Міністерство освіти і науки України
Львівський національний університет
імені Івана Франка

Навчальний посібник
з англійської мови як основної
(аспект Readings in Engish Literature)
"ELIZABETHAN DRAMA"

для студентів 1 курсу факультету іноземних мов
(англійське відділення)

Львів
2020

Рекомендовано до друку
Вченою Радою факультету іноземних мов
Протокол № 2 від 29.09.2020

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для студентів 1 курсу факультету іноземних мов
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Посібник *Elizabethan Drama* з першої іноземної мови розроблено для студентів I курсу факультету іноземних мов (англійське відділення).

До посібника включено чотирнадцять розділів, які охоплюють основні теми вказаного курсу і дозволяють студентам глибше засвоїти теоретичний матеріал. У посібнику скомбіновано теоретичний матеріал по драмі із теорією англійської драми епохи Єлизавети I. Окрім теоретичної інформації, у посібнику подано аналіз структури та мови Єлизаветинської драми, зокрема увагу сфокусовано на п'єсах К. Марло, В. Шекспіра та Дж. Дея. Матеріал посібника дає змогу студентам підготуватися до написання модулів та контрольних робіт, а також виявити рівень знань студентів з вказаної теми.

Посібник, в значній мірі, дозволяє студентам набути вмінь та практичних навичок для аналізу та інтерпретації літературного твору, зокрема драми, а також обґрунтування особливостей твору крізь призму відповідної історичної епохи.

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Definitions of drama

Drama is one of the major forms of literature. As a literary form, it is designed for the theatre because characters are assigned role and they act out their roles as the action is enacted on stage. It is difficult to separate drama from performance because during the stage performance of a play, drama brings life experiences realistically to audience. Drama is therefore presented in dialogue.

Drama is an imitation of life. It is different from other forms of literature because of its unique characteristics. It is read, but basically, it is composed to be performed, so the ultimate aim of dramatic composition is to be presented on stage before an audience. This implies that it is a medium of communication. It has a message to communicate to the audience. It uses actors to convey this message.

Drama like other forms of literature, imitates life. It is the form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action, and utter the written dialogue. It is designed for representation on the stage by actors who act the parts of the characters of its story, and among whom the narrative and the dialogue are distributed. It is a form of expression which depends largely upon communication from a playwright to an audience through the medium of actor. Drama generally takes the form of the theatre performance. But it can as easily be transferred broadcasting to a home television screen, or to the printed page. The word drama comes from the Greek and means to do or act. The drama has mirrored the life, customs, manner and general living habits of the people.

A lot of critics have made attempts to define drama in the following manner:

- "A play is a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours and the changes of fortune to which it is subject for the delight and instruction of mankind". (John Dryden)
- "Drama is a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through

action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance". (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary)

- "Drama is a composition in verse or prose and verse, adapted to be acted on the stage, in which a story is related by means of dialogue and action and is represented with accompanying gesture, costume and scenery as in real life". (Shorter Oxford Dictionary)
- "Drama is a composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue". (A Glossary of Literary Terms by M. H. Abrams)

Martin Esslin in *An Anatomy of Drama* has the following definitions of drama:

- Drama can be seen as a manifestation of the play instinct as in children who are playing mother and father.
- Drama is something one goes to see, which is organized as something to be seen, a spectacle.
- It is an enacted fiction an art form based on mimetic action.
- In arts, drama is the most elegant expression of thought nearest to the truth (reality).
- It is the most concrete form in which art can recreate human situation, human relationship.

Aristotle's definitions sum up these and other numerous definitions of drama by different scholars. He defines drama simply as an imitation of an action linking it to the mimetic impulse in human beings like children playing father and mother in a childhood play. This means that imitation is part of life. Human beings have a desire to imitate others, situations or events.

Origins of drama

The word drama comes from the Greek meaning "to act, do or perform", and it is in the several subtle and diverse meanings of "to perform" that drama can be said to have begun. All communities accept that their later drama has roots in pre-

history. Anthropologists have shown that primitive societies used role-playing in teaching the codes and behaviour required to live and survive in that society; for example, to teach the skills needed in knowing what and how to hunt, the making and use of weapons and the rules of warfare. Performance could be involved in oral repetition to teach the laws and social customs, while enactment of mythical or historical episodes perpetuates and transmits what is thought important to maintain in the race-memory of the tribe. Most early societies lived by a seasonal cycle, a regular pattern allied to the movements of the sun or moon, and perhaps related to the movement of prey, or to seed time and harvest, and drama was especially important in devising rituals to deal with the inexplicable, the changing seasons, the natural phenomena of night and day, or the waxing and waning of the moon. Without propitiation with certain symbolic ceremonial safeguards or sacrifices, the sun might not rise again, the crops might fail. All humankind had concerns with life and death and has evolved ceremonies and rituals to help deal with the perennial questions of "where did I come from?" and "where do I go after death?" These were usually answered by some kind of belief in an outside power, an almighty being or beings, to give the hope of an after-life, to avoid extinction at death. Thus, the invention of gods happened to provide a liaison between this world and the next and societal rituals would encompass joy, hope, and renewal, or death, despair and foreboding. Omens became important and had to be interpreted by wise men, perhaps involving impersonation, and disguise, in punctiliously performed ceremonies to appease or placate the gods.

Most societies would include rituals of purification, and ordeals for children to undergo in order to attain adulthood and acceptance into full membership of the community. And all this would be taught and learnt through oral tradition, through story-telling and through performances and enactments passed down from generation to generation. All societies seem to have had these ritual traditions in one form or another from which spoken drama often, but not always, emerged. It is these rituals and community roots that later dramatists have drawn on in trying to express humanity's concern with life and death in both tragedy and comedy. In the

early communities everyone was involved in the drama of a ceremonial ritual, perhaps with impersonation and identification with priestly roles, or as characters depicted in enactments, or simply as celebrants but it was not theatre. Theatre requires a separate audience of spectators which happened when the occasion became a performance by some in front of others as an entertainment. However, since the sixteenth century, the two terms have become synonymous with both words loosely understood as meaning the representation of a story enacted by actors in front of an audience. Most communities have some mention of folk drama derived from oral storytelling becoming a narrative in dialogue, but by its nature oral storytelling is mostly unrecorded, and histories are sparse and fragmentary. It is thought that music and dance associated with death and rejuvenation is represented in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs from around 2500BC but little more is known about Egyptian practices. Although Herodotus wrote about an Egyptian temple ceremony involving a mock battle, and implied this was an annual event, nothing is known about any spoken drama. In China music is believed to have existed in 5400BC, scribes wrote of rituals and religious worship accompanied by music and dance from 2200BC, and of emperors who were reproved for enjoying theatrical performances by actors. However, written classical Chinese poetic drama is only recorded from the 700s BC. In India, the beginnings of spoken drama are uncertain but it is also thought to have derived from earlier dramatic dances and mimes related to ancient rituals and seasonal celebrations, and to have appeared about the same time as the Greeks began writing their plays. Some authorities suggest Indian dramatic writings were influenced by the influx of Greek culture after the invasion by Alexander the Great in 327BC. For Greece, and in particular Athens, is credited with the beginnings of performing plays in front of an audience as we understand them today. Apparently, Greek drama evolved from religious festivals (ritual) that were celebrated to ensure the fertility of the land and the well being of its people. These festivals were connected with the worship of the god Dionysius, a native god who like the vegetation dies and was reborn each year. The festival involved singing and dancing by a chorus of fifty men. The choral song,

known as Dithyramb, was sung in honour of the god. The men danced around the altar of Dionysius in a circular dancing place called orchestra. Sometimes a story about the god was improvised by the leader of the chorus, though remaining part of the chorus. Sometimes he dresses like a character from mythology. At this stage, individual actors were not involved in the performances.

The dramatist, Thepsis, is believed to have been the first to introduce the individual actor and the element of impersonation in the 6 th century B.C. During a particular performance, he stood out from the chorus and instead of singing in the honour of the god, he sang as the god. He performed between the dances of the chorus and he conversed at times with the leader of the chorus. Thus, drama was literally born. Thepsis, therefore appeared as the first actor, and when he broke away from the chorus, he added the dramatic potential of impersonation.

The English drama at its initial stage developed from religious rituals, commemorating the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It grew out of the liturgy of the church. In order to amuse the congregation, and make the people familiar with the Bible, the bishops in the church began to dramatize some of the incidents from the life of Christ and other saints, out of this the English drama was born. In the 21stand 13thcenturies, some plays, describing the life of Christ and other saints, were called Morality and Miracle plays. At the end of 15 th century, the play called "The Morality Play" took birth. The morality plays mark the next stage in the growth of the drama in England. These plays were didactic and religious in nature. The characters were no longer Biblical figures but personified virtues and vices. *Everyman* (1490) is the finest of this type of play. Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561) was the first regular English Tragedy. Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (1566) was the first English regular comedy. The Elizabethan Drama reached its highest point in the works of William Shakespeare and Marlowe. After the Restoration period drama restored and in modern age various types of drama are developed.

Kinds of drama

– genre, mood and mode –

Tragedy

The tone and effect of tragedy were long ago identified by **Aristotle** as those of pain, usually of punishment for sin. In part 6 of his *Art of Poetry* he wrote the memorable words that point to both the purpose and the method: "A tragedy is the imitation of an action…with incidents arousing pity and fear"; thereafter the critical debate has been ceaseless. The pain was felt by the central character, but shared between the stage and the audience, and made worse because its source was mysterious. Tragedy also implied a struggle within that character, an act of self-knowledge which was inescapable, brought about by forces beyond his control. Jean Cocteau introduced his version of the Oedipus story, *La Machine Infernale* (1934), with the words:

Watch now, spectator. Before you is a fully wound machine. Slowly its spring will unwind the entire span of a human life. It is one of the most perfect machines devised by the infernal gods for the mathematical annihilation of a mortal.

Moreover, the emotions of pity and fear were painful because they were also in conflict with one another: pity involves the urge to approach and share, and fear the urge to retreat and evade. Watching the great tragedy, therefore, the spectator was torn apart.

To achieve these extraordinary and powerful effects, the style of tragedy was traditionally one of grandeur: it has always adopted a non-naturalistic, a penetrating, lyrical mode of speech and movement. Tragedy has also assumed a ritual quality that was repeated with each performance: highly conventional, it spoke for the community and for mankind, so that its subject acquired a mythical status. It aimed at universality, as Allardyce Nicoll insisted in *The Theory of Drama* (1931, 98), with symbolic and moral implications for all who saw it. For

that reason, its hero and heroine were commonly accorded noble stature, great in their guilt and seen at the limits of their endurance. It is not surprising that the best actors of history have therefore excelled in the magnificent, undying parts of tragedy: *Oedipus, Lear, Macbeth* and many more.

In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle lists six **elements of tragedy**:

1. **Plot**, that is the action, the story, which, he adds, is enacted by people, actors, as opposed to be being narrated or sung.
2. **Character**, the way a person behaves (for behaviour defines character); it is important to note that tragedy, according to Aristotle, deals with "the better type of person", that is royalty, generals, governors, people whose fate is of significance to more than just themselves;
3. **Reason**, the way plot and character are connected, the logic and coherence of what is presented, how what is shown is "likely to happen".
4. **Diction**, the speaking of the text.
5. **Poetry**, the poetic qualities of the text itself.
6. **Spectacle**, what you see on the stage.

For Aristotle, the most important of these is the plot, which is the imitation of action, the way the events, or incidents, are organised by the playwright. He argues that it would be possible to have a tragedy which contained action but no characters, but it would be impossible to have a tragedy which included characters but no action. Action, it may be noted, is a very wide term, and includes reaction (how characters react to events), for instance, as well as suffering, amusement, fear, and so on.

In order to generalize about the elements of tragedy it is necessary to focus on particular periods which gave rise to the great prototypes.

1. In the festivals of ancient Greece **myths and legends** were repeated with variations again and again, each well known to the citizen audience. This repetition of subject was acceptable because the stories were hallowed by the **religious tradition** in which they were performed, the familiarity with the stories actually permitting small changes of emphasis to be both subtle and effective. But at all

times the ritual of performance seemed essential to the sacred atmosphere and, although this cannot be recreated for today's audiences, nevertheless something of the original spirit of the occasion may be recaptured when some of the impressive ingredients of Greek tragic performance – chorus, costume and mask, speech and gesture, music and dance – are in place.

