants and performances in honour of their two gods.

##### **3.1.2 DRAMA IN GREECE**

Theatre in Greece enjoyed its peak in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Hitherto was an annual celebration of life with activities carried out to honour Dionysus, the Greek god of

fertility. Thespis is renowned to have been the first actor in history when he introduced the actor to actor relationship on a stage. The annual festivals enjoyed so much patronage and attention that with time, competitions for prizes were introduced. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes and other less popular Dramatists of the period wrote plays to compete for the prizes. Popular Greek plays include Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, *Ajax*, *Elektra*, *Antigone*, etc. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, *The Frogs*, *The Wasps*, etc.

### **3.1.3 DRAMA IN ROME**

The fall of the Greek civilization led to the emergence of the Roman Empire. The Romans were a military society and their theatre too tended to be inclined towards military might and violence. The Gladiator concept thrived in the Roman times. Gladiators were used to entertain the Romans during festivals, Games and special ceremonies. Such ceremonies were usually characterized by fights and bloodshed mostly between slaves, Gladiators and wild beasts. Among Roman playwrights of the time include:

Plautus (254-184 B.C.). Some of his plays are *Amphitryon*, *The Pot of Gold*, *The Rope*, *The Captives* and *The Twin Menaechmi*.

Terence (c. 195-159 B.C.). He wrote plays in Rome which became very popular and appreciated by all and sundry. He wrote *The Eunuch*, *The Mother-in-Law*, *The Brothers*, *The Woman of Andros*, *The Self Tormentor*, and *The Phormio*.

Seneca Lucious Annaeus (4B.C.-65 AD). He was a satire expert and tragedian who wrote plays such as *Medea* and *Thyestes*. About ten plays are attributed to Seneca.

## **TOOLS/ MATERIALS**

In writing any dramatic work, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good unified plot on paper.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT 1**

What do you like most in the drama of the classical period and why?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we have discussed the roots of world drama and how drama in the classical era addressed traditional and cultural issues fundamentally and other societal issues. It is worth noting that drama at this stage set the pace for what happened in later eras of theatre history.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Drama is as old as man beginning from the primitive times before the dawn of civilization.
- ii. Classical drama and theatre kickstarted the practise of drama in the world and this trend was built upon by successive eras.
- ii. Traditional and cultural issues got maximum attention of classical drama.

- iii. Greek theatre remains one of the most exciting eras in theatre history with an amazing exuberance of participation and activities.
- iv. Roman theatre was built around a warlike culture and the gladiator concept of providing entertainment at sports, competitions and festivals, through the shedding of blood.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1. What does classical drama represent?
- 2. Discuss the events that led to emergence of Greek drama.
- 3. Highlight the contributions of the major classical dramatists and show how their works have enhanced their respective societies.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

- Bernard Dukore. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. London: University press, 1999.
- Cohen, Robert. *Theatre: Brief Edition*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) California: Mayfield publishing, 2000.
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## **UNIT 2: MEDIEVAL THROUGH THE RESTORATION ERA AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DRAMA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 - Introduction
- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
- 3.1 - Medieval Drama
  - 3.1.1 - Renaissance Drama
  - 3.1.2 - Elizabethan Drama
  - 3.1.3 - The Restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Drama
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to advance your understanding of world drama from the middle ages through the restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the Middle Ages, theatre began a new cycle of development that paralleled the emergence of the theatre from ritual activity in the early Greek period. Whereas the Greek theatre had grown out of Dionysian worship, the medieval theatre originated as an expression of the Christian religion. The two cycles would eventually merge during the Renaissance.

Between the Classical and early Renaissance periods, theatre was kept alive by the slenderest of threads—the popular entertainers who had dispersed to wander, alone or in small groups, throughout Europe. These were the mimes, acrobats, dancers, animal trainers, jugglers, wrestlers, minstrels, and storytellers who preserved vital skills that survive in the theatre today. They also brought a duality to theatre that still exists: popular theatre and the literary theatre were to grow side by side, feeding off and nourishing each other. During the late Middle Ages these popular entertainers found a more secure place at royal courts and in the households of the nobility, where they acted, sang, and played music at their masters' festivities. The written texts that they developed for performance were, especially in France, literate and often sharply satirical.

The knowledge of drama during the renaissance and Elizabethan period is not left out and this is supposed to equip you with knowledge of how drama fared during the middle ages and the eras following it.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Understand what medieval and renaissance drama represents.
- ii. Identity the various traits that characterise drama in the medieval and renaissance period.
- iii. Attempt an assessment of major dramatists of the renaissance era vis-à-vis their works.



- iv. Evaluate the contributions of drama in the medieval and renaissance period.
- v. Expatiate the traits of restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> century drama.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 MEDIEVAL DRAMA**

After the fall of the Roman Empire due to internal wrangling and squabbles, a period of literally silence existed except for a few intellectual activities. By the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Medieval activities began to intensify especially with the introduction of the Corpus Christi, a new religious festival in 1264 by order of Pope Urban IV. By the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the Corpus Christi had spread across the regions by a decree of the Papacy. The Medieval era had come to stay and in churches throughout the land, congregations engaged in dramatizing the story of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Because of excitement and income, dozens of craft guilds and professional trade groups were formed; workers involved in specific professions took turns to make drama presentations based on their trade and profession. Three major categories of plays existed classified under Mystery Plays (Skill or trade based, examples are *The Second Shepherds Play*, *The Fall of Lucifer*, *The Building of the Ark*), Miracle Plays (Allegorical issues, example is *Doctor Faustus*) and Morality Plays (Teaching of morals and examples are *Everyman*, *The Pride of Life*, *The Castle of Perseverance*).

*Everyman* as a Medieval Play is written by an anonymous author. It tells the story of a man who undertakes a journey of life until he gets to heaven and his deeds while on earth are judged by God's Angels. The play imparts a lesson of caution to mankind that people

should watch how they treat their fellow brother while on earth since the day of Judgment must surely come.

### **3.1.1 RENAISSANCE DRAMA**

Renaissance simply means “Rebirth” and between 1401-1600 B.C. the world was experiencing a new spirit of revival and rebirth not just in drama only but in every other sector. Much of what was lying in ruins due to the ravages of war was being rediscovered in this period of peace. Classical texts of the Greeks were discovered and interests in the staging of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and others heightened the search efforts, since these had become a hot cake material to the society of the time.

The works of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and other philosophers of ancient societies were now being sought after intensely as researchers were equally using them as references in the new writings of the new age. In Italy, the Commedia dell’Arte became a major force in drama to reckon with. As a comedy performed by professionals, the Commedia dell’Arte provided a new lease of life to all of society at the time, and major transformations in society were going to be experienced as a result of this new theatre. Major characters in this type of drama were types popularly known as Pantalone, Arlecchino, Harlequinn, Pulcinella, Columbina, Zanni the shrewd and shifty servants and others. Together they added fun to life and took comedy to new heights in Europe.

### **3.1.2 ELIZABETHAN DRAMA**

From the 1500s, when Queen Elizabeth was on the throne in England, interests in the arts intensified. She particularly devoted both time, resources, energy and support to the arts.

This made the arts to thrive during her reign. Because of encouragements and supports, playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, John Webster, Inigo Jones, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, and others became celebrities in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century English theatre. The Globe Theatre was a popular drama performance auditorium in England and it was here that many drama performances were carried out to entertain the nobles in England. Other theatre halls included The Swan Theatre and The Fortune theatre. Popular plays staged in these theatres included William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Henry Part IV*, *King Lear*, and *Dr Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe.

### **3.1.3 THE RESTORATION AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DRAMA**

From the 1580s drama and theatre continued to thrive and expand especially as educational institutions began to spring up all over the world. The rise of the Puritans, the French, the Aristocrats, the Spanish, and other key players in the new age was critical to drama since increasing interests meant its expansion. In England, John Webster wrote plays such as *The White Devil* (1609) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613), Lope de Vega wrote dozens of plays including *The Gardener's Dog*, *The Greatest Alcalde* and *The King*.

In France, the controversial play of Pierre Corneille titled *The Cid* became a model for the interests in drama that would result and the increasing number of playwrights that would emerge. By 1640, the French had established a strong theatre base already. Jean Baptiste Racine emerged as a major figure in the drama world of this era, specializing in tragedy and some of his plays are; *Britannicus* (1669), *Iphigenia* (1674) and *Mithridate*

(1673). Moliere championed the cause of comedy with plays such as *The Miser*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *Tartuffe* and *The Misanthrope*.

In England, playwrights such as Aphra Behn became the first professional female playwright and she produced wonderful plays such as *The Rover*. William Congreve produced the play *The Way of the World*, while Richard Sheridan produced *School for Scandal*, all bestsellers of the time the world over.

By the 17<sup>TH</sup> century, drama had taken full roots in society, and state sponsorship of theatrical activities had increased considerably. David Garrick is renowned for being a theatre Manager par excellence in England and as a manager of the Drury Lane Theatre; he encouraged playwrights considerably making drama and theatre a lucrative and admirable profession. He is renowned for reworking French plays and embellishing them with ideas from Italian plays to produce stage masterpieces.

Notable playwrights of this period include; Sir Richard Steele, who wrote *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), Colley Cibber who wrote *Love's Last Shift* (1696), and Joseph Addison who wrote *The Spectator* (1700).

## **TOOLS/ MATERIALS**

In writing any dramatic work, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good unified plot on paper.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT 2**

How would you assess the practise of drama during the medieval and renaissance era and what would you suggest that would have been done during the eras?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we have discussed drama during the medieval and renaissance eras. Also, restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> century drama has been discussed. This will enable you to have a deeper knowledge of world drama.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Medieval drama served in propagating the gospel of the Christian Religion.
- ii. Renaissance drama was a rebirth of classical drama.
- iii. Drama experience a serious boost during the Elizabethan era due the support it enjoyed from Queen Elizabeth
- iv Drama took full roots during the restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1. What is medieval drama and what does it represent?
- 2. What is renaissance drama and what are its major tenets?
- 3. Attempt an assessment of Elizabethan drama?
- 4. Discuss the restoration and 18<sup>th</sup> century drama.

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## **UNIT 3: 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND CONTEMPORARY DRAMA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 - Introduction
- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
  - 3.1 - 19<sup>th</sup> Century Drama
    - 3.1.1 - 20<sup>th</sup> Century Drama
    - 3.1.2 - Contemporary Drama
    - 3.1.3 - Drama in Contemporary Nigeria
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to put you through the tenets of modern and contemporary drama. This is predicated on the fact that a knowledge of these will certainly spur to develop scripts which will be good enough to be produce in any part of the world. It is therefore important for you to familiarise yourself with the techniques of drama of the modern and contemporary times.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Identify the factors that characterised medieval and renaissance drama.
- ii. Discuss the contribution of renaissance drama.
- iii. Evaluate modern and contemporary drama.
- iv. X-ray Nigerian contemporary drama.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DRAMA**

Modern Theatre took shape from 1780 with the rise of a new generation of conscious personalities who were set to revolutionize existing ideas, ideals, philosophies, theories and theatre traditions to match and suit the new age. Earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romantic Drama was the in-thing but it had its shortcomings, limiting artists to embellishments and norms and giving no room for innovations and the power of poetic license. The romanticists such as William Wordsworth, John Keats, Samuel Coleridge, were to be seen eventually as aesthetic renegades.

Closet Drama became a popular form of drama from this period. It refers to drama that is meant to be read only and not necessarily to be performed. Lord Byron's *Manfred* (1817) is a play designed as a closet drama. Here in lies the origins of the use of other literatures for adaptation into plays. By 1800, it had become a craze and every novel, short story, prose that was good was being converted into a drama piece. Alexander Duma's *Fils* is one prose that inspired numerous plays and opera performances within the period. This equally formed the background for the rise of the melodrama.



Modern times meant modern ideas and numerous schools of thought were being established by critics, thinkers, artists, and other interests' groups. Expressionism, Impressionism, Surrealism, Naturalism, Absurdism, are some of the new schools of thought that arose from this period. Oscar Wilde's plays such as; *The Importance of being Earnest* (1895), *A Woman of no Importance* (1893), Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *An Enemy of the People* (1882), (1888), Anton Checkov wrote *The Three Sisters* (1901), *The Cherry Orchard* (1903), Bernard Shaw wrote *Major Barbara* (1905), and also other plays. These contributions were very significant to the new age of modernism.

### **3.1.1 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DRAMA**

What dominated drama in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the heritage of realism which transformed into numerous strands and shades of advancements. Ideas of realism became a major force to reckon with and a reference point was August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, and *Hedda Gabler*. Much of plays had adopted the approach of combining myth with realism to achieve a new drama style that was in vogue in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This incorporation of myth into drama provided opportunities for creativity, innovation and experimentation, and a new sphere that would last into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and would be enjoyed throughout the world. Among major areas of exploration in drama were poetic realism (The Abbey Theatre plays such as Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922) and *Desire Under the Elms* (1924). Social Realism at

this time focused on political participation and activism with a strong political consciousness. *Tobacco Road* by Jack Kirkland is a good example of such plays.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century equally witnessed a combination of realism and expressionism. The rise of Epic drama and theatre was significant especially with Bertolt Brecht's works such as *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941) and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1943). Absurdist Drama was spearheaded by the popular Theatre of the Absurd. Samuel Beckett was a major contributor to this. His plays such as *Waiting for Godot* (1952), and *Happy Days* (1961) are classics in this area.