The range of Greek tragedy was greater than appears. For example, For example, Euripides created characters more vivid and realistic than his predecessors, and his central figures were frequently "psychological" studies of women under stress, as in *Electra* (413 BC), *Hecuba* (425 BC) and *Medea* (431 BC), even though the eponymous heroine was played by a man. These creatures continued to inhabit a world of myth and legend, of gods and goddesses, even though their plays touched human problems closely.

2. In the new, secular playhouses of Elizabethan and Jacobean London tragic drama assumed an even more **human aspect**, and it is critically astonishing that the most weighty and intense tragedies of Shakespeare are sufficiently modern in feeling and natural in style to enable them to continue to be sympathetically received by today's audiences everywhere. His four central masterpieces in the tragic vein (*Hamlet, Othello, King Lear* and *Macbeth*, 1600-1606) probe the **presence and mystery of evil in the universe**, yet **in** notably particular and **human terms**, often unrestricted in their contrasting **use of humour and satire**. The human element so conspicuously present amid such profound material makes these plays unique.

Even a tragedy of the stature of King Lear, apparently set in an ancient Britain and seeming to deal with a society remote from our own, is totally accessible to modern audiences worldwide, and its tragic pattern, while retaining its symbolic strength, continues to be recognizable on a simple and unpretentious level. The play tells the story of a tyrant, whose pride and arrogance as both ruler and father reduce his rich and orderly world to one of chaos, beggary and madness. Nevertheless, throughout the action the presence of the redeeming characters Cordelia and Edgar enables Lear to recover an enlightened sense of humility, and

though his new humanity play reaches for a new harmony. The poetic structure of *King Lear* insists that the spectator see life as a circular journey, on which man is "*bound / Upon a wheel of fire*", and the detail of human relationships guides the audience every step of the way.

According to Aristotle, in a good tragedy, **character supports plot**. The personal motivation / actions of the characters are intricately involved with the action to such an extent that it leads to arouse pity and fear in the audience. Aristotle disqualifies **two types of characters** –**purely virtuous and thoroughly bad**. There remains but one kind of character, who can best satisfy this requirement – "A man who is not eminently good and just yet whose misfortune is not brought by vice or depravity but by some error of frailty". Thus, **the ideal tragic hero** must be an **intermediate kind of a person** – **neither too virtuous nor too wicked**. His misfortune excites pity because it is out of all proportion to his error of judgement, and his overall goodness excites fear for his doom. Thus, he is a man with the following attributes: 1) he should be a man of mixed character, neither blameless nor absolutely depraved; 2) his misfortune should follow from some error or flaw of character; short of moral taint; 3) he must fall from height of prosperity and glory. The protagonist should be renowned and prosperous, so that his change of fortune can be from good to bad. The fall of such a man of eminence affects entire state/nation. This change occurs not as the result of vice, but of some great error or frailty in a character. Such a plot is most likely to generate pity and fear in the audience. The ideal tragic hero should be an intermediate kind of a person, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just yet whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgement.

Hamartia ("fatal flaw" or "tragic flaw") may consist of a moral flaw, or it may simply be a technical error/ error of judgement, or, ignorance, or even, at times, an arrogance (called hubris in Greek). It is owing to this flaw that the protagonist comes into conflict with Fate and ultimately meets his/her doom through the workings of Fate (called Dike in Greek) called Nemesis.

Types of tragedy. According to Aristotle there are four types of tragedy:

1. **Complex tragedy** which entirely depends on peripety and anagnorisis. This type of tragedy depends on reversal of fate and recognition.

2. **Pathetic tragedy or tragedy of suffering**. Here much importance is given to incidents like death, physical agony, wounds etc.

3. **Ethical tragedy or the tragedy of character**. In this type, emphasis is given to character and not to the plot. Hence Aristotle considers this type of tragedy as inferior. According to Aristotle a tragedy is possible without a character but not without a plot.

4. **Simple tragedy or the tragedy of spectacle**. Spectacle is a formal part of tragedy and can produce the tragic effect. It depends on the scenes for its effectiveness on the stage. Spectacle is the manner of imitation.

Another classification of tragedies singles out five types of a tragedy:

(1) Cosmic tragedy or tragedy of simple circumstances

Conflict is the basis of tragedy. When the conflict is between the divine force, which is beyond the power of a man, and an individual, then it may be called a cosmic tragedy, or tragedy of simple circumstance. One of the tragedies of this kind is W. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-96).

(2) Tragedy of error or psychological tragedy

There is a flaw or a weakness in a man's nature. Because of this his reasoning capacity is weakened. He acts in a disastrous way. He commits a fatal error in blindness. His efforts produce exactly the opposite results. Too much pride, ambition, love, anger, hatred, too much thinking etc. are responsible for this type of tragic error. The best known tragedy belonging to this kind is C. Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1589-1592).

(3) Social tragedy

Sometimes, a man fights with social forces, and is crushed by the sheer might of society. In this type, there is a clash between what an individual holds well and the deep-rooted customs and traditions of society. Love is a powerful tragic theme under this type. The brightest example of a social tragedy is W. Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

(4) Tragedy of revenge

This is the name given to some of the Elizabethan plays. This type of tragedy deals with bloody deeds and retribution. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is the motto of this type. These are mainly tragedies in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras – C. Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90); W. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1599-1601) and *Titus Andronicus* (1589-92); T. Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587); J. Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1699-1601); H. Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (1602*)*; T. Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607).

(5) Domestic tragedy

It is a tragedy in which the leading characters belong to the middle class rather than to the royal or noble ranks usually represented in tragic drama, and in which the action concerns family affairs rather than public matters of state. This genre is represented by T. Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603-7), *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608) and *The English Traveller* (1630); *Tragedy of Mr. Arden of Feversham* (1592); Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603); *The Witch of Edmonton* by W. Rowley, T. Dekker and J. Ford (1621); W. G. Lillo's *The London Merchant: or, The History of George Barnwell* (1731-32).

<u>Comedy</u>

Comedy is well suited to ridicule human imperfections, making us laugh at them without malice and understand them without condoning them. If tragedy observes mankind with regret, comedy mocks at it with affection. To do this, it shows us that a human being has at least two sides of his nature, a bad and a good one – one to be blamed and another one to be forgiven. And to do this, comedy, unlike tragedy, chooses an explicit social milieu.

Yet the methods of comedy can be surprisingly straightforward. It teems with well-known, stock characters, and its situations are often quite silly, using coincidence, mistaken identity or surprise – a striking incongruity of some sort. In

fact, incongruity is usually the source of the humour. It can be transparent, as when in **Shakespeare**'s *Henry IV, Part I* at Gadshill Prince Hal orders the fat knight Sir John Falstaff to put his ear to the ground (his delicious response is "Have you any levers to lift me up again being down?"), or when in **Sheridan**'s *The Rivals* the solemn Mrs. Malaprop asserts that a girl should "*be mistress of orthodoxy… that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying*." Such comic effects call for a few basic elements in the dramatic mix:

1) the play and its performance need a certain "distancing" from reality to permit what is extravagant and unlikely to take place;

2) the style of performance may call for an exaggeration of speech and behaviour, a variation of pace and even the use of music, dance and song to lighten the tone;

3) the audience is best encouraged to react with a mixed response, involving sympathy and feeling as well as scorn and ridicule.

Types of comedy:

- Greek "old" comedy, associated with **Aristophanes** (c. 448-c.380 BC), is robust, satirical and often political. It was also frequently licentious, and *Lysistrata* (411 BC), a satirical anti-war play in which the women withhold their sexual favors to stop the war between Athens and Sparta, has enjoyed a popular and timely revival in recent years;
- Greek "new" comedy was more domestic and is associated with **Menander** (c. 343-292 BC). It influenced the popular Roman playwrights **Plautus** (c. 251-184 BC) and **Terence** (c. 190-159 BC), and their Roman comedy was also broad and especially imaginative in its farcical plotting. **Shakespeare**'s *The Comedy of Errors* (1593), a comedy that juggles twin brothers, was based on Plautus's *Menaechmi* (date unknown), and the musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962) drew on others of his fanciful situations.
- Elizabethan comedy, particularly **Shakespeare**'s, involved both *low comedy*, based on humor and slapstick of chiefly physical situations, and *high comedy*, associated with verbal wit and satire of more social situations.

Shakespeare habitually mixed these ingredients, and, where his picture of life was more idealized, his work has also been associated with the idea of *romantic comedy*. Romantic comedy may embrace a largely farcical low comedy, as in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593), and a witty high comedy of sexual manners, as in *Much Ado about Nothing*, where a degree of sympathetic feeling is freely admitted.

- The comedy of humour is chiefly associated with **Ben Jonson** and his contemporaries and successors. Their dry distortions of human personality complement a satirical *city comedy* of Jacobean London, and their comedy of intrigue offers a rather glacial treatment of human motive and behaviour, usually with a moral and didactic purpose.
- The comedy of manners, a comedy of sexual impropriety like **Etherege**'s *The Man of Mode*, developed strongly on the Restoration stage. Its types of character remained mostly two-dimensional, but its plotting grew shrewder, passing later into the more decorous drawing-room comedy of modern times. **Oscar Wilde**'s more subtle society comedies, like *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895), qualify to be included in this subgenre.
- Sentimental comedy was a genteel form partly adopted in London in 18th century in order to counteract the moralistic criticism of **Jeremy Collier**'s *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698). Its weakness lay in its stuffy and simplified characters of moral black and white, and in emotional crises that had the effect of eliminating any need to laugh.

Comedy at its most ridiculous

- Farce, with its low-comedy clowning, ludicrous characterization and witty wordplay, has been present in every age in order to provoke easy laughter. With its distinctive stylization and clock-work plotting, it developed rapidly in 19th century, particularly in France. The plays of **Eugène Labiche**, with his masterpiece *The Italian Straw Hat* (1851), and

Georges Feydeau, a brilliant specialist in so-called bedroom farce – notably *Occupe-toi d'Amélie* (1908; the title is variously translated as *Keep an Eye on Emily*, *Look after Lulu*, etc.) – set new standards of efficient comic stagecraft in which the pace and mechanical precision served to conceal the improbability of the situation. In the late 19th century, London enjoyed farces like **Arthur Wing Pinero**'s *The Magistrate* (1885) and **Wilde**'s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

Farce is not only highly technical and supremely difficult to perform well, but also its shameless release of zany laughter arguably permitted a stage fantasy which temporarily suspended the rules of decorum and deliberately invoked a preposterous image of human behaviour.

- Burlesque was another comic form that attracted quick laughter. Properly, burlesque seeks to travesty some other dramatic genre, just as **Sheridan**'s *The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779) made mockery of the heroic drama of the time. The miracle is that some burlesque plays still manage to attract laughter long after the original object of derision has been forgotten.
- Theatre of the absurd may be thought of in retrospect as a form of teasing farce. It was a short-lived form popular after 1950, and chiefly associated in Paris with **Samuel Beckett** and **Eugène Ionesco**. Its picture of man's predicament in a meaningless world was so irrational that comedy followed automatically – even when, ironically, its message was deadly serious. Essentially, a man was shown behaving like an automaton, a puppet whose tragicomic situation was well suited to catch the spirit of the nuclear age.

A TABLE TO IDENTIFY THE PRINCIPAL COMIC STYLES

kind	*purpose*	*method*	*tone*	*example*
comedy	to reveal human nature	by observing behavior	sympathetic	Shake-speare
satire	to correct morals, manners	by irony and exaggeration	mocking, objective	Jonson, Shaw
farce	to ridicule human behavior	by exaggeration and absurdity	cynical, amoral	Feydeau, Pinero
burlesque	to mock other drama	by parody and caricature	critical, sarcastic	*Pyramus and Thisbe*

Tragicomedy – The Elusive Form

In *An Apologie for Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney deplored plays which "*be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness is by their mongrel tragicomedy obtained.*"

Tragicomedy, argues Sidney, provides neither the katharsis("admiration and commiseration" is his version of "fear and pity") appropriate to tragedy, nor the energy, the warmth and jollity ("the right sportfulness"), which comedy properly evokes. It is a form which is ambivalent, elusive. Perhaps that is why it has (with epic drama, perhaps) become a dominant form in our insecure age. It seems that tragicomedy may take one of two forms. First, it may set a series of contrasting scenes one after the other, a serious scene following a comic one, another comic scene following that, and so on. Or second, it may find a way of synthesising the comic and the tragic, so that each is present simultaneously. Tragicomedy was first theorised by the Italian writer Giovan Battista Guarini (1538–1612), whose treatise on the subject appeared in 1601. Comparing tragicomedy to an alloy, like bronze, Guarini argued that tragicomedy fused two conventional forms, tragedy and

comedy, by taking something from each, and bringing them together. From tragedy, he said, tragicomedy borrowed noble characters, a believable plot line, and "the danger, but not the death". From comedy, it took subject matter which dealt with private, not public, affairs, complex plotting and a happy ending. In order to define the objective of tragicomedy, Guarini paraphrased Aristotle: its aim, he wrote, was to purge sadness or melancholy with delight. Tragicomedy attempted to "gladden our souls".

John Fletcher (1579–1625), an English dramatist who was a youthful contemporary of Guarini, was much influenced by these ideas, and brought forward his own definition of the dramatic form in which he made several attempts to write:

A tragicomedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy, which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life be questioned; so that a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy, and mean people as in a comedy.(John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, preface)

Fletcher collaborated with Shakespeare on at least one play, but it was Shakespeare writing alone who created perhaps the most perfect tragicomedy according to this definition, in *The Tempest*. Onto Prospero's island are brought a group of people of all classes from his native Milan. Indeed, their leader has usurped Prospero's place as the Duke of Milan, and banished Prospero and his daughter to this island. Now Prospero hopes to end their quarrel. But soon the duke and his courtiers are plotting against Prospero's life. This plot, foiled only at the last moment, exemplifies the idea of danger but not death. Meanwhile, Ferdinand and Miranda, Prospero's daughter, have fallen in love, but there are of course obstacles in their path to the happy ending. And a couple of drunken clowns get up to a series of slapstick adventures with Prospero's monster-like servant, Caliban. The deities Juno, Ceres and Iris appear, and the final reconciliation takes place in a magic circle drawn by Prospero.

In *The Tempest*, the ingredients of tragedy and comedy are not so much mixed as set side by side. A romantic scene involving Miranda and Ferdinand is followed by a “serious” scene of the courtiers plotting, which is followed by a scene for the clown characters, Trinculo and Stephano. If we were feeling sad, *The Tempest* would perhaps purge our sadness with delight.

The line between tragedy and its hybrid partner tragicomedy is often difficult to draw. The ironies which enforce the dialectical conflict of tragedy are simple in formula: each step the hero takes towards a supposed triumph is a step nearer his death, each step one which strengthens the audience's sense of a necessary end. The spectator, knowing or feeling this outcome, is wholly in the confidence of the author and the secret of the play; the characters are not. The spectator stands in a happy position of omniscience. Therefore, his excitement during the performance does not arise from a simple chemical mixture, as it were $x+y$, where x is each decision arising from the hero's wish to assert his personal responsibility, the positive element, and y is the tightening of the net of inevitable destruction, the negative element; but its source is in an active chemical compound, where the resulting passion is xy, imaginatively irreducible, a new substance with fierce properties of its own. It has even been given a name of its own: “tragic irony”.

Yet its counterpart, “comic irony”, is not very different in kind. It may indeed merge at times into the more easily recognizable irony of tragedy. The spectator is equally omniscient, able by his presence in the comic theatre to perform a chemical experiment like his fellow in the tragic theatre. Within his mind he mixes the positive image of a character wishing to be and to assert himself, x, with another aspect of necessity's power to destroy—its power to belittle and undermine by suggesting commonplaceness and triviality, y. Comic irony, however, can prick with a thousand pins in the course of a play, and in its way be as all-pervading and relentless and irresistible in its effect as tragic irony itself. Nor need we assume that such tragicomedy as emerges carries less weight than tragedy, is any the less moral, or bears any the less relationship to the society which promotes it. Its

philosophy may come equally from profound laws of feeling and understanding, just as important in themselves for our apprehension of the quality of life.

Ronald Peacock in his work declared with more justice that both tragedy and comedy "spring from the tension between our imperfect life and our ideal aspirations. They exist together in their dependence on the contradictions of life. They are parallel expressions, in different keys, of our idea of what is good."

We may gladly defer to the sound judgment of Dr Johnson in his familiar defence of Shakespeare's tragicomedy:

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Dr Johnson is of course the last man to invite anarchy in literary or dramatic standards: the play must disclose its design if life will not. But even he allows that "*there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature*": we must be well prepared to admit an endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination.

This genre is represented by such well-known plays as *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1597), *The Winter's Tale* (1610), *The Tempest* (1611) by **W. Shakespeare**, *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608-1609) by **J. Fletcher** as well as *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613) by **J. Fletcher and W. Shakespeare.**

Three Unities in Drama

Greek and Latin drama are strict in form. The stage represents as a single place throughout the action; the plot recounts the events of a single day; and there is very little irrelevant by-play as the action develops. The formula of the practice to

which the Greek and Latin dramatists adhered in general is known as the Three Unities, i.e. the unity of time, place and action. Therefore, the Three Unities were conventions which ancient Greek playwrights were expected to adhere to. Every play was to adhere to these rules, according to their originator, Aristotle. In the name of Aristotle, the three unities were emphasized by the English, the Italian, and the French critics, and especially by the Italians and the French. The English critics of the Renaissance, especially Sir Philip Sidney, regarded the observance of the three unities as obligatory for dramatists. However, in the 17th and 18th centuries, some English critics, especially Dryden and Dr. Johnson, declared that the observance of the three unities was not essential, though Dryden thought that the unity of action was a necessary condition of a successful play. Aristotle means three unities as a description of the norm, not that of an ideal. Three unities are supposed by critics to be useful in contributing to realism of play. Aristotle describes the drama of an earlier age in his important work *On the Art of Poetry*; those who follow his precepts call this disciplined structure the "Three Unities", i.e. the unity of place, the unity of time, and the unity of action. Dealing with the unity of action in some detail, under the general subject of "definition of tragedy", Aristotle wrote:

Now, according to our definition, tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude ... As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole (Aristotle's *Poetics*).

His only reference to the time in the fictive world is in a distinction between the epic and tragic forms:

Epic poetry agrees with tragedy in so far as it is an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type. They differ, in that epic poetry admits but one kind of

metre, and is narrative in form. They differ, again, in their length: for tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas the epic action has no limits of time (Aristotle's *Poetics*).

On place he is less explicit, merely saying that "*tragedy should be confined to a narrow compass*".

Based on the consideration of the dramatic unities of action, time, and place above, it can be inferred that the classical unities or three unities are rules for drama derived from a passage in Aristotle's *Poetics*. In their neoclassical form they are as follows:

1. The *unity of action*

The combination of incidents which are the action of the play, should be one –one story told, which is not to say it has to be about only one person, since characters are not in the centre of the tragedy, but the action itself is. Aristotle is against the plurality of action because it weakens the tragic effect. Number of incidents should be connected to each other in such a way that they must be conducive to one effect. The Unity of Action limits the supposed action to a single set of incidents which are related as cause and effect, "having a beginning, middle, and an end." No scene is to be included that does not advance the plot directly. No subplots, no characters who do not advance the action. This unity of action evidently contains a beginning, a middle and an end, where the beginning is what is "not posterior to another thing," while the middle needs to have something happened before, and something to happen after it, but after the end "there is nothing else." The chain of events has to be of such nature as "might have happened," either being possible in the sense of probability or necessary because of what forewent. Anything absurd can only exist outside of the drama, what is included in it must be believable, which is something achieved not by

probability alone, “It is, moreover, evident from what has been said that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.” Aristotle even recommends things impossible but probable, before those possible but improbable. What takes place should have nothing irrational about it, but if this is unavoidable, such events should have taken place outside of the drama enacted.

2. The *unity of place*: a play should cover a single physical space and should not attempt to compress geography, nor should the stage represent more than one place.

3. The *unity of time*: the action in a play should take place over no more than 24 hours. The unity of time limits the supposed action to the duration, roughly, of a single day; unity of place limits it to one general locality; and the unity of action limits it to a single set of incidents which are related as cause and effect, "having a beginning, a middle, and an end." Concerning the unity of time, Aristotle noted that all the plays since Aeschylus, except two, did illustrate such unity, but he did not lay down such a precept as obligatory.

Elements of Drama

According to Aristotle, there are mainly *five elements*: *imitation; plot; action; dialogue; character,* each of which is discussed in detail below:

Imitation

Imitation means the act of copying somebody or something. It is an act of copying the way somebody talks and behaves, especially to entertain. In literature, imitation is used to describe a realistic portrayal of life, a reproduction of natural objects and actions. This type of imitation includes writing in the spirit of the masters using merely their general principles; borrowing special “beauties” in thought and expression from the works of the best poets; or adapting their materials to the writer’s own age. In drama imitation is more pronounced in

performance. This is understandable because a play is written primarily to be performed. What is being imitated in drama is basically life. Drama tries to present life as realistically as possible on stage. This is why we say that drama mirrors life. According to Aristotle, imitation is an instinct of our nature. For it to be drama a story must be told through dialogue as the characters interact among themselves and that story must have a beginning, middle and an end. It is different from musical presentations. Musicians in these presentations do not imitate anybody. They may wear costumes and act in weird manners but they are being themselves. Some of them take on other names. People dramatizing stories imitate life in the dramatic sense. Over the ages, the attitude of dramatists to imitation differs from one dramatist to another and from one age to another. Some dramatists advocate the imitation of life exactly as it is lived, others insist on the imitation that is as close as possible to life.

Plot

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines plot as a "plan or line of events of a story especially of a novel or a story". In dramatic plot, unlike in the novel where the author describes the characters and incidents they are involved in, the playwright presents the characters in action. This means that plot in drama develops through what the characters do or say, what is done to them, and or what is said about them or to them. Plot is the structure of the actions which is ordered and presented in order to achieve particular emotional and artistic effects in a play. It helps to give the play an organic unity and a coherence that makes the play easy to understand. A good play should therefore possess a unified plot. Plot in simple terms is the arrangement of a story in such a way that there will be a sequential, logical and chronological order. The plot should be arranged in such a way that the action starts from the beginning rises, to a climax and falls to a resolution. It is **arranged in this form – exposition, discovery, point of attack, complication, crisis, climax, denouement or resolution**. Plot should not be confused with story. Plot is the way the story is arranged and it thrives on causality and logical unity. In it, one incident happens and as a result the next one happens and the situation must

be related to each other. It has a beginning, middle and an end. A beginning gives rise to the middle, which in turn raises the dramatic question that is answered in the end, thus, completing what was started in the beginning. Dramatic plot is also expected to produce a result or an effect on the audience. The playwright, therefore, tries to fashion his play in a particular way to produce a particular impression on his audience.

Aristotle divides plot into two – **complex** and **simple** plots. A simple plot is that in which the action is simple and continuous and in which a change of fortune takes place without reversal of the situation and without recognition. In a complex plot, on the other hand, the change is accompanied by a reversal of the situation or by recognition or by both. He also identified **two types of plots** - (a) the **unified** plot and (b) the **episodic** plot. He refers to the unified plot as the well-made plot. In the unified plot, the incidents are presented in a logical order and there is a causal arrangement. In episodic plot, there is no causal relationship between the incidents. The only unifying factor is that the incidents are related or happening to one man. In unified plot, the removal of any incident affects the organic structure of the play, but in episodic plot, we can remove an aspect of the plot without changing or destroying the plot. It means, therefore, that the part that was removed is not necessary.

Dramatic action

Action is the process of doing something or the performance itself. The series of events that constitute the plot in any literary work is referred to as action. It includes what the characters say, do, think and in some cases, fail to do. Action involves activity. This activity becomes more pronounced in drama where the action is presented in concrete form as the actors present the story to the audience for entertainment and education. Drama is the only genre of literature in which the story is presented in dialogue from the beginning to the end. However, dialogue alone does not constitute dramatic action. What makes it drama is the action that is involved. Dramatic action includes facial expression, gestures and movements. So, what makes dialogue dramatic is the presence of action. It is only through action

that the playwright can portray the human situations he chooses to dramatize. It is the action that propels the plot and helps to advance the theme. Dramatic action is a“...series of incidents that are logically arranged by the playwright to achieve specific response like joy, pity, fear, indignation, ridicule, laughter, thoughtful contemplation, from the audience”. In *Hamlet*, the popular quote ‘to be or not to be’ refers to the action. Hamlet is contemplating on the proper action to take against his uncle who he suspects killed his father. He does not want to act until he is sure of it. He therefore organizes a play and presents a similar experience in the play. Luckily, he gets the desired effect as Claudius’ reaction points to his guilt. It would have been possible for Hamlet to kill Claudius immediately, but that would have been the end of the play. So, Hamlet’s inaction helps to increase the suspense and emotional intensity of the play. We can see that all the actions mentioned here are logical. For the action to be logical, the characters must be well- motivated.