This period equally marked the novel contributions of the Irish world to theatre. John Millington Synge who is Irish wrote plays such as *Riders to the Sea* (1904), which became a classic and was widely adapted for both television and radio. Luigi Pirandello wrote *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), *Each in his own Way* (1924) and *Tonight we Improvise* (1930).

Eugene O'Neill was a realist writer who would later win the Nobel Prize for literature. His plays were numerous and quite popular among the matured populace. He wrote about life and reality with a tragic sense of the unfairness of life. His plays *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *Anna Christie* (1921), *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1943) and *The Iceman Comet* (1939) have appealed to numerous audiences over the years.

Arthur Miller made significant contributions within this period with his numerous plays including *Death of a Salesman* (1949), introducing a touch to the Aristotelian theory of tragedy. Aristotle had maintained in *The Poetics* that drama that is tragedy is for the rich who fall from grace to grass. Miller however posits that drama that is tragedy could also be about the poor in society. *Death of Salesman* as a play has received considerable attention throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century due to its critical stance on traditional ideas of drama.

### **3.1.2 CONTEMPORARY DRAMA**

Drama that is contemporary implies drama that belongs to the period from 1950 to date. The contemporary times has been marked by technology, science, innovations in society cutting across all sectors, and advancements never before witnessed in the history of mankind. Such Drama has continued to be experimental and it often carries ideas mostly of the contemporary times, dealing with mankind's problems and challenges of the contemporary times. Across countries and regions, the reality of the contemporary times has been felt, being experienced in the cinema, film industry, Television, Internet and other media of communication.

In Europe, Megan Terry's *Viet Rock* (1966), Jack Gelber's *The Connection*(1959), Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre, and his play *The Tragical life of Dr. Faustus*(1963), the innovations of Robert Wilson in his theatre of images, the Apartheid Theatre experiments of Athol Fugard, through plays such as *Master Harold* (1982), *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Martin Sherman's play tilted *Bent* (1979), and others all gingered new thinking that were

critical to society and encouraged reforms. Sam Shepard in America within this period had written plays which explore life in contemporary society. He looks at subjects such as frustration in modern society. He explores the sanctity of human life in plays such as *Curse of the starving Class* (1977), *The Tooth of Crime* (1972), *A fool for Love* (1983), and *True West* (1980).

### **3.1.3 DRAMA IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA**

Nigeria just as other human societies of the world share common problems and challenges. These feature in her drama and theatre. From the time Zulu Sofola, J. P. Clark and Hubert Ogunde wrote plays to address the problems of Nigeria till date; numerous playwrights have continued to write plays. Wole Soyinka has a dozen plays that tackle realities and challenges in Nigeria. His play *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) projected him as a critical mind in Africa. His comedy play *The Lion and the Jewel* shows the clash between the West and Africa while in *The Trials of Brother Jero*, he lampoons religious hypocrisy. He equally wrote *Kongi's Harvest* and *Madmen and Specialists* to address critical issues in Nigeria.

Femi Osofisan is among the critical minds in contemporary Nigeria. His plays which are more than fifty, have addressed numerous challenges in the Africa region and Nigeria in particular. Some of those plays include *The Chattering and the Song* (1977), *Morountodun* (1982), *Another Raft* (1988), and *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991).

Other Nigerian playwrights in the contemporary times include; Olu Obafemi (*Pestle on the Mortar*, *Ogidi Mandate*, *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows*) , Tess Onwuenme (*The*

*Broken Calabash, Tell it to Women, Shakara Dance Hall Queen*), Julie Okoh (*Aisha, Our Wife Forever*), Ahmed Yerima (*Tuti, Attahiru, Otaelo*), Emeka Nwabueze (*Spokesman for the Oracle, Lachrymose*) Iyorwuese Hagher (*Mulkin Mata, Aishatu, Swem Karagbe*), Tracie Chima Ezeajugh (*Our Wives have gone Mad again*), Samuel Kafewo's (*The General's Award*), Rasaki Ojo Bakare's (*Rogbodiyan and Drums of War*), Emmy Idegu's (*Another Odolu Kingdom, Great Odulu Kingdom, The Legendary Inikpi, Six and Half a Dozen*), and a host of other playwrights.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

What do you find most appropriate in modern and contemporary drama practise and if given the opportunity, what would you do differently?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we discussed modern and contemporary drama. We also discussed Nigerian contemporary drama. This is done in order to equip you with the knowledge and skills of conventional dramaturgy. With this knowledge, it is hoped that you can develop scripts than can be performed in any part of the world.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Modern drama represents a negation of classical and neoclassical ideals.
- ii. Contemporary drama is experimental in nature and deals with contemporary problems of humanity.
- iii. Nigerian contemporary drama has been result-oriented as it addresses problems confronting the ordinary Nigerian.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. What are the characteristics of modern drama?
2. Discuss the contribution of contemporary drama to the world in general.
3. How has Nigerian contemporary drama contributed to the development of the Nigerian society?

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## **MODULE 2 MODERN DRAMA**

### **UNIT 1. ROMANTICISM, REALISM AND SURREALISM**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main content

3.1 Romanticism

3.1.1 Factors Responsible for the Emergence of Romanticism

3.1.2 Realism

3.1.3 The Emergence of Realism

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3.1.6 The Emergence of Surrealism.

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

## 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

This unit is designed to take you through some of the movements and theories that characterise modern drama. Modernism is an era of revolt against classism and traditional tenets. Consequently, modern drama is a departure from the dramatic tenets of the classical through renaissance eras. Beginning with romanticism which preceded modernism, realism and surrealism set the pace of the era. As students of drama, it is important to be abreast of these movements and what they represent. This knowledge is important because, some of the contemporary theatre practices are dependent on the traits of the theories of drama. It is therefore, important to make reference to these movements in order to project the future.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Understand what modern drama represents.
- ii. Expatiate what is Romanticism and identify the factors that necessitated its emergence.
- iii. Explain what realism stands for and clearly identify the plays that represent its ideals.
- iv. Explain surrealist and its tenets in dramaturgy.

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 Romanticism



Historically, the Romantic era is sometimes called "The Age of Revolution" from the French Revolution (1789-99) and the American Revolution (1775-83), the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), and subsequent revolutions in Europe and Latin America (including the War for Mexican Independence, 1811-21). (Craig White, 1).

The Romantic "Age of Revolution" may also refer to liberating changes in the arts (in literature, for instance, increasing use of everyday language, free verse, appeals to common human feelings or emotions); and profound social and cultural changes that radically transformed everyday life-urbanization, early industrialization, movements for equality, expanding markets and wealth for increasing numbers of people following the Enlightenment's institutionalization of constitutional government, free market economics, and advances in science, medicine, hygiene and nutrition.

Romanticism therefore is a period, movement, style, or genre in literature, music, and other arts starting in the late 1700s and flourishing through the early mid-1800s, a time when the modern mass culture in which we now live first took form following the establishment of modern social systems during the Enlightenment or Age of Reason.

### **3.1.1 Factors Responsible for the Emergence of Romanticism**

Romanticism was influenced by the following factors:

- i. The rise of nation-states as defining social and geographic entities.
- ii. Increasing geographic and social mobility, with more people moving to cities & the growth of a literate middle class.

- iii. New technologies dependent on power from fossil fuels (trains, steamships, industrial printing).
- iv. Longer life-spans and rising standards of living enable ideas or values including individualism, imagination, idealization of childhood, families, love, nature, and the past.

The Romantic era rises from the new wealth, stability, and sense of progress created by the preceding Enlightenment. It is a historical period of literature in which modern readers must begin to see a reflection of themselves and their own modern conflicts and desires.

The period has passed, but its styles and values still thrive today in popular forms and familiar attitudes, e.g. feelings, emotions, and imagination take priority over logic and facts, belief in children's innocence and wisdom; youth as a golden age; adulthood as corruption and betrayal, nature as beauty and truth, esp. the sense of nature as the sublime. Any of these qualities may be associated with Romanticism, but none of them defines or limits Romanticism absolutely. As a matter of fact, some of them even contradict each other.

### **3.1.2 Realism**

Realism was an artistic movement that began in France in the 1850s, after the 1848 Revolution. It rejected Romanticism, which had dominated French literature and art since the late 18th century. Fundamentally, realism revolted against the exotic subject matter and exaggerated emotionalism and drama of the Romantic Movement. Instead, it sought

to portray real and typical contemporary people and situations with truth and accuracy, and not avoiding unpleasant or sordid aspects of life. Realists depicted people of all classes in situations that arise in ordinary life, and often reflected the changes brought by the Industrial and Commercial Revolutions. The popularity of such realistic works grew with the introduction of photography-a new visual source that created a desire for people to produce representations which look objectively real.

### **3.1.3 The Emergence of Realism**

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nature of theatrical performances changed in many theatres in Europe and America. Emphasis was placed more on elaborate stage machinery and realistic scenery taken to the extreme, dramas themselves often came to play a secondary role on stage. Popular melodramas and sentimental plays, as well as musical extravaganzas drew the largest crowds into playhouses all across Europe and even in North-America.

As a reaction to the unrealistic and incongruent plays they often saw on stage, some of the dramatists began to follow the instructions of Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) and turned to writing well-made plays which, as opposed to sensationalist popular dramas, were neatly and logically structured. However, they often lacked a notable plot and thorough characterisation.

The creative impulse that rejuvenated drama at the end of the century came from the fields of science and novel writing. Influenced by the writings of Darwin on hereditary and social determinism, Jules and Edmond Goncourt, and more importantly Emile Zola

began to write plays depicting characters with sociological objectivity, showing neglected aspects of contemporary society. They, in turn, had a great impact on the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) who did much work in realism.

His dramas, *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1881) shocked audiences all over the world with their brave display of failed marriages and hereditary determination, forcing European middle classes to confront themselves and the faulty aspects of their value system with reality. Although they were first severely criticised by officials – so much so that in England, the Lord Chamberlain refused to give a performance permit to these plays – these dramas proved to be immensely popular among audiences, as they showed those corners of their lives, usually hidden behind societal morals, which they themselves described as reality.

Ibsen introduced everyday events, a realistic setting and a naturalistic acting style onto the stage, with a heavy stress on psychological realism. His dramaturgy has much in common with Sophocles' tragic structure, evident in *Oedipus Rex* in that, the action on stage aims at uncovering, and analyzing the past. His characters (usually members of a family) live seemingly harmonious lives but as the doors of the past open up (for example by the appearance of a visitor) it reveals the rotten core of their co-existence. Thus, the dramatic exposition of these dramas already includes part of the conflict, and the action of the plays is mostly centred on the analysis of the past. As opposed to *Oedipus*, however, the uncovering which the characters make, do not lead to some comforting

universal truth as each character carries their inner truths, the incompatibility of which with the truth of the others leads partly to the final catastrophe.

The realistic-naturalistic movement reached its second highest artistic peak probably in Russia, in the plays of Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) and in the productions of the Moscow Art Theatre led by Constantine Stanislavsky (1863-1938).

Chekhov drew a delicate picture about the everyday life of the Russian landed gentry, leaving behind the binding dramatic rules of previous decades, the governing conflicts, dialogues and structure of older plays. While Ibsen's characters focus on the past instead of the present, Chekhov's figures (e.g. in *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*, or the *Sea-Gull*) forsake the present, and live in memories and utopias instead. They relinquish proper human relations, and with that the means of real communication as well.

### **3.1.4 The Effects of Realism**

The realistic change in dramatic writings brought about a wave of more naturalistic stage designs in the theatres of Europe, with middle-class interiors and realistic sets superseding the gothic settings of the 1850s. An imaginary fourth wall was pulled up between the audience and the actors, which resulted in the complete separation of the actions on stage and auditoria reactions to it.

A new, naturalistic acting style was soon to follow, developed by one of the most important theorists of acting, Konstantin Stanislavsky, the actor-manager of the Moscow Art Theatre. The Stanislavsky acting-method emphasized realistic presentation and a careful attention to every detail of the production, which usually needed meticulous

research and preparation on behalf of the costume-and stage designers and used historically accurate sets and costumes. It stressed the actor's emotional identification with the character and his natural use of body and voice, as well as the theatre's social and educational significance.

This socially conscious method, which later also had a huge impact on Anglo-American acting styles, and was developed into Method acting, however, caused the stagnation of experimental theatre culture in most of the Eastern bloc countries in the 1950s, and is thus today regarded as rather controversial.