Action in the drama could be presented in the following **three forms**: **physical action**; **reported action** and **mental action**.

Physical action. The physical action in drama refers to the movements made by a character in the play. It is visible and may or may not involve dialogue. Physical action could inform of movements/gestures, mime or pantomime.

Reported action. In dramatic action sometimes it is not possible to present every action on stage. This could be as a result of the prevalent convention or because the action cannot be realized on stage. In the Classical Period, for instance, violence was not presented on stage. The playwrights were expected to maintain single settings indoor actions and violence were reported on stage. In *King Oedipus*, the death of Jocasta is reported on stage.

Mental action. Mental action is an action that takes place in the character’s mind. In most cases, mental action is manifested in facial expressions. The mental action includes the action in which the audience is left to imagine what happened. In most cases, it comes at the end of the play as the audience is left to imagine what happened to a character or a group of characters. This is one of the main reasons why movie producers produce part two of some of their films. In the plot, of

course, these events are linked to one another by an unalterable chronology. But in the scenario, these same events have been presented to us in an entirely different order. Thus in studying the plot of a play, we must examine not only the events of which it consists, but also the complex ways in which those events are presented by the scenario.

Setting. Setting is the location of a play. It is the time and place when and where the action of the play takes place. Setting is very important in a play because it helps us to appreciate the background of the play. Also in productions it helps the designers to design appropriate locale, atmosphere, and costume for the play. We can identify the setting through the names of characters.

Types of Setting:

(a) Geographical / Physical / Occupational setting. This is the actual geographical location of the story and whatever surrounds the place where the story is located. It also includes the manner of daily living of the people. This helps in locating the story; for example, it helps us to know if the action of the play takes place in an urban centre or a village, or a bush, or a market place and so on. We can identify the physical setting easily in some plays because the playwright mentions some known landmarks like the names of towns or other important places in the town. In the play *Hamlet* the physical setting is easy to identify because of the fact that two of the major characters in the play are addressed as the "Prince of Denmark" and the "King of Denmark". Physical setting also includes the manner of daily living of the people.

(b) Temporal /Historical setting. This is the period in which a story takes place. It includes date, season and general atmosphere in the locale like war, fuel scarcity, democratic or military rule. This setting, like the physical one, could be presented by a playwright in the characters' dialogue or in the stage direction. It could be stated in some commentaries, especially the ones on the background of the play.

(c) General environmental setting. These are social, moral, emotional, mental and religious backgrounds of the story. It is highlighted through dialogue, stage direction and the characters' interpersonal relationships.

Dialogue

Dialogue in drama is expected to embody such literary and stylistic values: It advances the action in a definite way because it is not used for mere ornamentation or decoration. It is consistent with the character of the speakers, their social positions and special interests. It varies in tone and expression according to nationalities. It gives an impression of naturalness without being actual, verbatim record of what may have been said, since fiction is concerned with "the semblance of reality," not reality itself.

It presents an interplay of ideas and personalities among the people conversing; it sets forth a conversational give and take and not simply a series of remarks of alternating speakers. The playwright imagines certain feelings and ideas, put them together in a condensed form. This is because of the limitations of dramatic performance. The dialogue is designed in a way that it must be heard and understood by the audience. As a result, the continuity of the dialogue should be marked out clearly at every point. Drama is presented only in dialogue so that it should be designed in such a way that through it, the reader or audience must be able to infer the nature of each character, the public and private relationship among several characters, the past as well as the present circumstances of various characters.

Characterization

Since drama presents us directly with scenes which are based on people's actions and interactions, characters play a dominant role in this genre. The characters in plays can generally be divided into **major characters** and **minor characters**, depending on how important they are for the plot. A good indicator as to whether a character is major or minor is the amount of time and speech as well as presence on stage he or she is allocated. As a rule, major characters usually have a lot to say and appear frequently throughout the play, while minor characters have less presence or appear only marginally. Thus, for example, Hamlet is clearly the main character or **protagonist** of Shakespeare's famous tragedy as we can infer from the fact that he appears in most scenes and is allocated a great number of

speeches and, what is more, since even his name appears in the title (he is the **eponymous hero**). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, by contrast, are only minor characters because they are not as vitally important for the plot and therefore appear only for a short period of time. However, they become major characters in Tom Stoppard's comical re-make of the play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, where the two attendants are presented as bewildered witnesses and predestined victims. Occasionally even virtually non-existent characters may be important but this scenario is rather exceptional. An example can be found in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, where the action centres around the arrival of the mysterious Godot, whose name even appears in the title of the play although he never actually materialises on stage.

Major characters are frequently, albeit not exclusively, **multi-dimensional** and **dynamic** (**round characters**) while minor characters often remain **mono-dimensional** and **static** (**flat character**). Multi-dimensional characters display several (even conflicting) character traits and are thus reasonably complex. They also tend to develop throughout the plot (hence, dynamic), though this is not necessarily the case. Hamlet, for example, is marked by great intellectual and rhetorical power but he is also flawed to the extent that he is indecisive and passive. The audience learns a lot about his inner moral conflict, his wavering between whether to take revenge or not, and we see him in different roles displaying different qualities: as prince and statesman, as son, as Ophelia’s admirer, etc. In most cases, he grows from innocence to maturity or from ignorance to knowledge, so he is consistently alert to his environment with its attendant problem and reacts accordingly. He is found almost everywhere in the story. In his own unique way, he participates actively as much as possible in the course of the action. He seems to have no special alignment to any group but tries not to lose his credibility or acceptability. Mono-dimensional characters, on the other hand, can usually be summarised by a single phrase or statement, i.e., they have only few character traits and are generally merely **types**. Frequently, mono-dimensional characters are also static, i.e., they do not develop or change during

the play. A static character is presented in outline and without much individualization. He is usually stable and is said to be static because he retains essentially the same outlook, attitudes, values and dispositions from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. Laertes, Ophelia's brother, for example, is not as complex as Hamlet. He can be described as a passionate, rash youth who does not hesitate to take revenge when he hears about his father's and sister's deaths. As a character, he corresponds to the conventional **revenger type**, and part of the reason why he does not come across as a complex figure is that we hardly get to know him. In the play, Laertes functions as a **foil** for Hamlet since Hamlet's indecisiveness and thoughtfulness appear as more marked through the contrast between the two young men.

Sometimes the quality of characters can also depend on the subgenre to which a play belongs because genres traditionally follow certain conventions even as far as the **dramatis personae**, i.e., the dramatic personnel, are concerned. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, characters in tragedies have to be of a high social rank so that their downfall in the end can be more tragic (the higher they are, the lower they fall), while comedies typically employ "lower" characters who need not be taken so seriously and can thus be made fun of. Since tragedies deal with difficult conflicts and subject matters, tragic heroes are usually complex. According to Aristotle, they are supposed to be neither too good nor too bad but somewhere "in the middle', which allows them to have some tragic "flaw" (hamartia) that ultimately causes their downfall. Since tragic heroes have almost "average" characteristics and inner conflicts, the audience can identify more easily with them, which is an important prerequisite for what Aristotle calls the effect of catharsis (literally, a 'cleansing' of one's feelings), i.e., the fact that one can suffer with the hero, feel pity and fear, and through this strong emotional involvement clarify one's own state of mind and potentially become a better human being. Comedies, by contrast, deal with problems in a lighter manner and therefore do not necessarily require complex figures. Furthermore, types are more appropriate in comedies as their single qualities can be easily exaggerated and thus subverted into

laughable behaviour and actions. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, the weaver Bottom, who foolishly thinks he can be a great actor, is literally turned into an ass and thus becomes the laughingstock of the play.

An author can use two approaches to deliver information about a character:

1) Direct or explicit characterization
This kind of characterization takes a direct approach towards building the character. It uses another character, narrator or the protagonist themselves to tell the readers or audience about the subject.
2) Indirect or implicit characterization
This is a more subtle way of introducing the character to the audience. The audience has to deduce for themselves the characteristics of the character by observing his/her thought process, behaviour, speech, way of talking, appearance, and way of communication with other characters and also by discerning the response of other characters.

Knowing the Dancer from the Dance

Students want to know both *why* a particular play was performed, and *how* it was first done. Knowledge of both sheds light on the spirit in which it was received by the original audience: the *why* and the *how* are mutually illuminating. The reason for a play may be a religious one, and its performance before a congregation in the ambience of a church will absolutely determine the mood and temper of the theatrical occasion. Another play may have been devised for a courtly audience, whose social and cultural attitude may dominate every detail of the performance, manifesting itself in a decorous and ceremonious style of speech and behaviour, as well as in the manners and dress of the character.

To get to know a period masterpiece like Goldsmith's eighteenth-century comedy of middle-class attitudes, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), and to fathom what makes it work in the theatre, some sense of its cultural role is important. On one level, we can recognize its farcical structure and its social mockery when a

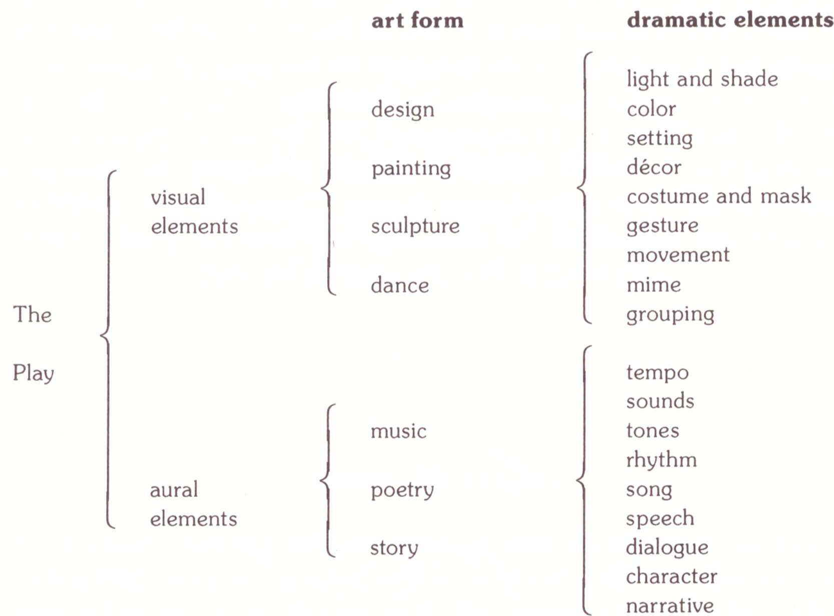
simple mistake of a house for an inn (even if it was based on an actual incident) is inflated to become *“the mistakes of a night”*. On another level, the broad characterization of the play helps even today’s audience understand how Mr. Hardcastle’s love of *“everything that’s old”* accounts for the dilapidated appearance of the house and his daughter’s simple dress. It also encourages the projection of a delicious image of a *“new-fangled”* wife in the irrepressible Mrs. Hardcastle, a self-conscious lady plagued by her wonderfully ill-mannered son Tony Lumpkin.

The pleasures of anticipating the comic blunders and misunderstandings that arise from satirical butts like Hardcastle, his wife and Tony depend upon an audience’s social or cultural memory, and the best comedy works to reveal the lasting and universal laws of the human condition. Performance study thus tends to be historically linked to both the processes and results of drama.

The play will only ignite when purpose and method are actively projected and perceived by actor and audience. At the end of his poem *Among School Children,* Yeats contemplates the complexity of life and creates a brilliant image that we may borrow for the stage:

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

The inseparability of the body and the music that animates it, the unity of the dance and the dancer who performs it, approach the timeless and universal through the particular, and indicate the elusive business of the critic or student of any performing art.



If what a spectator sees and hears during a performance is to be translated into meaning and experience, there must be a fusion of all its elements in the perception of the audience. In the best plays the signals and conventions of performance on the stage – its speech and sound, music and song, gestures and movement, the scenic picture, its colour and light – are so orchestrated that the visual and aural elements of the performance relate and interact, creating the visual poetry we associate with the stage at its best. These elements constitute the grammar and syntax, the vocabulary and idiom, of good theatre.