### **3.1.5 Surrealism**

Surrealism can be referred to a cultural movement that was expressed through art, literature, and even politics. Andre Breton is considered the leader of the Surrealist movement, and he defined Surrealism as a pure state of mind that allows someone to express thoughts freely and without the encumbrance of rational thought and societal rules. He and the other Surrealists were trying to introduce more open, free-thinking concepts that would allow people, particularly artists, to be aware of themselves without influence from the outside world. Breton pushed artists to look into their unconscious minds for inspiration.

On the other hand, Leslie defined Surrealism as, "Psychic automatism in its pure state by which we propose to express- verbally, in writing, or in any other manner- the real

process of thought. The dictation of thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason and outside any aesthetic or moral concerns” (59). In other words, the general idea of Surrealism is nonconformity. This nonconformity was not as extreme as that of Dada since surrealism was still considered to be art. Breton said that “pure psychic automatism” was the most important principle of Surrealism. He believed that true surrealists had no real talent; they just spoke their thoughts as they happened (Leslie, 61-63). Surrealism used techniques that had never been used in the art world before.

### **3.1.6 The Emergence of Surrealism**

Basically, Surrealism developed out of this thought process in Europe in the 1920s and it also embraced the psychoanalytical idea of unconscious desires, or things we want that we don't know we want. The movement focused on these ideas of chaos and unconscious desires in an effort to dig deep into the unconscious mind to find inspiration for political and artistic creativity. They believed this rejection of rational thought would lead to superior ideas and expressions.

Although Surrealism is defined by visual art, the movement originated with more focus on cultural thinking involving literary, political, and music elements.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise 1**

- i. Mention at least two plays that reflect the romantic, realistic and surrealistic ideals.
- ii. Which of these movements do you like most and why?
- iii. As a playwright, which of these modern drama ideals will you reflect in your play?

## **Tools/Materials**

In writing a romantic, realistic and surrealistic drama, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good plot on paper.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION:**

In this unit, we have discussed why modern drama emerged. We have also discussed that romantics – kickstarted modern drama and the rest is what we have today beginning with realism.

### **5.0 SUMMARY:**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Modern drama is a revolt against classical and traditional drama.
- ii. Romanticism as a movement served as a spring board for the taking off modernism.
- iii. Realism as a movement and theory in drama marked the beginning of modern drama and its tenets call for a realistic depiction of real life happenings in drama.
- iv. Surrealism as a movement is radical in approach and thoughts as it calls for a rejection of rational thought as this would lead to superior ideas.

### **6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment**

1. What does modern drama represent?
2. What is romanticism? What does it represent?
3. What is realism and how has it affected the practice of modern drama?
4. What does surrealism represent and how?



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## **UNIT 2: EXPRESSIONISM AND OTHER MOVEMENTS IN THE THEATRE**

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- 3.1.4 Emergence and Focus of Existentialism
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- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

This unit is designed to take you through some of the movements that heralded modern drama and the ideologies that went with them. In this unit, expressionism, existentialism, dadaism and symbolism are explored to enable you understand the traits of modern drama especially those that have taken on those themes. As students of drama, it is incumbent upon you to be familiar with these movements and what they represent to be able to adequately discern a dramatic piece and what it tends for. It is also important that, as you aspire to write plays, you should do so without ambiguity and without the knowledge of these movements and themes, this will not be possible. Consequently, this unit will enhance your knowledge of the various ideologies that informed modern drama and how some have continued in the contemporary time.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Explain what expressionism means in drama and outline its characteristics.
- ii. Expatiate on the concept of existentialism as it relates to drama and its guiding principles.
- iii. Provides the traits surrounding the convenient of dadaism in drama.
- iv. Explain how symbols are represented in drama form and the use of it.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Expressionism in Drama**

Expressionism is a term used to denote the use of distortion and exaggeration for emotional effect, which first surfaced in the art and literature of the early twentieth century. When applied in a stylistic sense, with reference in particular to the use of intense colour, agitated brushstrokes, and disjointed space. Rather than a single style, it was a climate that affected not only the fine arts but also dance, cinema, literature and the theatre.

##### **3.1.1 The Origin of Expressionism in Drama.**

As a movement, it was born and booming in Germany and it revolted against materialism, bourgeois values, massive urbanisation and the capitalist exploitation of the working classes. Consequently, expressionists were mostly supporters of socialist ideas, and used their characters as mouthpieces for advocating political or revolutionary doctrines.

Generally, we can say that expressionist art, instead of giving an overall realistic impression on events, presented a violently personal, dreamlike vision. August Strindberg

(1849-1912) and Frank Wedekind (1864-1918) are notable forerunners of the movement which got fully fletched in the works of Georg Kaiser (1878-1945) and Ernst Toller (1893-1939). Expressionism had a very strong visual impact on both theatrical and film arts, with its distorted, nightmarish images which aimed at unmasking the dark, hidden world of the subconscious. The best examples of this kind of scenography are to be found in films such as: Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), or Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).

### **3.1.2 The Focus of Expressionism in Drama.**

Fundamentally, expressionism is an artistic style in which the artist attempts to depict not objective reality but rather the subjective emotions and responses that objects as well as the events that arouse in him. He accomplishes his aim through distortion, exaggeration, primitivism, and fantasy and through the vivid, jarring, violent, or dynamic application of formal elements. In a broader sense, expressionism is one of the main currents of art in the later 19th and the 20th centuries, and its qualities of highly subjective, personal, spontaneous self-expression are typical of a wide range of modern artists and art movements.

### **3.1.3 Existentialism in Drama.**

Existentialism emerged in the early 20th century as a philosophical and cultural movement (theology, drama, art, literature and psychology). Basically, it held that, the experiences of the individual are at the centre of understanding human existence, rather than moral or scientific thought. It rejected systemic modes of thought associated with

earlier philosophies, religions or romantic beliefs, emphasizing a reliance on authentic experience rather than external idea. It stressed the importance of personal experience and responsibility and the demands that they make on the individual, who is seen as a free agent in a deterministic and seemingly meaningless universe.

### **3.1.4 The Emergence and Focus of Existentialism.**

The movement came to prominence in Paris in the 1940s and 50s with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Religious beliefs had faltered through the first half of the 20th century and were temporarily replaced by nationalism during World War II, but when the war ended there was little left to fill the void. A main preoccupation of existentialism is that, “existence precedes essence,” which means that the most important consideration is the fact that one is an individual rather than the labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individual fits into. Followers of the idea often did not label themselves as such, as it undermined a fundamental principle.

*Waiting for Godot* is often called an existentialist drama, which in some ways it is, but Beckett never ascribed the philosophy to his work. In the world of the play, devoid of systems, purpose and markers of time, all that is left is to simply exist. The fact that Vladimir and Estragon do little except exist highlights some existential themes. It is more accurately described as absurdism, which contains the idea that there is no meaning found in the world beyond.

### **3.1.5 Dadaism in Drama**

Dadaism, is a European artistic and literary movement which started in 1916. It was founded in Switzerland and flouted conventional aesthetic and cultural values by producing works marked by nonsense, travesty, and incongruity.

Generally, many critics firmly believe that theatre must have a structure and must be socially relevant. Also, theatre should set the moral tone of its society. However, dadaism as a movement was opposed to this norm. Rather, it was dedicated obsessively to the promotion and promulgation of the absurd.

### **3.1.6 The Emergence and Major Traits of Dadaism**

As a movement, it basically revolted against certain 20th-century painters and writers' smugness in traditional art and Western society; their works, illustrating absurdity through paintings of purposeless machines and collages of discarded materials, expressed their cynicism about conventional ideas of form and their rejection of traditional concepts of beauty.

### **3.1.7 Symbolism in Drama.**

Symbolic dramas seek to strip away traditional theatricality and replace it with a suggestive dreamlike universe created by symbols, words and acting. Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), who is one of the leading figures of the movement asserted that, "the essence of a play lies in its second, deeper meaning, which is hidden beneath the dialogues". In his art, symbolism is combined with a kind of new romantic idealism, for example in his most famous play, *The Blue Bird*, first put on stage by Stanislavsky in

Moscow, in which two children go on a search for a blue bird of happiness in their dreams just to find it when awoken in their own room.

Although symbolist plays are not very popular today, these writers enabled a huge change in stage design still visible in contemporary theatres. They initiated the kind of symbolic scenery of abstract settings which is still common on our stage,

### **Tools/Materials**

In writing a drama of expressionism, existentialism, dadaism and symbolism, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good plot on paper.

### **Self-Assessment 2**

1. Between drama of expressionism, existentialism, dadaism and symbolism, what would you prefer?
2. Do a critique of a symbolic play.
3. Mention contemporary plays that reflect any of these modern drama tenets discussed here.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION:**

In this unit, some modern drama movement and ideologies have been explored. These include expressionism, existentialism, dadaism, and symbolism. The characteristics of these movement have also been identified for your understanding and necessary application when the need arises.

### **5.0 SUMMARY:**



In this unit, we have discussed that modern drama movement started as a revolt of the classical ideals of drama as radical thinking informed the new form of dramaturgy. While existentialism emphasizes the importance of personal experience and responsibility of the individual who is seen as a free agent in a meaningless world, existentialism seeks to depict subjective reality against objective responses that arose in humans. Also, while the Dadaist seeks to promote the assured, the symbolist represent life through symbols.

## **6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment**

1. Expatiate the concept of expressionism and outline its major tenets.
2. What does existentialism seek to do in drama?
3. List 5 plays you have read that reflect any of the movement discussed herein.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **UNIT 3: POOR THEATRE AND OTHERS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main contents
- 3.1 Poor Theatre

- 3.1.1 The Emergence of Poor Theatre
- 3.1.2 Theatre of the Absurd
- 3.1.3 Major Advocates and Focus of Absurdism
- 3.1.4 Epic Theatre
- 3.1.5 Origin of Epic theatre
- 3.1.6 The Influence of Epic Theatre
- 3.1.7 Avant Garde Theatre
- 3.1.8 The Emergence of Avant Garde Theatre
- 3.1.9 Characteristics of Avant Garde theatre.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment.
- 7.0 References/Further Readings.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

This unit is designed to put you through the various theatres that characterised the modern era and their preoccupation. It further explores the techniques of these theatres and what they sort for and still seek to achieve. Beginning with poor theatre to theatre of the absurd, epic and avant garde theatre, they each seek to represent life in a particular style and approach as well as address and arrest the audience differently. As a student of

drama, it is imperative for you to be abreast with all these theatres of the modern age as some of them are in vogue in the contemporary age.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain what poor theatre represents and how a performance can be realized using its tenets.
2. X-ray the tenets of theatre of the absurd and how it can be absolved into other theatre forms in the contemporary times.
3. Expatiate what epic theatre represents and how it seeks to jolts its audience into action.
4. Discuss the tenets of Avant Garde theatre and how these have helped contemporary drama and theatre practice.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Poor Theatre**

The Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) was best known for his intense actor training processes in the 1960s and 70s. At the Laboratory Theatre in Opole, Grotowski and his small groups of actors experimented with the physical, spiritual and ritualistic aspects of theatre, the nature of role, and the relationship between the actor and spectator. He was a key figure of the avant-garde theatre. His compressive acting system is probably the most complete approach to role since the work of Stanislavski.

Grotowski coined the term ‘poor theatre’, defining a performance style that rid itself of the excesses of theatre, such as lavish costumes and detailed sets (hence ‘poor’). Poor

Theatre pieces centre on the skill of the actor and are often performed with only a handful of props.

### **3.1.1 The Emergence of Poor Theatre**

As a director, Grotowski preferred to perform works in non-traditional spaces such as buildings and rooms, instead of mainstreaming theatre houses with traditional stages. Typically, the audience was placed on many sides of the action or in and amongst the action itself.

Acting in the style of Poor Theatre places emphasis on the physical skill of the performer and uses props for transformation into other objects, sometimes of great significance.

According Jerzy Grotowski, “By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc” (19).

Today, Grotowski is recognized as one of the great directors of the modern theatre and a significant innovator of the experimental theatre movement. His techniques are easily grasped by students. Poor Theatre can be performed in any bare space, so school drama and Departments with few resources often find this style of theatre attractive.

### **3.1.2 Theatre of the Absurd**

This is a term coined by Martin Esslin in 1961 which refers to playwrights whose plays disregard all traditional elements of dramatic arts, such as round characters with well-grounded motivations, logical dialogues and a causative plotline development.

### **3.1.3 Major Advocates and the Focus of Absurdism.**

One of the major advocates of absurdism is Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989). In his *Waiting for Godot* (1952), for example, famously, 'nothing happens'. Two men wait for Godot who never turns up, and probably does not even exist; they seemingly lead no sensible conversations, they do nothing in particular, and the play does not progress at all. The ideas of the *well-written plays* of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century thus got rejected. Playwrights like Beckett (Eugène Ionesco 1909-1994, Edward Albee (1928), Jean Genet (1910-1986), Harold Pinter (1930) or Václav Havel (1936)) do not believe in the "possibility of neat resolutions, clearly defined motivations, acceptable solutions or the settlement of conflicts." (Martin Esslin) They instead emphasize the sense of human purposelessness, and the absurdity of human existence, the impossibility of actions fulfilling a purpose, the meaningless struggle of human beings in a hostile and irrational universe.

Most importantly the main constituent of dramas, the dialogue often got misused or even meaningless in these absurd plays, signifying the impossibility of modern communication. This is why Martin Esslin can validly state that these plays are rather like poems, developing a poetic image, rather than a series of events.

### **3.1.4 Epic Theatre**

Epic theatre is a theatrical stream that developed in the 20th century in Germany. In this stream, the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action are no longer applicable. The Realistic theatrical conventions, such as the 4th wall, were also discarded. One of the main aims of the Epic theatre was to tell the story in a simple fashion so that the audience can be stimulated to think about the consequences of the events that they saw on stage. In epic theatre, stories are presented in episodic nature where each can stand as a whole, independent of the other sequence or a best connected with ignorable links.

### **3.1.5 The Origin of Epic**

Developed by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), epic theatre aimed at continuously engaging its audience. This was done through experiments. These experiments involved shifting the dramatic focus from character to plot and emphasizing the epic quality of the dramas at hand. This Brecht wished to achieve by ‘alienating’ his audience from the events on stage, with the insertion of commentators, choruses and songs, thus preventing the viewers from identifying with any of the characters, let alone experiencing a catharsis of any kind. (This is the so-called *V-Effekt* or *Verfremdungseffekt*.) This way the audience could stay reflective and critical and could be woken up to their everyday responsibilities so that they realise (with their brains and not by their emotions) how they should change their own lives.

Brecht’s plays, such as *The Three Penny Opera* (1928) which highlights the hypocrisy of bourgeoisie society, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941/1961) which ridicules the

Nazi regime, or *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939/1941) with talks about the horrors and the absurdity of warfare, are all good examples of the epic theatre and set pieces in the theatres of the Western world.

### **3.1.6 Theatre the Influence of Epic theatre**

Fundamentally, Brecht's influence on European theatre culture is mainly twofold. He encouraged several directors to be critical of prevailing opinions, to study life as well as art, to be creative of a spirit of inquiry and to stage plays with an aim to dig out the strong social messages. What had a longer lasting effect on stage techniques, however, were his stage constructions, developed by and with Gaspar Neher, and influenced by German expressionist theatre. His rejection of the decorative, directed against the spectacle of the *Göring theater* of Nazi Germany, found ardent followers. Directors often favoured his chalk-white light with which he aimed at showing not hiding the actions on stage and enabling the spectator to follow the story "without impediments," as well as his "selective realism" "in which fragmentary or metonymic objects represent objects or circumstances in the real world and yet, because of their deliberate incompleteness, invoke the artifice of the stage and yet invite the intellectual attendance of the spectator. Brecht wanted theatre to teach and raise awareness of social questions, to incite revolutions and induce social changes. Brecht's theatre is consequently, to raise so much consciousness and use theatre to effect change even more than service does to the society.

### **3.1.7 Avant Garde Theatre**



The term avant garde came into being by the end of the nineteenth century and it applied to the theatre as well as other arts and practitioners involved in introducing original and experimental ideas, forms and techniques. According to John Ashford and Marvin Carlson, It is “a loose term often meaning Experimenting Theatre, that has been widely used since the middle of the twentieth century and has gone by many other names: ‘event’ or ‘Happening’ in the 1950s; ‘multimedia’ in the 1960s; ‘visual theatre’ in the 1970s; Performance Art in the 1980s; Live art in the 1990s. Rarely have these names been chosen by the practitioners; they have for the most part been coined for the sake of critical convenience, often (particularly in Britain) because when critics are confronted by theatre which is not a play-by work not based in text-they see it as so foreign to their tradition that it must be defined as separate, an ‘experiment’. They have been unable to develop a vocabulary which can cope with the physicality and volatility of experimental performance or its multiplicity of meaning”.

### **3.1.8 The Emergence of Avant Garde Theatre**

Avant garde theatre began in the West with Alfred Jarry as a rejection of both the age (late 19th century) in particular and, in general, the dominant ways of writing and producing plays. The term has shifted over time as the mainstream theatre in the world and has adopted many forms that were once considered radical. Basically, avant garde or experimental theatre is trying something new. It was created as a response to a perceived general cultural crisis. Despite different political and formal approaches, all avant-garde theatre opposes bourgeois theatre. It tries to introduce a different use of language and the

body to change the mode of perception and to create a new, more active relation with the audience (Erika Fischer-Lichte, 15). One of the famous experimental theatre Directors and Playwrights Peter Brook describes his task as building "... a necessary theatre, one in which there is only a practical difference between actor and audience, not a fundamental one".

Traditionally audiences are seen as passive observers and many practitioners of experimental theatre have wanted to challenge this. A typical example of this is Bertolt Brecht who wanted to mobilise his audiences by having a character in a play to break through the invisible "fourth wall," and directly ask the audience questions, not giving them answers, thereby getting them to think for themselves. Also, Augusto Boal wanted his audiences to react directly to the action while Antonin Artaud wanted to affect them directly on a subconscious level. This explains why Peter Brook has identified a triangle of relationships within a performance. Firstly, he identifies the performers' internal relationships, secondly, the performers' relationships to each other on stage, and thirdly, their relationship with the audience.

Besides the ideological implications of the role of the audience, theatres and performances have involved the audience in a variety of ways. Fundamentally, the proscenium arch has been called into question, with performances venturing into non-theatrical spaces. Audiences have been engaged differently, often as active participants in the action on a highly practical level. Audience participation can take many forms ranging from asking for volunteers to go onstage to complement actors in audience

members' faces. Also, by having audience participation, the performer invites the audience to feel a certain way and by doing so they may change their attitudes, values and beliefs in regard to the performance's topic.

### **3.1.9 Characteristics of Avant Garde Theatre**

With the coming into being of avant garde theatre, theatre spaces took on different shapes physically, and practitioners re-explored different ways of staging performances and a lot of research was done especially into Elizabethan and Greek theatre spaces. The most important traits of experimental theatre are: (1) breaking with the dramatic forms of realism and the fourth wall, in order to depart from traditional realistic Huaju; (2) a tendency towards theatricalism in production, generating theatrical effects and emphasizing artistic techniques so as to urge the audience to see plays as artistic works rather than as real life; and (3) sup positionality, the tendency to avoid duplicating real life on stage, and to rely instead on the actor's ability to present that which is less concrete visually but more real in feeling, such as an old and feeble heart or an abstract river. (Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture, [www.enacademic.com](http://www.enacademic.com)).

Experimental theatre is born of a long creation periods and the single-minded commitment of genuine ensemble companies has become a rarity –such circumstances have long since become a financial impossibility. Many of those who might once have advanced experimental theatre now work in the equally innovative and collaborative fields of opera, video, television or film. Those few who continue to experiment do so increasingly intermittently, or solos or duos.

## **Tools/Materials**

In carrying out dramatic performances under the index of poor theatre, theatre of the absurd, epic and avant garde theatre, you need to first and foremost understand the tenets of these respective theatres and tailor the performance along their ideals. Also, you need to get actors who will drive the material you want to put across to the audience. In doing this, you need to consider props, sets, costumes and lights where the need arises to make the performance what it should be.

## **Self-Assignment**

Between Grotowski's "poor theatre" and Brecht's "epic theatre", what do you prefer and why?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION:**

In this unit, various theatres of the modern era are explored. Their peculiarities have equally been x-rayed with a view of enhancing your knowledge of drama and theatre practice in the modern era. One of the outstanding trait of these theatres is in the audience response to the performance on stage where Brecht using his epic theatre jolts his audience to become active participants and not passive respondents of what happens on stage.

## **5.0 Summary**

You have learnt in this unit that:

1. Poor theatre ropes itself of the excesses of theatre in terms of lavish costumes, sets and props.

2. Epic theatre thrives on simple narrations in order to stimulate the audience to think and give their verdict of what they see on stage
3. Theatre of the absurd emphasizes the purposelessness and absurdity of human existence.
4. Avant Garde theatre is an experienced theatre which thrives on non-adherence to the theatrical and dramatic convention of the classical and renaissance era.

## **6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment**

1. Discuss poor theatre and how it can be explored in contemporary theatre practice.
2. How would you employ the epic theatre tenets in your dramaturgy?
3. Discuss how experimental theatre can be used to advance more innovations in contemporary theatre.
4. Attempt a critique of the different theatres discussed in this unit.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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## **MODULE 3 – DRAMATIC GENRE**

### **UNIT 1- TRAGEDY**

#### **CONTENTS.**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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    - 3.1.1 Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy
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    - 3.1.3 Types of Tragedy
  - 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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## **1.0 Introduction**

This unit is designed to explore the concept of tragedy. It takes a cue from Aristotle's theory of tragedy with a view of evaluating its tenets. In doing this, the concept of drama is explained in order to establish a foundation for discussing tragedy. Consequently, you are required to go through the concept, types, characteristics, and structure of tragedy with a view of exploring its principles for writing same.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain the concept of tragedy in drama.

2. Define Aristotle's concept of tragedy.
3. Outline the characteristics of Aristotle's theory of tragedy.
4. Discuss the types of tragedy.
5. Attempt a critique of tragic plays following the knowledge of the principles of tragedy.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Tragedy**

The word drama means different things to different people. To many, there is nothing serious about it but just a way of recreation. However, drama has over the years remained a potent tool for achieving different things in different societies of the world especially in the areas of religion, education, economy, politics and culture.

Generally, drama is an art form that tells stories through speech and actions of the characters in the story. It is a form of literature which differs remarkably from the other forms because, it has to be performed before an audience. This implies that drama occurs when people (referred to as actors) consciously do on stage before an audience what others do unconsciously in everyday life.

On the other hand, drama could be seen as a mode of fictional representation through dialogue and performance. It is the imitation of an action. It contains a conflict of characters, particularly the ones who perform in front of an audience on the stage. It is also a type of a play written for the theatre, television, radio and film. The person who



writes drama for the stage directions is known as a “dramatist” or “playwright”. The genres of drama include: tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, melodrama and dance drama.

Furthermore, tragedy means different things to different people. It is a genre of drama that treats in a serious and dignified style the sorrowful or terrible events encountered or caused by a heroic individual. By extension the term may be applied to other literary works as well.

Although the word tragedy is often used loosely to describe any sort of disaster or misfortune, it more precisely refers to a work of art that probes with high seriousness questions concerning the role of man in the universe. The Greeks of Attica, the ancient state whose chief city was Athens, first used the word in the 5th century BCE to describe a specific kind of play, which was presented at festivals in Greece. Sponsored by the local governments, these plays were attended by the entire community, a small admission fee being provided by the state for those who could not afford it themselves. The atmosphere surrounding the performances was more like that of a religious ceremony than entertainment.

There were altars to the gods, with priests in attendance, and the subjects of the tragedies were the misfortunes of the heroes of legend, religious myth, and history. Most of the material was derived from the works of Homer and was common knowledge in the Greek communities. So powerful were the achievements of the three greatest Greek dramatists—Aeschylus (525–456 BCE), Sophocles (*c.* 496–406 BCE), and Euripides (*c.* 480–406 BCE)—that the word they first used for their plays survived and came to

describe a literary genre that, in spite of many transformations and lapses, has proved its viability through many centuries.

### **3.1.1 Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy**

Tragedy is a serious play, usually depicting the downfall of the protagonist. The earliest definition of tragedy was handed down to us by Aristotle, a classical Greek philosopher in his *Poetics*:

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (2–3).

Aristotle gave this as a descriptive definition, based on the dramas of his age, mostly on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, a tragedy he admired, but later ages often regarded this definition as a prescriptive doctrine, so it is important to understand its parts for a fuller comprehension of the development of dramatic arts as well.

1. Aristotle, first of all, describes drama as a mimetic art, which takes its subject from life. However, he – in other parts of the *Poetics* – contrasts it with history claiming that history describes the facts, relating how events happened, while drama describes the possibility, how things could happen.
2. Furthermore, Aristotle emphasises that the subject matter of a tragedy is serious, that is fitting the genre. To use a later writer's, Horace's term, tragedies should have decorum – appropriate style, character, form and action.

3. Aristotle also talks about certain fixed parts of the play, which we distinguish under the following terms:

- Hubris: The hero's/heroine's arrogance, or pride with which they violate the gods, or moral rules. This antagonism leads to the major conflict the protagonist has to face in the course of the tragedy.
- Hamartia: The Greek word means 'error' but was often mistranslated as 'tragic flaw'. Aristotle, however, meant by it not a character weakness, but a mistaken, misplaced deed, a misjudgement, the hero commits and later falls victim to.
- Anagnorisis: That crucial point or turning point of the drama where the hero recognises his/her previous misjudgement. This is often the climax of the play, followed by the reversal of the hero's fortune (peripeteia).
- Peripeteia: The sudden reversal of the hero's fortune, in the case of a tragedy his downfall.
- Catharsis: The most debated of Aristotle's terms. It describes the 'purification' or 'purgation' of our souls at the end of a tragic performance through the pity we feel for the lost hero and the terror the horrifying events raised in us. Fear is also felt by the audience who cannot fathom what will happen to common men if the gods could so drag the tragic heroes down from their Olympian heights.