Words and Voices

In the theatre hearing competes strongly with seeing when the action on the stage is to be perceived and understood. The ear is particularly sensitive to music which may guide the response of the audience for all or part of the time. However, the ear is even quicker to hear voices, although not necessarily words before it hears their sounds. On the stage a speaker can make a word stand out like a signal, drawing attention to itself, as when King Henry V repeats the name St. Crispian again and again before the Battle of Agincourt:

He that shall see this day, and live old age,

Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say, "To-morrow is Saint ***Crispian****:"*
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say, "These wounds I had on ***Crispian's*** *day."*(Shakespeare, *Henry V*)

In such a way Shakespeare's word rises to a crescendo of emotional strength and seems to clinch the resolution of the King and his men for the fight to come. Repetition of a word can charge it with feeling, like Juliet's naming her lover: *"O* ***Romeo****,* ***Romeo****, wherefore art thou* ***Romeo****?"* or Hamlet's mention of his mother's remarriage after less than two months: *"But* ***two months*** *dead – nay, not so much, not* ***two****"*. In Antony's use of *"honourable men"* over Caesar's body, a simple word becomes a cynical one, and when Macduff hears that Macbeth has killed his wife and children – *"****All*** *my pretty ones? / Did you say* ***all****? – O Hell-kite! –* ***All****?"*, the sound *"all"* has changed to a cry of pain.

It is in the power of the spoken word to convey both its meaning and its feeling – so revealing the state of mind, the psychological workings, of the speaker. Nevertheless, such words must fall into patterns of sound to be intelligible, patterns which obey the agreed rules of language, but which may have little to do with formal grammar. What theses patterns always express is the way the sounds are to reach their audience. There are <u>five elements that govern the sound of the words</u>:

1. The rate or speed of speech.
2. The power or strength of speaking, with its effect of crescendo and diminuendo as in musical notation.
3. The emphasis or stress placed on particular words within a unit, like a sentence or a line of verse.
4. The variation in vocal song, the pitch and tone of the words.
5. The pauses and moments of silence, which punctuate the flows of speech and suggest the workings of the mind.

Conventions of Speech

It is significant that in the past all the principal conventions of speech involved an actor's direct address to the spectators, and arose from the proximity and bonding between the stage and the audience:

1. The *prologue*. This is an introductory part of a play. It was spoken to the house before the play began, usually as an appeal for its indulgence, and it was often spoken in rhyming couplets to indicate that its function lay outside the drama proper. The prologue was dropped in modern plays where the main intention was to create an immediate illusion of reality on the rise of the curtain. In many plays the prologue foreshadows the events in the play and sometimes gives a background to the play as can be seen in the example below taken from Christopher Marlowe's *Dr.Faustus*:

[Prologue] Enter Chorus.
Not marching in the fields of Trasimene
Where Mars did mate the warlike Carthagens
Nor sporting in the dalliance of love
In courts of kings where state is overturned,..
The form of Dr Faustus' fortune, good or bad:
And now to patient judgments we appeal
And speak for Faustus in his infancy.
Now is he born of parents base of stock
In Germany within a town called Rhode;
At riper years to Wittenberg he went
Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up.
So much he profits in divinity
That shortly he was graced with doctor's name
Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute
In th' heavenly matters of theology;
Till swoll'n with cunning, of a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach

And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow!

For falling into a devilish exercise

And glutted now with learning's golden gifts

He surfeits upon cursed necromancy:

Nothing so sweet as magic is to him

Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss—

And this man that in his study sits (Christopher Marlowe)

2. The *epilogue* is spoken at the end of a play, usually as a final appeal to the sympathies, if not the mercy, of the audience. It sums up the action of the play and in some cases, makes a statement (an advice or a lesson to be learnt) on the action or events presented in the play.

3. The *soliloquy* (from Latin "speak alone") is a speech made by a character when he is alone. The audience hears it but the other characters are not expected to hear it. It is very popular in Renaissance plays. It was common in non-realistic plays when a character was used to advance the action by revealing his thoughts and intentions directly to the audience. He may be taken at face value even if what he says is strongly ironic, like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (*"Tis but fortune, all is fortune"* (William Shakespeare)) and Edmund in *King Lear* (*"Now, gods, stand up for bastards!"*(William Shakespeare)). The popularity of the soliloquy arose from the stimulation of hearing a character speak in this candid and straightforward way; the actor might hold the audience, as H. Granville-Barker put it, in the palm of his hand. Playwrights use this device to reveal the thoughts or the feelings of specific characters in reaction to certain events or situations. "Customarily, the soliloquy is a means of giving expression to a complex state of mind and feelings, and in most cases the speaker is seen struggling with problems of utmost consequence. This accounts for the intensity which we find in soliloquy. Here, the character thinks aloud as he talks to himself. He pretends that the audience is not there. Soliloquy also offers the dramatist a means of providing a point of view on the action of the play. Apart from serving as a means for revealing characters, it is used to make

significant commentaries on events of the play. In the first soliloquy in *Hamlet*, Hamlet presents the state of his mind and his view on the world:

O that this too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon against self-slaughter. O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world! (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

From it we learn of his father's death, the incestuous affair between his mother and his uncle and it foreshadows the catastrophe at the end of the play when he predicts that the affair will come to no good. He continues:

But two months dead - nay, not so much, not two-
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not permit the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth.
Must I remember? Why, she would hang him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on. And yet within a month –
Let me not think on it – Frailty, thy name is woman –
A little month, before those shoes were old
With which he followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears – why, she –
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer – married with my uncle,…
She married – O most wicked speed! To post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, and it cannot come to good
Break my heart, for I must hold my tongue. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

4. The aside is a dramatic convention in which a character speaks to himself or makes a comment in the presence of another character. However, that other character is not expected to hear the comment but the audience hears it. There is an actual stepping aside of the character who utters an aside from the other characters on the stage. This makes it more unrealistic because it is not possible for him to make the remark in their presence and they will not hear it. An aside is a very brief remark and in most cases it is indicated in the stage direction. Here is an example taken from *Hamlet* when Hamlet feigns madness and is discussing with Polonius:
POL. [Aside] though this is madness, yet there is method in it. Will we walk out of the air my lord? (William Shakespeare)
5. In Elizabethan drama a *Chorus* may serve as a commentator on the action, like the Chorus who links the acts in *Henry V*. But properly the idea of a Chorus derives from the Greek tragic theatre, in which a group of players speak, sing or dance together to expound the past, comment on the present and anticipate the future. They may function like a single character, filling in descriptive detail, furthering the action and guiding the audience to the required feeling. On the modern stage the Women of Canterbury in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) provide a good example of choric voices directing the spectator's response. As the Knights approach Thomas à Becket to kill him, the emotions of the Women, orchestrated in contrasting pitches of voice, slowly begin to pervade the audience:
I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened
By subtile forebodings; I have heard
Fluting in the night-time, fluting and owls, have seen at noon
Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridiculous…

The Style of Speaking: Speech and Song

The sort of dialogue that is imposed on the play as a whole also constitutes a convention, providing an immediate signal to the spectator. Such signals have an infinite variety, but may be reduced to three kinds:

1. Colloquial prose. To represent life realistically a play may use a conversational style, as do many plays. However, naturalistic speaking may mask a hidden and ironic purpose, as does Harold Pinter's black comedy *The Homecoming* (1965), with its sinister beginning:

Max: What have you done with the scissors? (Pause.) I said I'm looking for the scissors. What have you done with them? (Pause.) Did you hear me? I want to cut something out of the paper.

Lenny: I'm reading the paper.

The uneasy repetitions and the banality of this exchange harbour the explosive mixture of humour and threat.

2. Stylized prose. The heightening of unreal, stylized language warns the audience that realism is not the aim, but that a more artificial, and often mocking, level of performance and perception is intended, as in Wilde and Shaw. In Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, Catherine shows a special ebullience in reporting the heroism of Major Sergius Saranoff: *A cavalry charge! Think of that! He defied our Russian commanders – acted without orders – led a charge on his own responsibility – headed it himself – was the first man to sweep through their guns. Can you see it, Raina: our gallant splendid Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing, thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Serbs and their dandified Austrian officers like chaff…*

The crescendo of clichés here adds a touch of the ludicrous to the characters, and to the comedy that follows.

3. The *rhetorical or lyrical style*. Here a higher imaginative level is exhibited by the conceits and figures of the language, its poetic grandeur, its edging towards extremes. This is language which can reach the heights of the histrionic sublime, and implies a movement and gesture that is larger than life. The hero of Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1587) voices a gigantic image of power, and even in the arms of his Queen Zenocrate he is not given to whispering sweet nothings:

Now, bright Zenocrate, the world's fair eye,
Whose beams illuminate the lamps of heaven,

Whose cheerful looks do clear the cloudy air
And clothe it in a crystal livery,
Now rest thee here on fair Larissa plains
Where Egypt and the Turkish empire parts (Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*)

Emphasis in Drama

By applying the negative principle of economy of attention, the dramatist may prevent his auditors at any moment from diverting their attention to the subsidiary features of the scene; but it is necessary for him also to apply the positive principle of emphasis in order to force them to focus their attention on the one most important detail of the matter in hand. The principle of emphasis is the principle whereby the artist contrives to throw into vivid relief those features of his work which incorporate the essence of the thing he has to say, while at the same time he gathers and groups within a scarcely noticed background those other features which merely contribute in a minor manner to the central purpose of his plan.

It is obviously easy to emphasize by **position**. The last moments in any act are of necessity emphatic because they are the last. During the intermission, the minds of the spectators will naturally dwell upon the scene that has been presented to them most recently. If they think back toward the beginning of the act, they must first think through the concluding dialogue. This lends to a special curtain-falls importance of which modern dramatists never fail to take advantage.

This simple form of emphasis by position was impossible in the Elizabethan theatre and was quite unknown to Shakespeare. His plays were produced on a platform without a curtain; his actors had to make an exit at the end of every scene; and usually his plays were acted from beginning to end without any intermission. It was therefore impossible for him to bring his acts to an emphatic close by a clever curtain-fall. This advantage has been gained only in recent times because of the improved physical conditions of the theatre.

At the beginning of XX century it was customary for dramatists to end every act with a bang that would reverberate in the ears of the audience throughout the

entr'-acte. A decade later playwrights showed a tendency towards more quiet curtain-falls. The exquisite close of the first act of The Admirable Crichton by J.M. Barrie was slightly suggestive of the past and future of the action; and the second act ended pictorially, without a word. But whether a curtain-fall gains its effect actively or passively, it should sum up the entire dramatic accomplishment of the act that it concludes and foreshadow the subsequent progress of the play.

Likewise, the first moments in an act are of necessity emphatic because they are the first. After an intermission, the audience is prepared to watch with renewed eagerness the resumption of the action. The close of the third act of Beau Brummell makes the audience long expectantly for the opening of the fourth; and whatever the dramatist may do after the raising of the curtain will be emphasized because he does it first. An exception may be made of the opening act of a play. A dramatist seldom sets forth anything of vital importance during the first ten minutes of his piece because the action is likely to be interrupted by late-comers in the audience and other distractions incident to the early hour. But after an intermission, he is surer of attention, and may thrust important matter into the openings of his acts.

The last position is more potent than the first. It is because of its finality that exit speeches are emphatic. It has become customary in the theatre to applaud a prominent actor nearly every time he leaves the stage; and this custom has made it necessary for the dramatist to precede an exit with some speech or action important enough to justify the interruption. Though Shakespeare and his contemporaries knew nothing of the curtain-fall, they at least fully understood the emphasis of exit speeches. They even tagged them with rhyme to give them greater prominence.

It is also customary in the drama to emphasize by **proportion**. More time is given to significant scenes than to dialogues of subsidiary interest. The strongest characters in a play are given most to say and do; and the extent of the lines of the others is proportioned to their importance in the action. Hamlet says more and does more than any other character in the tragedy in which he figures. This is as it should be; but, on the other hand, Polonius, in the same play, seems to receive

greater emphasis by proportion than he really deserves. The part is very fully written. Polonius is often on the stage and talks incessantly whenever he is present; but, after all, he is a man of small importance and fulfils a minor purpose in the plot. He is, therefore, falsely emphasized. That is why the part of Polonius is what French actors call a "faux bon role" – a part that seems better than it is.

One of the easiest means of emphasis is the use of **repetition**. Certain catch-words, which incorporate a recurrent mood of character or situation, are repeated over and over again throughout the course of a character's dialogue as in S. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*: "Nothing to be done" and "Why don't we hang ourselves?" uttered by Vladimir and Estragon or in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

Macbeth: Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house.
Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more, − Macbeth shall sleep no more!