Scholars in later times also insisted on the fact that a tragedy should contain the

Aristotelian unities, those of time (the play should not cover events longer than one day), of space (the play should occur in one place), and of action (the play should have one coherent, major plotline), but Aristotle himself only mentioned the unity of action in his writing.

### **3.1.2 The Tragic Structure**

Gustav Freytag, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century German critic analysed the structure of drama in the following way: (1) introduction, (2) inciting moment, (3) rising action, (4) climax, (5) falling action, (6) catastrophe. The climax is the apex of the pyramidal structure which shows clearly how complication and emotional tension rise like one side of a pyramid toward its apex. Once the climax is over, the descending side of the pyramid depicts the decrease in tension and complication as the drama reaches its conclusion and denouement ('unknotting', 'unwinding', the unravelling of the main dramatic complications at the end of a play, the outcome or result of a complex situation or sequence of events).

The structure of the Freytag-pyramid is based on a typical five-act tragedy but is in fact applicable to a large number of plays and also to many forms of fiction.

### **3.1.3. Types of Tragedy**

There are several types of tragedy in drama but for the purpose of this exercise, the following are considered.

- **Revenge Tragedy (tragedy of blood):** The plot of this type of tragedy is centred on the tragic hero's attempts at taking revenge on the murderer of a close relative; in these plays the hero tries to 'right a wrong'. The genre can be traced back to Antiquity, e.g. to the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, and the tragedies of Seneca. During the Renaissance period, there were two distinct types of revenge tragedy in Europe; the Spanish-French tradition (Lope de Vega, Calderón, Corneille) focusing on honour and the conflict between love and duty; and the English revenge tragedy following the Senecan traditions of sensational, melodramatic action and savage, often exaggerated bloodshed in the centre. Elizabethan revenge tragedies usually feature a ghost, some delay, feigned or real madness of the hero, and often a play-within-the-play; cf.: Kyd: *The Spanish Tragedy*; Shakespeare: *Hamlet*; Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi*.
- **Domestic Tragedy:** This is a play typically about middle-class or lower middle-class life, concerned with the domestic sphere, the private, personal, intimate matters within the family, between husband and wife (as opposed to the national-matters of a nation/country, or universal-the whole of mankind). There are numerous examples in Tudor and Jacobean drama, e.g. Shakespeare: *Othello*; Heywood: *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, but also some in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, like Lillo: *The London Merchant*, and the term may even be applied to the work of later dramatists as well.

**Heroic Tragedy:** This type of tragedy was mostly popular during the English Restoration. Heroic tragedy or tragicomedy usually employed bombastic language and exotic settings to depict a noble heroic protagonist and their torment in choosing between love and patriotic duties. A typical example is John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada*.

### **Self-Assessment Experience 1**

Give at least one reason why you would like to be a tragic dramatist or otherwise.

### **Tools/Materials.**

In writing a tragic play, you will need writing materials such as paper, pen, pencil, writing pads, notebooks and perhaps, a computer set. You can do your writing with any of these but most importantly, you need to use a particular tool you are comfortable with.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise 1**

- a. Do you like tragic plays? Give reasons.
- b. What would you do differently if opportuned to write a tragic play?

## **4.0 Conclusion.**

In this unit, we have discussed tragedy as a dramatic genre and have also looked at its characteristics. It is incumbent upon the students to note the various methods of writing tragedy.

## **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, we have learnt that:

- i. Tragedy is a major genre of drama.
- ii. It is important to know the peculiarities of tragedy.

iii. In the next unit, you will learn about comedy which is another genre of drama

## 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

1. What is tragic drama?
2. Outline the characteristics of tragedy as given by Aristotle.
3. What are the various types of tragedy?
4. Does the structure of tragedy affect its content? Give reasons.

## 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS

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Dramatic Genres

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## UNIT 2: COMEDY

## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Comedy
    - 3.1.1 The Emergence of Comedy
    - 3.1.2 Types of Comedy
    - 3.1.3 Comic Devices
  - 3.2 Comparisons of Tragedy and Comedy
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading.

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to take you through yet another dramatic genre-comedy. It is a very important type of drama and is used to achieve a lot of things including relief, mobilization, sensitization on, entertaining, education and the like. Consequently, this unit will take you through its emergence, the various types that make up comedy and the devices used in putting together a comic dramatic work across to the audience. As a student of drama, this knowledge is important in order to enable you write comedies and even put them on stage as well.



## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Expatiate the concept of comedy in drama.
- ii. Discuss the origin of comedy in drama.
- iii. Outline the types of dramatic comedy.
- iv. Discuss the comic devices.
- v. Attempt a critique of comic plays following the knowledge of comic devices.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Comedy**

A comedy is any given work of drama in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us. Unlike tragedy which excites our emotions of pity and fear, the characters in comedy together with their discomfitures engage our delighted attention rather than our profound concern. Disasters may occur within the drama which are rather minor but the action usually turns out happily for the chief characters.

Comedy is the other major dramatic genre besides tragedy. It is a drama chiefly written to amuse its audience, with characters mostly taken from everyday life, (as opposed to tragedy, where they are superior to us in character or social standing) and a plot usually ending happily. In the Middle Ages, this term simply meant a story ending in happiness (e.g. Dante's *La Divina Commedia*), and was seen as the complementary of tragedies, (in

a narrative tragedy the hero: “from wealth [is] fallen to wretchedness,” while in a narrative comedy climbs from wretchedness to wealth/happiness), the two making up the wheel of fortune, a major symbol of human fate.

### **3.1.1 The Emergence of Comedy**

The cradle of European comedy also attracted many audiences in the Mediterranean- in the Athens of 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. There, the second day of the Dionysian celebrations was traditionally devoted to five comedies. The only playwright competing was Aristophanes (450-385 BC), with whom we connect the genre of *Old Comedy*. Old Comedies have fantastical plots with often surreal turns combined with political and social satire of contemporary figures. The *New Comedy* of Menander (340-290 BC), however, revolves around love plots. The young lovers have to face trials and tribulations, often the opposition of their parents and other senile or conservative members of society, but with the help of their witty servants, they overcome the difficulties, and get united in the end. The genre can probably be best defined by two Shakespearean quotations, as New Comedies had a great impact on the Elizabethan playwright’s romantic comedies, too. Although “the course of true love never did run smooth”, as Lysander says in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (134), after misunderstandings, plotting and counterplotting, finally, “Jack shall have Jill; Nought shall go ill,” (461-62) the comedy ends in weddings and general reconciliation.

Menander’s comedies were reinvented by two Roman authors around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC,

by Plautus (254-184 BC) and Terence (195-159 BC) who, in turn, influenced both the *commedia dell'arte* of the Middle-Ages (an Italian form of comedy whose plot mainly centred around love and intrigue, with often farcical dialogues, and which was a popular type of market place entertainment until the 15<sup>th</sup> century) and the Renaissance plays of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega, not only in their plots, but mostly in the usage of *stock characters*. Stock characters are stereotyped figures characterised mostly by their roles and not by their inner qualities. Such stock characters include the *senex* – the old miser, the *miles gloriosus* – the braggart soldier, the witty servant, etc, whom we can also find in Shakespearean tragedies (Polonius in *Hamlet*), or histories (Falstaff in *Henry IV*, 1-2), or comedies (Touchstone in *As You Like It*).

Unlike tragedy, comedy must end happily. The protagonist must win otherwise the audience would feel guilty or ashamed for having laughed at the central character. The audience should be made to understand that, what they are seeing is not to be taken seriously and that, they are not to identify too strongly with either the characters or the situation unless it is a matter of laughing with instead of at the character.

### 3.1.2 Types of Comedy

- Romantic Comedy: This is a comedy whose humour lies in the complications the hero and heroine face in their love for each other. Often, the course of this love

does not run smoothly but overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union. It is based on Greek New Comedy and Roman *commedia erudita*, a composite genre which centres mostly on the vicissitudes of young lovers, who get happily united in the end. The best examples for this genre are to be found in Shakespeare's oeuvre, e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *As You Like It*.

- Comedy of Humours: A form of drama typical at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; based on the Medieval and Renaissance belief that people's actions are governed by their dominant bodily humour (blood, phlegm, bile or black bile), its characters are ruled by a particular passion or trait. The first and most significant playwright of the genre was Ben Jonson, especially in his *Every Man in His Humour* and *Every Man Out of His Humour*.
- Satirical Comedy: A form of comedy whose main purpose is to expose the vices and shortcomings of society and of people representing that society; it is often very close to farce or the comedy of manners. The earliest examples are the works of Aristophanes, especially his *Clouds*, *Birds*, *Frogs*. In English literature, Ben Jonson's *Volpone* or Sheridan's *School for Scandal* are good examples. In European literature, the greatest master of the genre is undoubtedly Molière.
- Comedy of Manners: It is also known as 'Restoration Comedy' or 'Artificial Comedy'; the prevailing kind of drama in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, before the advent of the so-called sentimental comedy in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. This type of comedy explores the incongruities or rather abnormalities that arise

from adherence to an accepted code of behaviour at the expense of normal desires and responses. It depicts a stylish society, mainly the middle and upper classes. Its focus is on elegance, with characters of fashion and rank, but also would-be nobles, ambitious social climbers, fops, country bumpkins, and so on. Its topics are social intrigue, mainly marital and sexual, and also adultery and cuckoldry. The most important playwrights in the Restoration period are William Congreve and William Wycherley; but some of Shakespeare's plays (e.g. *Love's Labour's Lost*, or *Much Ado About Nothing*) can also be considered examples of this genre, as are the plays of Molière, Sheridan, and Oscar Wilde.

- Sentimental Comedy: It is known as 'Drama of Sensibility' and was the dominant comic genre after Restoration Comedy which provided popular entertainment for the middle classes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It appeared as a reaction against the immoral and licentious comedy of manners, which emphasised vices and faults of people; sentimental comedy focused on the virtues of private life, with simple and honourable characters. Some typical examples can be found in the works of Oliver Goldsmith and Robert Steele. However, on the whole, the genre did not prove to be as enduring as its predecessors, and it is not often performed any more.
- Farce: This is a type of low comedy, which undertakes to arouse laughter by jokes and by boisterous or exaggerated or clownish physical activities. It is a form of low comedy, whose intention is to provoke simple mirth in the form of roars of laughter (and not smiles); it uses larger-than-life physical action, character and

absurd situation, with improbable events, a complex plot, with events rapidly succeeding one another, pushing character and dialogue into the background. The origins of the genre are not clear, but farcical elements can be found already in the plays of Aristophanes and Plautus. In English literature, even parts of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, or *The Taming of the Shrew*, together with the Falstaff plays (*1-2 Henry IV*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) can be classified as farce.

- **Black Comedy:** (translated from the French *comédie noire*) A form of drama which displays cynicism and disillusionment, human beings without hope or convictions, their lives controlled by fate or unknown and incomprehensible powers; a genre popular in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the absurd predicament of mankind was increasingly in the focus of literature.

### 3.1.3 Comic Devices

There are basically six comic devices identified for developing a comic play. These include: exaggeration, automatism, character inconsistency, surprise, derision and Incongruity.

**Exaggeration:** This is a comic device brought about as a result of the intensification or enlargement of a particular characteristic or situation through overstatement. It simply refers to creating humour through overstatements.

**Automatism:** The word automatism is derived from automation. It implies one who

appears to be acting involuntary and without any intelligence. In drama however, it refers to a visual or verbal joke that is repeated time after time and becoming funnier and funnier.

**Incongruity:** A thing is incongruous when it is out of harmony. Incongruity is a very Powerful or potent comic device. Most times, humour is created through showing differing or opposing elements together.

**Character Inconsistency:** This device creates humour that results from a trait that does not seem to fit with a character's personality.

**Surprise:** This device creates humour through the unexpected. It can take the form of many or any of the aforementioned.

**Derision:** This makes fun of people or institutions for the purpose of social reform.

It is chiefly employed in the form of comedy known as satire. Writers often deride hypocrisy, pomposity or ineptitude, thereby using derision to deflate egos or to cause discomfort and reduce status.

## **Self-Assessment Exercise 2**

Advance at least one reason why you would like to be a comic dramatist or otherwise.

### **3.2 Comparison of Tragedy and Comedy**

Tragedies and comedies can be compared on several grounds, by setting up opposites as those of death and love, solitude and company, punishment and reward, etc., but these comparisons cannot really be generalised. They rather apply one-by-one to the different

modes of the tragic and comic sub-genres that have developed during the centuries.

### **Tools/Materials**

In writing a comic play, you will need writing materials such as paper, pen, pencil, writing pads, notebooks and perhaps, a computer set. You can do your writing with any of these but most importantly, you need to use a particular tool you are comfortable with.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, we have discussed comedy as a dramatic genre and have also traced its origin, types and devices. This is done to enable you write and produce a comic dramatic work efficiently.

### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

1. Comedy is a major dramatic genre and it is used to achieve entertainment, relief, education, socialisation and the like in the society.
2. It is important to know the comic devices to be able to write and or produce a comic play effectively.
3. In the next unit, you will learn how to fuse tragedy and comedy into one play.

### **6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment**

- a. Expatriate the concept of comedy
- b. Drama comparison between tragedy and comedy



- c. Trace the origin of comedy and bring out the contributions of Aristophanes and Menander to the development of comedy
- d. Outline the devices used in writing and producing a comic play.

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## UNIT 3 TRAGICOMEDY AND OTHER GENRES

### CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 Tragicomedy

##### 3.1.1 The Characteristics of Tragicomedy

##### 3.1.2 Melodrama

##### 3.1.3 Dance Drama

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

This unit, is designed to put you through the concept of tragicomedy and other dramatic genres particularly melodrama and dance drama. This is predicated on the fact that the knowledge of these will spur budding playwrights in developing scripts which will be produced for the consumption of the society. It is therefore important that you familiarize yourself with the techniques of these dramatic genres to be able to write quality scripts for production.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES:**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Explain the concept of tragicomedy, melodrama and dance drama.
- ii. Outline the main traits of each of these dramatic genres.
- iii. Equip yourself with enough technical skills to enable you write good scripts on the aforementioned genres
- iv. Attempt a critique of tragicomedy scripts.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Tragicomedy**

The term was first used by Plautus, but the concept is even older, and has always been used to refer to tragedies with a happy ending (also called ‘mixed tragedies’). Later it was also used for tragedies with comic subplots, and by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the two kinds became intermingled. Dramatists increasingly tended to use comic relief in their tragedies and tragic aggravation in comedies, to enhance the desired effect.

According to Battista Guarini in his book, *Compendium of Tragi-Comic Poetry*, “Tragicomedy takes from tragedy its great persons, but not its great actions, its movement of the feelings but not its disturbance of them, its pleasure, but not its sadness, its danger but not its death; from comedy it takes pleasure, but not sadness, its danger but not its death; from comedy it takes laughter that is not excessive, modest amusement, feigned difficulty and happy reversal”.

#### **3.1.1 Characteristics of Tragicomedy**

From the definition of tragicomedy, it has the following characteristics:

- It is made up of important characters of high and low degrees. (Upper class from tragedy and lower class from comedy).
- It involves a serious action that threatens a tragic disaster to the protagonist but ends happily.
- It has a romantic and fast-moving plot dealing with love, jealousy, treachery, intrigue and disguise.

Tragic-comedy can be summed up to be a marriage of tragedy and comedy with each not overshadowing the other.

### **3.1.2 Melodrama**

Melodrama deals with a serious action. This serious action is however temporary and is usually attributed to malicious designs of a wicked character. After destroying the villain or the unsympathetic characters, it ends happily. A good versus bad or evil is what is uppermost in melodrama. This means that, two opposing camps are always pitched. The unsympathetic characters always set evil in motion whereas, the good characters are always fighting to eliminate the evil set in motion by the unsympathetic characters. The characters do not grow as in tragedy because their moral nature and identification is established at the beginning of the play and remains constant throughout. The protagonist is always admirable and innocent; the action normally dramatizes his entanglement in a web of circumstances and his eventual rescue from death or ruin usually at the last possible moment. A lot of suspense is usually aroused in the audience, as they are rather expectant of the punishment of evil and the triumph of virtue. The emotions around include sympathy for the protagonist and hatred for the antagonist.

This makes melodrama to have a double ending and to relate both to tragedy because of the serious action and to comedy because of the happy ending.

### **3.1.3 Dance Drama**

Dance drama is a drama enacted through dance and its main objective is to tell or

interpret a story, theme or piece of music through movement of the body. Generally, dance has emerged as a vital, diverse and challenging theatrical force in contemporary Nigerian society. This is so because, it has encompassed a range of forms, including the classical, modern and postmodern periods.

### **Tools/Materials.**

In writing a tragicomedy, melodrama and dance drama, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good plot on paper.

### **Self-Assessment 3**

Would you like to be a tragicomic dramatist, melo dramatist or dance dramatist? Give reasons for your answer.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION:**

In this unit, we have discussed the dramatic genres which are still extant particularly tragicomedy, melodrama and dance drama. We have also discussed the traits of these genres. This will enable you to have a deeper knowledge of them.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. The different genres of drama all function to provide entertainment, education, information and the like using different techniques.
- ii. It is important to be abreast with the techniques of all the dramatic genres in order to write and perhaps produce them effectively.

## 6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT.

1. Expatiate the concept of tragicomedy.
2. What are its characteristics?
3. Draw a line between melodrama and tragedy
4. What is dance drama?
5. How can it be explored to mobilise and chart the course of development?

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## MODULE 4: AFRICAN DRAMA

### UNIT 1: NORTH AFRICAN DRAMA

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1.0 - Introduction

- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
- 3.1 - North African drama
- 3.1.1 - The Focus and Major Dramatists of North Africa
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to put through the dramatic activities in North Africa. This knowledge is very imperative given that Egypt which happens to be in region is generally acclaimed to be the cradle of civilisation and drama is not left out. The unit takes you the focus of North African Drama and its major dramatists especially Tawfik Al-Hakim and Abdelkader Alloula. It is therefore important that you acquaint yourself with the trends of North Africa drama in order to understand the happenings of the region.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Discuss the practise of drama in North Africa.
- ii. Advance reasons why drama in North Africa has not recorded much growth as is in other African regions.
- iii. Attempt an assessment of the major dramatists of North Africa vis-à-vis their

contributions to the continent generally.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 NORTH AFRICAN DRAMA**

Drama in North Africa is rooted in the long history of the people of North Africa. However, Egypt has remained a major hub for most dramatic writings in North Africa.

##### **3.1.1 FOCUS AND DRAMATISTS OF NORTH AFRICA**

Modern North Africa is renowned for writings addressing the challenges of the Arabic world. Tawfik Al-Hakim has plays including the popular *People of the Cave* (1933), *Fate of the Cockroach*, *King Oedipus* (1949), and *The Tree Climber* (1966). Al-Hakim's *The Tree Climber* is an absurdist play. It is the story of a detective who investigates the disappearance of a wife belonging to a man who is influenced by a devil to kill her in the end. The story is complex but interesting and it draws attention to the reality of supernatural forces influencing mankind on a daily basis. Absurdism is a major influence in this play. In *Fate of the cockroach*, Tawfik Al-Hakim projects collective heroism in solving societal contradictions and challenges than selfish or individual attempts, especially such individual attempts that fail because of the obvious limitations in individuals.

Abdelkader Alloula has equally written some critical plays in North Africa. One of his popular plays is *The Generous Trilogy* (1980) made up of three plays. In Tunisia, Jalila Baccar is a woman whose passion for the theatre led to her establishing a theatre



performance troupe known as Familia. Her play *Araberlin* looks at the 9/11 attack in America. In this play, the consequences of terrorism and terrorist activities on innocent citizens is addressed. Other Northern African playwrights notable for their contributions to the development of drama in the region include; Tayeb Saddiki, and Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin (*Collission of Altars*).

### **Tools/Materials**

In writing a dramatic work, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good unified plot on paper.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

What would you consider to be most attractive and spectacular in the works of North African playwrights?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit has looked at drama in North Africa and particularly Egypt. It has discussed the works of major dramatists in the region with a view of identifying their contributions to the development of Africa as whole.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that,

- i. Drama in North Africa did not fare well like other African regions.

- ii. North African drama is rooted in the history of the people and their cultures.
- iii. A number of dramatists in North Africa have projected the issues troubling the region in spite of all barriers.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. What would you consider to be the reason (s) for the slow growth of North African Drama?
2. Discuss at least one major dramatist of North Africa vis-à-vis the issues addressed in his/her works.
3. Trace the trends of North African drama and show how these have made or marred drama in the region.

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## **UNIT 2: SOUTHERN AFRICA**

### **CONTENTS**

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- 3.0 - Main content
  - 3.1 - South Africa Drama
    - 3.1.1 - The Origin of South African Drama
    - 3.1.2 - Focus of Drama in South Africa
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to expose you to the developments in drama in Southern Africa. It takes you through the historical experience of the region especially as it patterns struggle for independence and their freedom from the apartheid policy and the contributions of drama in that regard. Drama in Southern Africa shares common features which are characteristic of the region. Drama was majorly used in the fight against apartheid and as a student of drama, it is imperative for you to be aware of this to ascertain the potency of drama and theatre.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Understand what Southern African drama represents.

- ii. Know the factors responsible for the shaping of drama in Southern Africa.
- iii. Identify the major playwrights of the region and attempt an analysis of their plays.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Southern African Drama**

Apartheid dominated the history of Southern Africa for a long time. The struggle of the people of Southern Africa for racial survival had become a way of life and this reflected in the drama of the people. In South Africa for instance, the Boer wars, the Afrikaner identity crisis and other challenges led to the urban theatre culture where the theatre was taken to the streets in South Africa. As at 1935, there was a population of 40 Afrikaans theatre companies on the streets of South Africa performing. In the book *Annals of the Cape Stage* (1926), P.W. Laidler provides good examples of drama developments in South Africa. In the book *History of Drama and Theatre in South Africa* (1652-1855), F.C.L. Bosman provides an erudite account of experiences of the people of South Africa in the area of drama.

In addition to South African, Zimbabwe's drama shares a lot with other countries in Southern Africa. Focusing on apartheid and post-apartheid experiences that dwell much on leadership crises, Silvanos Mudzvova uses drama to advance democracy in Zimbabwe. His plays, *Final Push* and *Street Protest* made remarkable artistic contribution to exposing the ills inherent in the long reign and hold on to power by Robert Mugabe, the ex-Zimbabwean leader.

### **3.1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN DRAMA AND THEATRE**

Generally, the emergence of drama and theatre in Southern Africa was predicated on the struggles of the Southern Africans to gain recognition, obtain power, assert their position as indigenous people, develop themselves and assert ownership over their land. Professional theatre in South Africa became popular from 1945. The National Theatre Organization (NTO) was already a strong entertainment body in South Africa by the 1960s. This body promoted dance, opera, music, drama, and mime forms. Athol Fugard introduced the musical *King Kong* to promote a new kind of urban performance from 1959. His style of theatre attracted a large audience for him as he followed it up with his acclaimed plays *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*.

### **3.1.2 GROWTH OF DRAMA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Drama in Southern Africa has also grown as an academic university art and over the years, the Universities have developed a tradition of taking the theatre to the people to the grassroots. The popular concept in use has been the cultural struggles approach. Here, art is seen by Southern Africans as a political weapon. The presentation of South Africa's problems in dramatic form before rural audiences has continued to remain a popular style in Southern Africa. Popular troupes in this practice include Theatre Workshop 71, The Space Theatre, Market Theatre, Junction Avenue Theatre and The Serpent Players. All these have contributed to the development of a more conscious Southern Africa.

Most post-independent Southern African Drama has taken a new turn addressing the

yearnings of the new age especially unemployment, discrimination, and bad political leadership. Works such as; *The Drama of South Africa* by Loren Kruger, Peter Larlham's *Ritual Theatre in South Africa*, Martin Orkin's *Drama and the South African Stage*, have all impacted on the drama experience of the people of South Africa and other surrounding Southern African countries.

### **Tools/Materials**

In writing a dramatic work, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good unified plot on paper.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

What would you appreciate most in South African drama and what will you do differently if given the chance to write on their peculiarities?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we have discussed the drama of South Africa with a view of appreciating their struggle for freedom. Their style of writing is not left out as the environment portend danger and writing cum performance of drama especially during the colonial era had to be creatively carried out to avoid colonial attack. No doubt, drama and theatre have made a mark in South Africa.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Drama was used in fighting apartheid in South Africa.
- ii. Drama and theatre activities in Southern Africa progressed steadily and have been able to mark in the region.
- iii. Drama in Southern Africa represents the culture and challenges of the region.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. What does Southern African drama represent?
- ii. Discuss the major dramatists of the Southern African region and attempt an assessment of their works.
- ii. Attempt an assessment of the practise of drama and theatre in some Southern African countries.