Another obvious means of emphasis in the drama is the use of **antithesis**. The design of a play is not so much to expound characters as to contrast them. People of varied views and opposing aims come nobly to the grapple in a struggle that vitally concerns them; and the tensity of the struggle will be augmented if the difference between the characters is marked. The comedies of Ben Johnson, which held the stage for two centuries after their author's death, owed their success largely to the fact that they presented a constant contrast of mutually foiling personalities. But the expedient of antithesis is most effectively employed in the balance of scene against scene. What is known as "comic relief" is introduced in various plays not only to rest the sensibilities of the audience but also to emphasize the solemn scenes that come before and after it. It is for this purpose that Shakespeare, in *Macbeth*, introduces a low-comic soliloquy into the midst of a murder scene:

Porter: Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes, and unprovokes; it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance: therefore, much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and disheartens

him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him.

Hamlet's ranting over the grave of Ophelia is made more emphatic by antithesis with the foolish banter that precedes it:

Hamlet: Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.
Woul't weep, woul't fight, woul't fast, woul't tear thyself?
Woul't drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine,
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

A less familiar means of emphasis is that which owes its origin to **surprise**. This expedient must be used with great delicacy, because a sudden and startling shock of surprise is likely to diseconomise the attention of the spectators and flurry them out of a sane conception of the scene. But if a moment of surprise has been carefully led up to by anticipatory suggestion, it may be used to throw into sharp and sudden relief of an important point in the play. The appearance of the ghost in the closet scene of *Hamlet* is made emphatic by it unexpectedness:

Horatio: Look, my lord, it comes! [Enter Ghost.]
Hamlet: Angels and ministers of grace defend us! –
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell… (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

A further means of emphasis is the use of **climax**. The whole action should sweep upward in intensity until the highest point is reached. In Shakespearean drama the highest point came somewhat early in the piece, usually in the third act of the five that Shakespeare wrote; but in contemporary plays the climax is almost

always placed at the end of the penultimate act, - the fourth act if there are five, and the third act if there are four. Nowadays the four-act form with a strong climax at the end of the third act seems to be most often used. This is the form of Henry Arthur Jones' *Mrs. Dane's Defense*, of Sir Arthur Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, and *The Gay Lord Quex*. Each beging with an act of exposition, followed by an act of rising interest. Then the whole action of the play rushes upward toward the curtain-fall of the third act, after which an act is used to bring the play to a terrible or a happy conclusion.

But perhaps the most effective form of emphasis in the drama is emphasis by **suspense**. Wilkie Collins, who with all his faults as a critic of life remains the most skilful maker of plots in English fiction, used to say that the secret of holding the attention of one's readers lay in the ability to do three things*: "Make 'em laugh; make 'em weep; make 'em wait."* There is no use in making an audience wait, however, unless you first give them an inkling of what they are waiting for. This method of emphasizing by suspense gives force to what are known technically as the *scenes a faire* of a drama. A *scene of faire* is a scene late in a play that is demanded absolutely by the previous progress of the plot. The audience knows that the scene must come sooner or later, and if the element of suspense be ably managed, is made to long for it some time before it comes. In *Hamlet*, for instance, the killing of the king by the hero is of course a *scene a faire*. The audience knows before the first act is over that such a scene is surely coming. When the king is caught praying in his closet and Hamlet stands over him with naked sword, the spectators think at last that the *scene a faire* has arrived; but Shakespeare "makes 'em wait" for two acts more, until the very ending of the play. In comedy the commonest *scenes a faire* are love scenes that the audience anticipates and longs to see. Perhaps the young folks are frequently on the stage, but the desired scene is prevented by the presence of other characters. Only after many movements the lovers are left alone; and when at last the pretty moment comes, the audience glows with long-awaited enjoyment.

It is always dangerous for a dramatist to omit a scene a faire, - to raise in the minds of his audience an expectation that is never satisfied. Sheridan did this in *The School for Scandal* when he failed to introduce a love scene between Charles and Maria, and Henry Arthur Jones did it in *Whitewashing Julia* when he made the audience expect throughout the play a revelation of the truth about the puff-box and then left them disappointed in the end. But these cases are exceptional. In general it may be said that an unsatisfied suspense is no suspense at all.

Place and Space

In the history of western theatre there have been three basic stage shapes:

1) **arena**: playing with the audience nearly all around the stage;

2) **thrust**: with the stage jutting out into the audience;

3) **frame**: where the actor remains inside the arch of the proscenium.

The Arena Stage

The finest examples of drama played within a circular auditorium are those of the towering tragedians of 5th century BC Athens: Aeschylus; Sophocles and Euripides. The occasion for Greek tragedy was the annual five-day religious festival of Dionysus, performed for the city in the presence of its priests, but the elements that determined the conventions of the Greek drama were both physical and traditional:

1. *Its scale and size*. The Greek word for “theatre” was “a seeing place” and great circular terraces were cut into the convenient rock face of a hill to provide the seating for huge audiences (27000-56000). The actors therefore played in the open air and in daylight, and the vast scale of the performance made necessary the actor’s full padded costume, high boots and tall headdress, as well as his statuesque immobility and stentorian speech.

2. *The shape* of the theatre was round, so that the actors were all but surrounded by the spectators. The keynote of Greek tragedy was therefore a quality of formality

and ceremonial, which encouraged a performance that enjoyed communal ritual, the actors acting out the common lore and legend of their mass audience.

3. *The Chorus*, in song, chant and dance (with the help of flute-player), performed virtually in the centre of this theatre in a large circular orchestra ("dancing-place"). The orchestra had an entrance on either side and an altar at its centre. The Chorus, made up of fifteen men, by far outstripped the actors in number, lending a proper weight to their ritual function of speaking for the audience.

4. *The actors*, also male, virtually paraded themselves like masked icons on a long platform that was built behind the orchestra.

It is clear that there was never any pretence of realism in a performance. Any "action" in the plot took place offstage and was reported by a speaker, and all speech was in verse and formal in the extreme, with no trace of the conversational idiom of modern prose dialogue.

The later Middle Ages also furnished interesting examples of arena staging. The medieval pageant wagon hauled along narrow streets, or the parade of "mansions" disposed about the market square, offered performance largely seen in the round.

The Corpus Christi cycles were as profoundly religious as the Greek tragic trilogies, but the physical conditions of performance could not have been more different. The pageant wagon and the mansion stage were each no more than the size of a hay-cart, and the spectators who pressed around them on foot were accordingly in much closer touch with the actors than the vast audience in a Greek arena.

The greater proximity between actor and audience meant that a medieval performance was more intimate and individualized than a Greek one. Accordingly, details of real life and common behaviour, as well as elements of local dialect and familiar speech, made these plays more approachable and their experience more sociable. This sense of shared familiarity is characteristic of all street theatre, from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* of the sixteenth century to the *ad hoc* amateur and professional companies of "alternative" or "fringe" theatre today.

The Thrust Stage

The most vigorous development in English drama, encompassing the work of such celebrated playwrights as Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson, as well as many other giants, took place in an Elizabethan playhouse that reveled in a stage built out into the middle of its audience. This has been given the descriptive name of “thrust” or “apron” stage, and in its essentials it proved to be so effective that it has provided the model for many new theatres built in recent years.

The elements of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre (1599-1613) exemplify the characteristics of most Elizabethan stages:

1. The building was again virtually *circular* and probably not much more than 24 meters in diameter – thus it was another intimate theatre without necessarily being realistic: an aside or a soliloquy to the house were conventions that came naturally to it.
2. It was *open to the sky* and for illumination relied entirely on daylight.
3. The *capacity* of the playhouse was very great (about 2,000 – 3,000).
4. The *great platform* upon which the actors chiefly performed was approximately 12 meters wide and 9 meters deep – in relation to the size of the playhouse an unexpectedly spacious acting area that permitted grand and fluid movement.
5. In the façade behind the platform there were two symmetrical *doors* – which implied that all entrances were made by moving downstage into the house and all exits by moving upstage away from it.
6. Between these doors it is believed that there was a *curtained discovery space*, useful as a way of showing a *tableau* in the course of the main action.
7. A *balcony* above and behind the platform permitted action on a second level.

Shakespeare showed what might be done in a playhouse with so much acting space and so little scenery. As Granville-Barker pointed out in his *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Shakespeare’s strategy was to create a “cinematographic patchwork” without mentioning location. He was less interested in places than in persons, constructing his rhythmical sequence of episodes in striking parallel or contrast. The thrust stage served the playwright well, because it was an actor’s stage of

endless flexibility and variety, a poetic stage that permitted rapid changes of location free from the constraints of realism. William Poel, the Elizabethan revivalist of the early twentieth century, believed that the Globe made possible "a special kind of realism": "The audience was in the play, not in front of it; the action of the play was not in Rome or Alexandria; it was here and now; it was Elizabethan, and immediate… essentially an experiment with time".

The Proscenium Stage

Today's audiences are most familiar with the picture-frame stage constructed within the proscenium arch, and it is this stage that has transformed the nature of the dramatic experience in modern times. It developed in Europe during the period of the late Renaissance, and in England in the seventeenth century after the Restoration of Charles II (1660).

As the frame around the forward acting area evolved, so it *divided the available space between the scenery and the players*, keeping its new scenic borders, shutters and wings painted on canvas frames at the back of the forestage. At the same time the proscenium arch supplied *a necessary structure to house two, four or six entrance and exit doors* (limited to two in 18th century) and, above the doors, *to support two small balconies opposite one another*.

The Restoration playhouse was an *indoor theatre*, and remained *small and intimate*. Christopher Wren's design for Drury lane in 1674 would apparently have held only 500 people, with about 11 meters between the apron and the back of the house. With the same overall lighting, *the actors* seemed to be actually *playing in the same room with the spectators*. Needless to say, the Restoration was the great age of all forms of address to the audience, especially aside.

The wings and shutters of the Restoration and 18th-century stage were so *symmetrical* that the scene they flanked could never pretend to realism. It is hardly appropriate to call the result "scenery": at best the *scenic pieces were decorative*, leaving the *actors no inducement to perform among them*. Over a period of two

centuries any idea about a realistic set and décor to match a realistic performance was very slow to come.

The realism of a "setting" integrated with the action of the play did not emerge until 19th century, when the apron diminished until it was useless as an acting area. The proscenium arch seemed now to extend all around the stage like the frame of a picture, with the spectators for the most part sitting in front of it, so forcing the actor to stay within the limits of the interior action of the play and perform within what now became a "box set". The box often resembled the interior of a room, which in turn had to be filled with stage furniture and other props. And so the actor's manner of speaking and behaving were required to match the décor, rather than the other way round.

This was a theatre of scenic illusion and it was made possible by the growth of machinery to fly scenic curtains and other pieces, and to create artificial lighting and color effects – all hidden in the work-space behind the proscenium (London's Savoy Theatre was the first to adopt electric lighting in 1881). However, all this was accomplished at a price: the actor was compelled to retreat into the better-lit scenic area and change the style of his acting to dominate and address those on the stage rather than the audience itself. Movement on the stage was more effective if it was lateral, i.e., from side to side ("crossing" the stage), rather than to and from the audience. The actor might then be praised for actually ignoring the presence of the audience and scolded if he stepped outside the frame of the "illusion".

It followed that the actor's speech and gesture derived more and more from the character he was playing; his lines became less and less declamatory and ceased to be directed at the house. In the "well-made play" of the late 19th century, the playwright himself was forced to devise emotional patterns of action which were designed to involve the spectator anew and draw him back into the play.

Structure

The outline of a Greek tragedy

Greek tragedy was not divided into acts, but played continuously, with four or five narrative segments divided by choric odes.