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### **UNIT 3: WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 - Introduction
- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
  - 3.1 - West African Drama
    - 3.1.1 - The Emergence of West African Drama
    - 3.1.2 - Focus of Drama in West Africa
    - 3.1.3 - Radical Drama in West Africa
    - 3.1.4 - Thematic Issues in West African Drama
    - 3.1.5 - Francophone Drama in West Africa
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to equip you with the knowledge of the developments of drama in West Africa. The region is made up of Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroun and Benin Republic. Fundamentally, this unit takes you through the historical experience of drama in the region up to the present. Drama in West Africa is as rich as the region is in terms of cultural attributes. The people of the region share certain cultures and traditions which have equally manifested in their drama as well.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Understand what West African drama represents.
- ii. Know the factors responsible for the shaping of drama in West Africa.
- iii. Identify major playwrights of the region and their works.
- iv. Attempt an assessment of the contributions of drama and theatre to the development of West African region.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

Drama in West Africa has a deep history which is rooted in the past historical experiences of the people. In Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroun, Benin Republic, etc, the pattern of drama has been similar. In the early centuries, West Africa was a society made of kingdom settlements and structured empire communities including the Bantu expansions beginning from as far back as 2000 AD. Drama enactments and performances were regular day to day practices of the people of West Africa especially in times of peace. As a way of life, Drama in West Africa therefore spans a period of several centuries, being originally indigenous drama experiences derived from day to day experiences and also the imaginations and fantasies of the people of West Africa. A common term for the earlier experiences of drama in West Africa is generally known as pre-colonial drama. Way back in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the people of West Africa had their own

original indigenous drama practices rooted in traditional life and local experiences. Much of pre-colonial drama was unscripted. The local people shared their life experiences using dramatic means including mimes, pantomimes, improvisations, puppetry, dances, comic presentations and riddles etc. Children were usually expected to learn from these, and equally emulate. Pre-colonial drama was therefore essentially traditional drama in West Africa. A useful theory in understanding drama in West Africa is the evolutionary approach (Austin Ivgueraye Asagba, 1986).

### **3.1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

Indeed, as the evolutionary approach theory postulates, Drama in West Africa “developed from man’s need to control and dominate the natural and unforeseen forces that co-inhabit the world around him. Through ritual propitiation and sacrifices, which evoke elements of magic and spiritual possession, man dominates and empathizes with the repressive and unpredictable forces of nature. With time, festivals which are the culmination of these rites became the unit of joyous celebrations (as well as occasions for social and communal integration) against the capricious forces that seek to annihilate him” (86). This drama was of two major categories which were the sacred and the profane. Sacred West Africa Drama in the pre-colonial times was ritualistic in form and style, usually centred around a deity whose worship involved everyone in the community. This category of performance was more of a communal rite hinged on the general and common belief of an entire community even to the extent of the faith being a cult (Saint Gbilekaa, vi). The profane type of drama in pre-colonial West Africa was within the

popular tradition and was basically for entertainment. It had been in practice in various West Africa communities as an alternative to serious drama (Gbilekaa, vii).

### **3.1.2 THE FOCUS OF WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

Drama in West Africa during the colonial era in the 1900 was basically hinged on colonial experiences and it was practiced as concerts. The church was at the centre of this and it was applied through schools within the communities. At this time, Lagos was a hub in West Africa and thus the attention the Lagos Concerts or Concert parties got was hinged on this. Playing hosts to colonial Masters and their guests from the West was a regular and common occurrence. Drama presentations were done to entertain them. This drama was highly influenced by the West and colonial mentality of service to the colonial powers. Ene Henshaw wrote plays such as *This is our chance* (1956) to express this truth. Colonial influences led to a borrowing of Western cultures which influenced the way of life of the people. Most countries within the region were already fighting for their independence from the colonialists by the 1950s. Nigeria gained her independence in 1960, motivating Wole Soyinka to write *A Dance of the Forests*. One of such independence plays in West Africa include Zulu Sofola's *King Emene* (1974). Playwrights such as Efua Sutherland (*The Marriage of Anansewa*), Zulu Sofola (*The Sweet Trap*), Femi Osofisan (*Midnight Hotel*), Olu Obafemi (*Suicide Syndrome*), Julie Okoh (*Aisha*), Bode Sowande (*Farewell to Babylon*), Ahmed Yerima (*Hard Ground*), Tess Onwueme (*The Broken Clabash*), Iorwuese Haegher (*Swem Karagbe*), Ola Rotimi (*The Gods are not to Blame*), have in recent times contributed immensely with their plays

in addressing key challenges of the West Africa region.

Wole Soyinka who is a Nobel Laureate winner played a very significant role in the early 1960s and 1970s. His plays including *The Strong Breed*, *Kongi's Harvest*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, and others, made significant waves in Nigeria and West Africa in general. They helped to expose realities in the region especially colonialism and its effects.

Hubert Ogunde established a new theatre troupe known as The African Music Research Party in 1945. He used this professional troupe to perform live at various concerts and shows. Among the popular plays staged were, *Yoruba Ronu*, *Bread and Bullet* (1950), *Worse than Crime*, *Strike and Hunger*, *Tiger's Empire* (1946). These plays were successful instruments in making political commentaries on issues affecting Nigeria and the West Africa region.

The little beginnings in the 1920s with the popular Onitsha Market literature had yielded good results, since such dramatic texts had raised a consciousness in the people about their realities. Popular plays such as, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Ikolo the Wrestler* (1947), Ene Henshaw's *This is our Chance* (1956), *A Man of Character* (1964), *Dinner for Promotion* (1965), had made waves within the entire West African region. By the 1970s, a new generation of literate Nigerians were at the forefront of the struggle for the emancipation of the continent from colonialism. Obviously Post-independence Nigeria was still a struggling country yet to be stable and so was the experience in the other West African countries such as Ghana, Cameroun, and Liberia etc. Zulu Sofola's plays serve as an

example of the older generation of playwrights in the region. These plays clearly marked a watershed in issues that formed the themes of plays of the earlier generation. Sofola wrote *The Wedlock of the Gods*, *The Sweet Trap*, *Memories of Moonlight*, *King Emene*, *The Wizard of Law*, *Old Wines are Tasty* and others. However, her plays are not revolutionary or radical in approach.

### **3.1.3 RADICAL DRAMA IN WEST AFRICA**

Radical theatre by the 1970s had become a major instrument in Africa and most especially Nigeria for addressing challenges observed in the society. Femi Osofisan, Olu Obafemi, Kole Omotoso, Bode Sowande and a host of others wrote plays in which they raised topical issues and suggested the revolutionary approach to solving them. Wole Soyinka's earlier plays such as *The Swamp Dwellers* were useful and relevant for the situations when they were written. Specifically, before the independence era in Nigeria, colonialism and clash of cultures was a common theme in plays.

After the country obtained independence, revolutionary tendencies were needed because bad leadership, corruption, greed, and other ills had become trending ills and playwrights were already writing about them. Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* looks at official white-collar crimes in government circles. *No More the Wasted Breed* stresses the need to leave old and decadent traditions and cultures and adjust to the new and changing society, with faith that things will work out just fine. It is a response to Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*. An increased dramatic literary activity was witnessed in the 1970s as

a result of the firebrand interest by Femi Osofisan and his colleagues about the future of Africa and Nigeria in particular. The new spirit of revolution in the 1970s was channelled towards helping to solve the problems of the period including corruption of leaders, poverty in the land, greed of politicians, ethnicity, avarice and indiscipline among others. Olu Obafemi's *Suicide Syndrome* is a play written at this period to address such ills. The play tells the story of a mother, her daughter and the husband who is a civil servant but cannot afford to feed his family. According to Obafemi in his 'Authors Note' to the play, he states that, "I do not conceive of *Suicide Syndrome* as a play about suicide at all. If anything, it is a rabid exposure of the symptoms of suicide, the cause; that is, the neo-colonial social- economic order in the Nigerian and other 'third world' nations (Obafemi, *Suicide syndrome*, viii).

### **3.1.4 THEMATIC ISSUES IN WEST AFRICAN DRAMA**

Drama in West Africa presents topical issues of the day bothering on the development of the individual countries of West Africa and the sub-region as a whole. Nigeria's experiences are common in the various countries of West Africa. Corruption, greed, avarice, bad leadership, nepotism, tribalism, communal conflicts, white collar crimes, economic sabotage, and others are the thematic pre-occupations in most plays written in recent times. Ahmed Yerima's *Tuti* looks at corruption in religious circles in the society. Yerima's *Hard Ground* looks at the struggle for survival in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Rasheed Gbadamosi (*Trees Grow in the Desert*), Akomaye Oko (*The Cynic*), Felix Akinsipe (*Never and Never*), Iyorwuese Hagher (*Aishatu*, *Swem Karagbe*, *Mulkin*



*Mata*), Julie Okoh (*Aisha, Who can fight the Gods? In the Fullness of Time, Our Wife Forever*), Emeka Nwabueze (*Lachrymose*) Tracie Chima Ezeajugh (*Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*), Emmy Idegu's (*The Humans are not to Blame, Atalgala the Great, Beloved Odolu Kingdom, The Field Marshals' Exeunt*) and a host of others. These have put forces together in the effort to use drama to communicate to society and seek redress in problematic areas.

### **3.1.5 FRANCOPHONE DRAMA IN WEST AFRICA**

Francophone Drama and literature in West Africa exist too and numerous playwrights have written plays from countries such as Cameroun, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, The Gambia, Liberia, Guinea, Niger, and Ivory Coast. There is a total of sixteen West African countries and the above were colonized by the French making their official language to be French.

Drama in these countries is therefore rendered in French since their plays are usually written in French language unless translated. Basically, the French policy of assimilation cut across all French colonies and drama experiences from these countries in oriented to the assimilation policy. A popular French play is written by Bernard Dadie and it is titled *Monseur Thogo Gnini*, a play which is a satire on post-colonial society. Guillaume Oyono Mbia on his part examines the conflict between traditional and modern values in society in his play *Trois Pretendious un mari*. Werewere Liking equally has written numerous plays addressing contemporary life in Francophone societies.

## **TOOL/MATERIALS**

In writing a dramatic work, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good unified plot on paper.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

What do you like most in West African drama and if given the opportunity, what would you do differently?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we have discussed West African Drama and how it has addressed the challenges of the region. No doubt, drama and theatre occupy a special place in West Africa.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Drama in West African region has its peculiar experiences and reflects such experiences.
- ii. Nigerian theatre and drama remains the hub for the West African experiences of theatre due to the intensity of activities in the country and active participation of various playwrights.
- iii. West African drama is rooted in the history and culture of the people.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Discuss the traditional views versus modern radical views as reflected in the

drama of West Africa.

2. Identify the issues addressed by West African drama.
3. Attempt an assessment of major dramatists in West Africa and show how their works have contributed in building the region.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING**

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## **UNIT 4: EAST AFRICAN DRAMA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 - Introduction
- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
- 3.1 - East African Drama
- 3.1.1 - The Origin and Focus of East African Drama
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 - References/Further Reading

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to put you through the dramatic activities in East Africa with a view of enhancing your knowledge of the happenings in the region. The effect of colonialism on drama in East Africa is much as consequently has shaped the practise of drama and theatre in the region. This as a matter of fact has also informed the radical approach to drama in the region. It is therefore necessary for you to be abreast of the issues addressed by drama in East Africa and how these issues were and are addressed.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Understand what represents East African drama.
- ii. Identify the factors that shape East African Drama.

- iii. Attempt an assessment of the major playwrights that have occupied the East African stage and how their works have contributed in the growth of the region.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 EAST AFRICAN DRAMA**

Drama in East Africa is closely associated with the history and experiences of the people of the region. Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania constitute East Africa and these countries share common drama experiences rooted in the culture, history, social relations, religions of the East Africa society and post-colonial mis-governance. Key players in the drama experience of East Africa such as Ngugi Wa Thiongo have made significant contributions which serve as a torchlight in understanding realities in that region. Ngugi's book *Writers in Politics* provides a useful background in understanding his plays, among which are; *The Black Hermit*, *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* and *I will Mary When I Want*. In East Africa, survival of the average citizen is hinged on the political struggles in the immediate community.

##### **3.1.1 THE ORIGIN AND FOCUS OF EAST AFRICAN DRAMA**

East Africa is a region blessed by nature with gold, diamonds, quartz, and other precious stones which have become the major source of income for the region. Foreigners however control and dominate this natural resource industry. The indigenes often have had little or no control over their own blessings. This reality has featured in much of the drama of East Africa. The popular concept of 'decolonizing the mind' which Ngugi Wa

Thiongo has often written about how for decades served as the platform idea for most writings in East Africa. *The Black Hermit* is a play that introduced Ngugi as a critical mind in East Africa. The next play he wrote equally drew attention to the weaknesses of the State apparatus in Kenya. This play titled *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* which he co-wrote with Micere Mugo challenged the leadership of the Kenya society. Public interest in Ngugi's writings prompted the masses to call him to produce a new play written in his indigenous language Gikuyu. The play *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will Marry when I want)* challenged the colonial structures in Kenya which were still oppressing the people and limiting them. The gist of the play was hinged on a revolutionary spirit recall reminding the people of their past victories such as the Mau Mau rebellion.