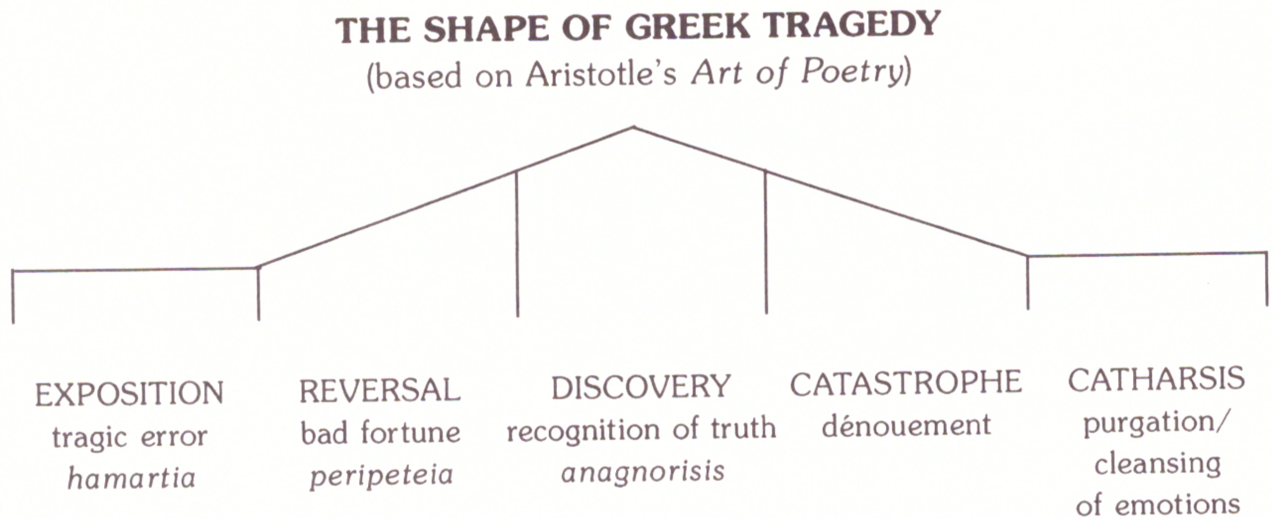
Greek name	Function in the drama
1. *prologos*	prologue spoken before the entry of the chorus
parodos (parode)	song of the chorus sung on or after entering
2. *epeisodion 1*	first episode of spoken dialogue between songs
stasimon 1	first song of the chorus (in place)
3. *epeisodion 2*	second episode
stasimon 2	second song of the chorus
4. *epeisodion 3*	third episode
stasimon 3	third song of the chorus
5. *exodus (exode)*	exit following the last song of the chorus

In practice the Greek pattern also supplied a classic sequence of traditional divisions or segments in the structure of almost any play, the terms of which have proved to be remarkably serviceable in modern drama:

The traditional structure of a play

exposition	the situation to be known at the start (possibly implied from past events)
development	the complication of the situation ("the rising action", "tying the knot")
crisis	the climax of the action (the turning point)
denouement	the catastrophe, the resolution ("the falling action")

Roughly following this arrangement, the theatre has down the years evolved a few particular patterns associated with different forms.



This pattern may be readily traced in **Sophocles**'s *Oedipus the King*, where the dramatic construction is especially flawless. The tragedy opens with the oracle's pronouncement that the pestilence ravaging Thebes may be purged only if the killer of the former king (Laius) is discovered. After such an absorbing exposition, Oedipus's fortunes begin to turn and little by little the ugly truth comes out – that the confident Oedipus himself was not only the killer of his own father,but that he unknowingly married his own mother. It is a terrible tale of sacrilege, with all the taboos violated. Jocasta first realizes the truth and rushes offstage to kill herself, and only then Oedipus himself fully recognizes what has happened and in a catastrophe unlike any other puts out his own eyes. A catharsis of pity and fear (pity for the hero and fear of making a similar error) is in Aristotle's opinion the maximum emotional response an audience can make.

The Elizabethan five-act play

The concept of the five-act division of a play began with the rather casual statement from **Horace** in his *Ars Poetica*, "Let a play be neither shorter nor longer than five acts" (trans. T.A. Moxon, Everyman edn., 67). This was taken up as a law

by French neoclassical dramatists, and in England it was adopted by Ben Jonson. Although Shakespeare did not bother with it, and his plays were performed continuously as if one-act, subsequent editors inserted the five-act division, adding arbitrary scene-divisions.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) supplies a suitable example of the pattern. The political situation in Rome, with Caesar in an all-powerful position, is established in the first act by his popular procession through the streets; this exposition provides the cause of the conspiracy by Brutus and Cassius, seen in the second act as the complication of the plot. Caesar's assassination in the Forum on the Ides of March in the third act marks the crisis of the action, and for its resolution the fourth act depicts the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius. Antony's victory at the Battle of Philippi brings on the catastrophe and the inevitable tragic end for both of the conspirators.

Subplots, double plots and themes

One of the distinctions of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama was the opportunity granted by its open stagecraft for playwrights to weave two or more stories together within a single play. For example:

- *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (Thomas Heywood, 1603): the tragic love of Anne for Wendoll and the nature of her husband's "kind" revenge are strongly contrasted by social class with the tragicomic contest over Susan Mountford by her brother Sir Charles and Sir Francis Acton.

- *The Changeling* (Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, 1622): the ugly sexual blackmail of Beatrice-Joanna by the villain De Flores is paralleled in an asylum by the lovely Isabella, who withstands Lollio, her doctor-husband's "usher of idiots."
- *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (John Ford, 1625): two other stories are used to measure the quality of Giovanni's incestuous passion for his sister Annabella, that of the revenge of Hippolita and that of the ludicrous courtship of the stupid Bergetto. The inadequacy of Annabella's various suitors has the effect of raising Giovanni in our esteem.

In this period, Shakespeare was particularly skilled in manipulating the multiple plot in tragedy, comedy and the history play:

- *The Merchant of Venice* (1596): the repugnant story of Antonio's conflict with Shylock is mitigated by the subplot of Bassanio's love for Portia, which itself is idealized by the presence of the Jessica/Lorenzo sub-plot.
- *Henry IV, Part I* (1597): the three worlds of the Court, the rebels and the tavern invite a comparison between political and personal duty, honour and cynicism, to which the several perspectives of the King, Hal and Hotspur, and Falstaff together contribute.
- *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598): the comic courtship between Beatrice and Benedick accentuates the quasi-tragic relationship between Claudio and Hero, the two plots finally coming together for maximum emotional impact.
- *Hamlet* (1601): the story of Polonius and Laertes reflects that of the late King Hamlet and the prince, and touches and expands the issue of a father's relationship with his son.
- *King Lear* (1605): the parallelism of the Lear and Gloucester stories, with the gratitude of their offspring, is unmistakable; less easy to recognize is the way the Gloucester subplot is used as an emotional reinforcement of the main plot: while Gloucester tries to take his own life, the King goes mad.

In British drama multiple plotting was less common in subsequent years. Sheridan had a fondness for parallel affairs in *The Rivals* (1775), where the honest

deceit of captain Absolute in wooing Lydia is set in contrast with the courtship of Julia by the jealous Faulkland, and in *The School for Scandal*, in which the hypocrisy of Joseph Surface is balanced by the happy honesty of his brother Charles. In the modern period, the more naturalistic the playwriting, the more natural and easy it is to mingle the stories of several characters at once. Sean O'Casey's plays of modern Irish life trace several threads simultaneously: in *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), the tragedy of Jack Clitheroe and his wife Nora is complemented by the comedy of the Irish workmen Fluther, Peter and the Covey, as well as by the tragicomedy of the women Bessie Burgess and Mrs. Gogan, each representing a different political or religious position.

These examples show how one plot may be emphasized and elaborated by the shadow of another – not as "relief", but by repetition and by contrast.

<u>Levels of action, levels of meaning</u>

It becomes clear that the manipulation of a plot allows a play to tell more than a story. Ordering the play's structure can convey hidden or ironic suggestions at the same time as it tells the story, so that in performance the contribution of the plot to the whole can be incalculable.

We may say that **Shakespeare**'s *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595) is "about" romantic love, and, analyzed clinically, the plot yields no less than five love stories. It is essential, however, to recognize that these are written and played in four different styles:

- *Theseus and Hyppolita*, *the Duke of Athens and his betrothed*, are the most natural and conventional of the couples: they oversee the others, and, if anything, we see through their more normal eyes.
- *Titania and Oberon*, the fairy king and queen, behave in a highly fantastic, whimsical and insubstantial manner: their sphere is the wood near Athens at night, and it is crucial that they establish its unearthly nature.

- *Hermia and Lysander*, and *Helena and Demetrius*, the two pairs of young lovers, are presented at yet another level of almost literary, idealized, romantic love, full of capricious, overwrought passion.
- *Pyramus and Thisbe*, played by clowns and absurdly burlesqued, are offered puppetlike as a play-within-a-play, and are therefore to be seen at an even further, and laughable, distance from reality.

As one pair of lovers conflicts with another both on the stage and in the imagination, so the audience recognizes more sharply their comic differences. Puck darts and slips between them, securing their entanglement, and in one part of the plot sets up the outrageous confrontation between the Queen of the Fairies and Bottom the Weaver, the most delicate with the grossest of creatures. Without the structural use and amoral presence of Puck, the comedy's infinite variety of human attitudes to love could not be explored.

LEVELS OF COMIC ACTION AND STYLE IN
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Level	Characters
Supernatural (Fantastic)	Titania, Oberon, Puck
Idealized (Romantic)	Hermia, Lysander Helena, Demetrius
Normal (Natural)	Theseus, Hippolyta
Subnormal (Eccentric)	Quince, Bottom, Flute Snout, Snug, Starveling
Burlesque (Absurd)	Pyramus, Thisbe

Shakespeare particularly favored the interwoven plot. The comedy *As You Like It* (1599) offers another four love affairs (Rosalind/Orlando, Celia/Oliver,

Touchstone/Audrey and Sylvius/Phebe), again pursued in extravagantly different styles and at several different levels, whereby the play teaches its audience that the amorous relationship comes in many guises. Such juxtapositions also underlie the comic craftsmanship of *Twelfth Night* (1602), which eposes the lady Olivia to four dramatically different kinds of lover in Orsino, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Malvolio and Viola/Cesario, again to explore with the audience what is genuine and what is arbitrary.

Eric Bentley suggested memorably that plot is "like a perverse traffic policeman, steering the cars, not past, but into each other", and this explains many of the structural arrangements and juxtapositions. Plotting is the hidden machinery that makes all the wheels turn in a play. Nevertheless, it may do this in an infinite variety of ways, and dramatic frameworks and patterns are not so mechanical as this suggests. In a good play a plot is not always simply a formula, but it is often an essential contribution to the art form.

Elizabethan Theatre

Elizabethan Theatre is a general term denoting the plays written and performed in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Owing to Elizabeth I this period is known as the Golden Age of English Drama. It was her who promoted the flourish of English theatre and encouraged building the first permanent theatres.

Most playing companies in the sixteenth century travelled from town to town and used London as their base. The establishment of a theatre district in the London area, however, was a lengthy process fraught with disagreements, financial problems, and legal restraint. Nonetheless, the move towards permanence by a select number of innovators highlights the appeal and support for the performing arts and is an indicator of the increase in popularity of the theatre during the Elizabethan era.

In the early years of Elizabeth's reign groups of players performed where they could, occasionally indoors in halls to provide entertainment at court or in great houses, but more frequently in public in the square or rectangular yards of a

number of inns in the city of London, the galleries round the yards being used by spectators. The companies were all licensed by the patronage of some great lord to travel and perform, for, if unlicensed, they were, according to a statute of 1598, technically deemed "Rogues Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars". The civic authorities of the city of London generally showed hostility to players, whom they saw as a nuisance, promoting crowds and disorder, and distracting people from their proper occupations, as well as from divine service on Sundays. Following a prohibition of 1559, which does not seem to have had much effect, the Common Council of London in December 1574 banned performances in taverns in the city unless innkeepers were licensed and the plays first subjected to strict supervision and censorship.

One distinctive feature of the companies was that they included only males. Until the reign of Charles II, female parts were played by adolescent boy players in women's costume.

The first man who built an outdoor theatre was James Burbage. He built the first permanent English public theatre in 1576 and called it *The Theatre*. Burbage's theatre was so successful that it was quickly followed by others: *The Curtain* in 1577, *The Newington Butts* in 1579, *The Rose* in 1587, *The Swan* in 1595, *The Globe* in 1599, *The Fortune* in 1600 and others in the early 17 century.

In Elizabethan Era there were two types of theatres – public (the Theatre, the Globe, the Curtain, the Swan) and private ones (Blackfriars). There were quite a few differences between them. First, the private theatres were indoor spaces and were much smaller in terms of audience space. They probably sat only about 500. As the private theatres were indoors, they had to be artificially lit, by candles. Another very important difference was the location of the private theatres. Unlike the public theatres, which had to be located outside the city's boundaries, the private theatres were located in the city of London.

The private playhouses charged much higher prices, when standing-room cost a penny at the public theatres, and a seat in the galleries two pence, the private playhouses were charging sixpence. All the audience was seated at the private

houses. Moreover, greater comfort was offered in private theatres – cushions on the benches. Members of the audience could pay extra money for the privilege to have a stool and sit on the stage. Act divisions do not at this time appear to have been observed as intervals at the public theatres, and music was not played between the acts. At Blackfriars music was played before the performance began, and sometimes there was dancing or singing too between the acts. Probably intervals were required because the candles needed to be trimmed; but music was a special feature of small, enclosed theatres, where soft sounds could be heard, and a range of instruments used.