## **TOOLS/ MATERIALS**

In writing any dramatic work, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good unified plot on paper.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

How would you rate East African drama in terms of fighting colonialism and what would

you have done differently given the chance?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, we have discussed the dramatic experience of East Africa with a view of ascertaining its functionality. We have also established that, the fight against colonialism informed the radical nature of drama in East Africa.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. East African drama represents the yearnings and aspirations of the region.
- ii. The radical nature of East African drama is predicated on their colonial history.
- iii. Ngugi Wa Thiongo' occupies a special place in East African dramaturgy.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1. Discuss the factors that led the rise in East African drama.
- 2. How would you assess the major dramatists of East Africa?

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Balogun, Odun. 'Marxist Aesthetics in Socialist African Literature'. In *Proceedings of the International Symposium on African Literature*. Osofisan et al (ed) Lagos: Centre for Black and African Civilization, 1991.

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## **MODULE 5 TRADITIONAL VERSUS SCRIPTED DRAMA**

### **UNIT 1 – TRADITIONAL DRAMA**



## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Traditional Drama
    - 3.1.1 The Meaning of Traditional Drama
    - 3.1.2 The Emergence of Traditional African Drama
    - 3.1.3 Theories of Traditional Drama
    - 3.1.4 Functionality of Traditional Drama.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/ Further Reading

### **1.0. Introduction**

This unit sets out to explore the place of traditional drama and its functionality in the society. This is to enable you to be acquainted with the knowledge of traditional drama in order to give you a solid foundation in drama studies. To further achieve this purpose, the origin of traditional drama is also trace in this unit.

### **2.0. Objectives**

At the end of the unit, the students should be able to:

- i. Explain what traditional drama is.
- ii. Trace the origin of traditional drama.
- iii. Advance the functionality of traditional drama.

### **3.0. MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1. Traditional Drama**

Traditional drama is indigenous in nature. It is said to be the oldest form of drama in Africa. Since it has no literary or textual tradition, its authorship is believed to be unknown. Instead, there are claims that traditional drama may have originated from the dramatic activities that the African continent is replete with. These include: religious rites, festivals, story-telling as well as the different kinds of celebrations interwoven in the daily lives of the various African cultures. In most cases, traditional African drama does not follow a prepared script. Examples of such include sacred drama or the traditional performances meant for entertainment.

##### **3.1.1 The Emergence of Traditional African Drama**

Traditional African drama is said to have evolved in ancient Egypt from the religious rituals which seemed to move towards a more explicitly theatrical enactment. Consequently, the pantheon of animal-headed gods and the stories of the soul's journey after death into the other world provided rich materials for Egyptian ceremonies and rituals. During such occasions, priests were thought to have impersonated the deities by

wearing stylised masks and reciting hymns and prayers in propitiation to the Egyptian gods.

It has also been discovered that, the pyramid texts of Egypt were assembled from the fragments of prayers carved on the walls of royal tombs found in the Old Kingdom. The most important of these texts involved the god Osiris. He was the subject of what was known as the Abydos Passion plays. This was a yearly ritual performed during the period of the Old Kingdom until about AD 400. Ritual dramas like the Abydos passion play were performed to ensure the fertility of women, cattle and crops among other reasons. In addition, investigators have discovered another text preserved on Papyrus Scrolls known as the Book of the Dead. It reads very much like an oratorio. There is no evidence that it was actually performed. However, the ritual is full of dramatic elements.

### **3.1.2 Theories of Traditional Drama**

African theories which point to the emergence of traditional drama include the religious, mimetic and the storytelling theory are closely related. For example, the religious theory holds that man is a religious being by nature and in his quest to understand, control and order his environment, engaged in the worship of a supernatural being whom he identified as one who is in control of his environment. In doing so, he believed he could be favoured. From this worship, drama and theatre evolved as dance, songs etc became part of the worship. Also, the mimetic and storytelling theories see drama and theatre as products of storytelling and mimesis. Fundamentally, all these theories see drama as a development from the primitive and religious rites and ceremonies that were performed

to win favour from the gods.

In these ceremonies, the dramatists who are described as descendants of the priests impersonated supernatural beings or animals. They engaged in actions like substituting an animal for human sacrifice, say, a goat for a virgin or a young warrior. At times, the priest imitated such actions as a hunting expedition. With time, stories grew around some religious rites and lasted after the rites had died out. These myths may have formed the basis for drama.

Another African theory holds that drama grew out of a natural love for storytelling. Stories were told around camp fires, for instance, recreated victories in the hunt or in battle, or the feats of dead heroes. Subsequently, these stories developed into dramatic revelations of such events.

### **3.1.3 Functionality of Traditional Drama.**

Traditional African drama has been functional for thousands of years because drama for Africans has served a purpose beyond entertainment. Although Africa is a continent with many different countries, some homogeneous features can be noticed in many of the contemporary African dramas. When their theatrical roots are traced the following features can be significantly outlined in many traditional African dramas.

- Plays-within- the play
- Story telling performances or story-telling art
- Simple enactments such as a grown-up man playing like a boy running after a dog

or young people miming like pigs in a pigsty

- Ritualized enactments
- Spirit cult performances
- Masquerades
- Ceremonial performances
- Comedies

Although the roots traditional African drama and theatre are ancient, written African dramas are a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. More importantly, although the pre-colonial dramatic performances were meant to fulfil the community needs of their native African society, colonial encounter may have urged the native Africans to be propagandists in their dramas. Moreover, modern African dramas may be an amalgam of traditional dramatic performances and modern influences especially due to social political changes in society. Modern dramatists have, above all, used drama as a political tool.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise I**

Give at least three reasons while you think traditional drama is relevant and functional in the modern world.

### **Tools/Modules**

In carrying out traditional drama, you need people who will serve as actors and a few sets where the need arises such like seats, utensils etc. Also, costumes may be required to carry out traditional drama for effects. If the performance is at night, you may also need lighting system to illuminate the production and achieve certain efforts. You therefore,

need to know exactly what you need in order to carry out traditional drama.

#### **4.0. Conclusion**

In this unit, we have discussed the place of traditional drama in the modern practice of drama.

#### **5.0. Summary**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- i. Traditional Drama is indigenous and functional.
- ii. There are theories that explain the origin of traditional drama
- iii. In the next unit, you will learn the various techniques involved in scripting drama for stage, radio and television or film.

#### **6.0. Tutor Marked Assignment**

- a. Discuss traditional drama and its functions.
- b. Explain the origin of traditional drama.
- c. What is the place of traditional drama in the modern world?

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/STUDY MATERIALS**

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## **UNIT 2: SCRIPTED DRAMA**

## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 - Introduction
- 2.0 - Objectives
- 3.0 - Main content
  - 3.1 - Scripted drama
    - 3.1.1 - Scripting for the stage.
    - 3.1.2 - Scripted for the Radio
    - 3.1.3 - Scripted for Television
    - 3.1.4 - Scripted for Film/Video
  - 3.2 - Traditional and Scripted Drama.
- 4.0 - Conclusion
- 5.0 - Summary
- 6.0 - Tutor – Market Assignment
- 7.0 - Reference/Further Reading.

### **1.0. Introduction**

This unit is designed to explain what scripted drama is in order to enhance your knowledge of drama studies. It explores the origin of scripted and outlines the techniques involved in scripted performances for the stage, the film or video media.

### **2.0. Objectives**



At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain the concept of script drama
2. Trace the origin of scripted drama
3. Outline the techniques involved in scripting for the radio, stage, TV, and film/video

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Scripted Drama**

Scripted drama is the written version of a play. This implies that it is a well-structured performance by authors before an audience at a given place, be it stage, radio, television, film/video. This kind of drama is Western-oriented. It is impossible to state with certainty how and when drama originated. Nevertheless, many explanations have been provided regarding its emergence. Western theories of drama claim that drama was born in Ancient Greece during the period that the Greeks gave choral performance of dances and songs at festivals in honour of their god of wine and fertility known as *Dionysus*. In addition, this version has it that the earliest record of Greek drama dates from the time the contest for tragedy was established in Athens. It was at this time that Thespis won the first competition. He became the earliest known actor. The word “thespian” comes from his name.

### **3.1.1 Scripting for the Stage**

In dramatic literature, a play is a text written in the form of dialogue between characters. It is intended to be performed on stage, rather than being read. There are two major parts of a script namely: the dialogue and stage direction. The dialogue involves the words that ought to be spoken by the actors while the stage directions are instructions about the movement of the actors or different aspects of the set. Stage directions are often times separated from the dialogue. These instructions appear in italics.

Most scripted plays are divided into acts and scenes. The former constitutes a larger section of the play text while the latter comprises smaller units of the text within the act. However, recent playwrights go beyond this ancient though revenant style of playwriting by using Happening, Movement, Situation and other words that separate one sequence of action from the other. For a stage play to be entertaining or interesting, the onus lies on the playwright to utilize dramatic techniques in the form of conflict. This is the struggle between two opposing forces without which the audience will find the play boring. In addition, the use of soliloquies, asides, and monologues alongside the dialogue usually help to engage the attention of the audience watching the play on stage.

### **3.1.2 Scripting for Radio**

The radio is popularly referred to as the blind man's medium. As a result, scripting for this medium involves the use of sound effects in order to accentuate the action of the radio play. Care should also be taken by the writer not to fashion out too many characters

for a radio performance as the radio audience usually finds it difficult to comprehend too many characters in a radio play.

In radio play dialogues, because the radio is a single sense (hearing-audio) user, short speeches are preferable to long speeches so that the message is not lost. Nevertheless, if the play requires the description of characters, past actions and the setting, the employment of the narrator by the writer will save a lot of time. It is also important to incorporate the traditional three-part structure of the beginning, middle and end in the treatment of the plot of a radio play.

### **3.1.3 Scripting for TV**

Unlike the radio, telling a story on screen demands the use of visuals on the part of the writer because the television deals more with sight than sounds in its audio-visual nature. In this respect, the selection of the correct images or objects goes a long way towards imprinting the dramatic experience in the mind of the audience. For instance, an image that suggests or contrasts the mood of a character has the capacity to speak volumes and cut deep into the psyche of a television audience.

Moreover, if a television drama is to have an impact on the audience, there has to be a marriage between the text and the sub-text. In other words, if the writer intends to send a clear message to a television audience, the plot (text) must agree with the motivation behind the plot (sub-text). More importantly, a script is a blue print for a director, set designer or cinematographer. As such, the temptation to give camera angles or directions

to actors should be avoided in writing a screen play. Similarly, lengthy dialogues are inappropriate in the television drama script.

### **3.1.4 Scripting for Film/video**

The age - old saying, a picture is worth a thousand words” holds relevancy to scripting for film/video. The first step is to begin with a brief. A brief does not necessarily follow a particular pattern. It includes pertinent questions regarding the goal and the topic as well as the target audience of the film or video. In answering these questions, the team involved in creating the movie or video will be carried along.

Once the topic has been selected, the process of writing the script begins in earnest. A good movie or video script is that which enables the people on camera to get their message across to the audience simply and naturally. This implies that the language used should be conversational.

Apart from the dialogue, the film or video script includes multiple shots, characters, and scenes. If it is possible, the writer should use images, charts, graphs or other graphic elements to convey concepts or ideas. The reason for this is to ensure that anyone who picks up the script to read knows exactly what to do.

Crafting an effective film or video script takes cognizance of the audience as well. To this end, searching questions such as: Is the audience made up of teenagers, professionals or the aged will prove helpful in shaping the intended message.

### **3.2 Traditional and Scripted Drama**

The dramaturgical principles of the different genres vary in the sense that television script includes camera angles and other pertinent technical data besides the dialogue. On the other hand, most stage scripts contain just the dialogue and the description of places and characters. Except for soap operas and shows filmed before a live audience, all television acting is compared to movie acting. However, the television timing slightly differs from that of movie timing for one reason or the other.

#### **Tools/materials.**

In scripting a play, you will need writing materials like pen, paper, writing pads, pencil, notebooks, and perhaps a computer set. You can do your writing with all or any of these. What one needs to do is to identify what is most convenient. Most importantly, your ideas must be in shape and intact to be able to put a good plot on paper.

#### **Self-Assignment 2**

1. Do you want to be a script writer?
2. What media do you prefer to write for?
3. What hiccups do you envisage in writing scripts?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, scripted drama has been explored, the basics of writing for the stage, radio, television, film or video have also been discussed. Furthermore, the traditional and

scripted drama have been compared to draw the similarities and differences.

## **5.0 Summary**

You have learnt in this unit that:

- i. Scripted drama is Western based and has been embraced by dramatists.
- ii. There are different techniques for writing plays for Stage, Radio, TV, and Film/Video.
- iii. There are differences between traditional and scripted drama.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

- a. What is scripted drama?
- b. Explain the origin of scripted drama.
- c. Justify the assertion that the radio is a blind man's medium.
- d. What are the basic guidelines for writing a stage play?
- e. Distinguish between traditional and scripted drama.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/STUDY MATERIALS**

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