All the public theatres, though varied in shape from round to square to octagonal, were designed according to similar principles. The basic plan – a yard with a stage jutting into the centre of it and three levels of galleries surrounding the yard – suggests that it may well have been modeled on inn-yard or courtyard performances of an earlier period. The stage itself consisted of two acting levels, and on each level there were several distinct acting areas.

The size and design of the theatre also made possible a highly flexible drama. The main acting surface was generalized but it was not restricted to a limited number of locales established by set pieces. The stage could become any number of places simply by the departure of one set of characters and the appearance of another, implying in their dialogue a new location. The other acting areas made possible a wide variety of discovery scenes, bedroom scenes and balcony scenes, not to mention disappearance scenes through a trapdoor on the ground level stage. Only a few props were used to suggest the location of a scene: a bed, a throne, a tree, a rock.

Usually built of timber, lath and plaster and with thatched roofs, the early theatres were vulnerable to fire, and were replaced (when necessary) with stronger structures. When the Globe burned down in June 1613, it was rebuilt with a tile roof; when the Fortune burned down in December 1621, it was rebuilt in brick (and apparently was no longer square).

The grandest theatre of the Elizabethan era was The Globe. In 1597, the city fathers closed down The Theatre. In late 1598, Richard Burbage (James Burbage's son) and his men dismantled it and hauled it in pieces across the Thames to Southwark. It took them six months to rebuild it, and when they did, they renamed it the Globe.

Scholars disagree about what the Globe actually looked like because there are no surviving drawings from the time or detailed written descriptions. Shakespeare refers to the building in "Henry V" as "this wooden O", so we have a sense that it was round or octagonal. It is presumed that an important influence on the design of the theater was the bear-baiting and bull-baiting rings built in Southwark. These "sports" arenas were circular, open to the sky, and had galleries all around.

The building was small enough to ensure that the actors would be heard, but we know that performances could draw audiences as large as 2,500 to 3,000 people. These truly packed houses must have been quite uncomfortable. Those who paid an admission price of a penny stood throughout the performance. Some of the audience even sat in a gallery behind the performers. Their seats were very expensive, and though they saw only the actors' backs and probably could not hear very well, they were content to be seen by the other members of the audience.

The conditions of an Elizabethan performance differed significantly from those of today. Of the three thousand spectator capacity, about a thousand of them would have been those standing in the galleries. The performances had no intervals, and vendors circulated the audience with food and beverages. Performances would have started around 2 o'clock lasting about two hours. The time of day means sunlight would have provided a well lit space where the audience was very aware of their surroundings. If it looked like rain, one had to decide if the roof of the gallery warranted the extra penny or two that it cost. Most Elizabethans wore hats, so some jostling, particularly among those standing, would have been likely as patrons secured a good view of the stage. Wealthier patrons in the galleries would likely have required cushions to make their seats more comfortable.

At first there was little music, but soon players of instruments were added to the company. The stage was covered with straw or rushes. There may have been a painted wall with trees and hedges, or a castle interior with practicable furniture. A placard announced the scene. Stage machinery seems never to have been out of use, though in the early Elizabethan days it was probably primitive. The audience was near and could view the stage from three sides. Whatever effects were gained were the result of the gorgeous and costly costumes of the actors, together with the art and skill with which they were able to invest their roles.

The use of the **Chorus** in Elizabethan plays derives ultimately from its use in Ancient Greek drama, where it consisted of a group of actors who spoke in unison or were sometimes divided into two groups to speak alternately, in a kind of conversation or debate. The Chorus represented a voice that stood apart from - and commented on – the main action:

1) it might be heard as a community voice, interpreting the action in terms of the moral and cultural practices of the time;

2) it might comment favourably or unfavourably on the behaviour of the characters;

3) it might discuss the role of the gods in supporting or opposing one or more of the characters;

4) it might simply fill in parts of the action not seen on stage;

5) at the end of the play, it might provide a moral and religious comment, pointing the lessons to be learned from the action just witnessed and offering warnings or advice.

Not all Elizabethan dramas include a Chorus; where it does appear, it has been reduced to a single voice. Its inclusion depends very largely on the kind of play that is being presented and whether a Chorus is necessary or appropriate. *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe employs the Chorus in a number of functions:

1) to explain the kind of play the audience is about to witness:

Chorus. Not marching now in fields of Thrasymene,

Where Mars did mate the Carthaginians;

Nor sporting in the dalliance of love,

In courts of kings where state is overturn'd;

Nor in the pomp of proud audacious deeds,

Intends our Muse to vaunt her heavenly verse:

Only this, gentlemen,—we must perform

The form of Faustus' fortunes, good or bad:

To patient judgments we appeal our plaud,

And speak for Faustus in his infancy.

2) to tell ‘the story so far and fill in details of Faustus' birth and early career:

Chorus. Now is he born, his parents base of stock,

In Germany, within a town call'd Rhodes:

Of riper years, to Wertenberg he went,

Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up.

So soon he profits in divinity,

The fruitful plot of scholarism grac'd,

That shortly he was grac'd with doctor's name,

Excelling all whose sweet delight disputes

In heavenly matters of theology.

3) to anticipate the first part of the action, as Faustus turns towards forbidden knowledge:

Chorus. Till swoln with cunning, of a self-conceit,

His waxen wings did mount above his reach,

And, melting, heavens conspir'd his overthrow;

For, falling to a devilish exercise,

And glutted now with learning's golden gifts,

He surfeits upon cursed necromancy;

Nothing so sweet as magic is to him,

Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss:

And this the man that in his study sits.

4) to fill in episodes not represented on the stage and to introduce a new location:
CHORUS. When Faustus had with pleasure ta'en the view
Of rarest things, and royal courts of kings,
He stay'd his course, and so returned home;
Where such as bear his absence but with grief,
I mean his friends and near'st companions,
Did gratulate his safety with kind words,
And in their conference of what befell,
Touching his journey through the world and air,
They put forth questions of astrology,
Which Faustus answer'd with such learned skill
As they admir'd and wonder'd at his wit.

5) to inform the audience of Faustus' increased reputation as a learned man, and his summons to the court of the Emperor:
Chorus. Now is his fame spread forth in every land:
Amongst the rest the Emperor is one,
Carolus the Fifth, at whose palace now
Faustus is feasted 'mongst his noblemen.
What there he did, in trial of his art,
I leave untold; your eyes shall see['t] perform'd.

6) to offer a more intimate view of the change in Faustus' behaviour as the end of the play approaches. In scene 12, the Chorus identifies himself as Wagner and speaks in a language register similar to that he uses elsewhere in the play:
WAGNER. I think my master means to die shortly,
For he hath given to me all his goods:
And yet, methinks, if that death were near,

He would not banquet, and carouse, and swill

Amongst the students, as even now he doth,

Who are at supper with such belly-cheer

As Wagner ne'er beheld in all his life.

See, where they come! belike the feast is ended.

7) in the final lines of the play, as a moral guide for the audience:

CHORUS. Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,

And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,

That sometime grew within this learned man.

Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,

Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,

Only to wonder at unlawful things,

Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits

To practice more than heavenly power permits.

In *Henry V,* William Shakespeare utilizes the character of the Chorus to transcend the limitations of the Elizabethan stage and challenge the audience's imagination. The Chorus praises King Henry V and his motivations for waging war with France through the application of colourful commentary. Two of the most common literary techniques that the Chorus uses are metaphor and wordplay, which were very important to Elizabethan theatregoers for several reasons.

The Chorus applies metaphor in several passages throughout the play to reveal details about King Henry's character. In the prologue to Act 2, the Chorus reveals that many English men are preparing for war by "*Following the mirror of all Christian kings*". The Chorus means that King Henry represents a mirror that reflects England's values, and the country's citizens see themselves in King Henry's image. In the prologue to Act 4, King Henry visits some of the soldiers at the English campsite in an attempt to elevate their heavy hearts; the Chorus states:

With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty;

That every wretch, pining and pale before,

Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks.
A largess universal, like the sun,
His liberal eye doth give to everyone,
Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all.

In this passage, the Chorus uses the sun as a metaphor for King Henry being a light that brightens the dark times that the English are living in. Like sunlight, King Henry brings warmth to the soldiers who are weary from war. King Henry is also depicted as a sun to England in the prologue to Act 3 when the Chorus says:

The well-appointed king at Hampton pier
Embark his royalty, and his brave fleet
With silken streamers the young Phoebus fanning.

In Greek mythology, Phoebus is an epithet of Apollo, the god of sun. The Chorus also uses other mythological references to King Henry's godlike qualities, such as in the prologue to Act 2 when the Chorus says the English soldiers are ready for war, "*With winged heels, as English Mercuries*". In Roman mythology, Mercury is the winged messenger of the gods; therefore, King Henry is perceived as a god and the English troops are his devout followers who carry a message of King Henry's sovereignty to the French.

The Chorus makes use of wordplay to engage the audience and enhance interest in certain situations throughout the play. In the prologue to Act 2, the Chorus informs the audience that The Earl of Cambridge, Lord Scroop, and Sir Thomas Grey plan to kill King Henry when he says:

Have, for the gilt of France, – O guilt indeed! –
Confirmed conspiracy with fearful France.

In this passage, the Chorus makes a pun by pairing the word gilt (gold) with guilt to signify that France is guilty of the murder of King Henry because the country pays off the assassins with gilt. In the prologue to Act 3, the Chorus also uses wordplay by requesting that the audience imagine King Henry and his soldiers sailing to France: "Grapple your minds to sternage of this navy" [Shakes, p. 543]. A grapple is used to fasten one ship to another, and the Chorus uses this pun to

urge the audience to hitch, like deck hooks, its imagination to King Henry's "majestical" vessel.

In the prologue to Act 4, the Chorus narrates King Henry's arrival at the English campsite on the night before the Battle of Agincourt and says that his physical appearance does not leave *"…one jot of color / Unto the weary and all-watched night; / But freshly looks and overbears attaint / With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty*". In this passage, "attaint" can mean exhaustion, but the Chorus also uses it to play on the word taint (a tint or colour) to signify the colour (and brightness and warmth) of Henry, which eases the fatigue on the soldiers' faces. In the prologue to Act 5, the Chorus describes the English citizens who wait at the coast of England to welcome home King Henry and his soldiers:

Behold, the English beach
Pales in the flood with men, with wives and boys,
Whose shouts and claps outvoice the deep-mouthed sea,
Which like a mighty whiffler 'fore the king
Seems to prepare his way. (Shakespeare, *Henry V*)

The Chorus uses the word *"flood"* to describe the setting of the shore and describe the overflow of the English people waiting for King Henry's vessel to drop anchor in England to greet him with applause louder than the sounds of the sea.

Elizabethan audiences may have loved the use of metaphor and wordplay in *Henry V* for a few reasons. English literary critic G. Wilson Knight believes wordplay and metaphor were important during Elizabethan times because of the "age's literary strength". The English language was developing significantly during the Elizabethan period, and that was due to the ability of many Elizabethans to read and write well. Secondly, the Elizabethans may have been drawn to these writing techniques because, it is believed, William Shakespeare had been inspired by philosophers such as Aristotle and Quintilian, who used wordplay and metaphor to strengthen their rhetoric. When the Chorus applies these writing techniques, the purpose is to make the language in the play more engaging and effective. Finally,

Elizabethan audiences may have been enthralled by the incorporation of metaphor and wordplay in *Henry V* because just as these techniques are used in modern writings to make references that are culturally relevant, William Shakespeare also employs these methods to include allusions appropriate for the time period.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare entrusts the chorus with the task of uttering a prologue. In the first lines, the chorus sets the scene for the play, describes the setting and basic conflict:

Chorus. Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

In the next two-line stanza, the chorus describes the young lovers and their dilemma:

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life.

After the description the chorus prepares a reader for a tragic end and explains the focus of the play:

Chorus. Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which but their children's end naught could remove.

Finally, the chorus reminds the audience that there is more to come when the play is acted onstage:

If you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend".

Pastiche of a more sympathetic kind characterises Shakespeare's later and final Chorus figures, in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. John Gower is introduced as Chorus to the play *Pericles*. Gower was the fourteenth-century poet whose version of the ancient romance, *Apollonius of Tyre*, is the play's main source. He not only

presents his own story, but he does so in irregular octosyllabic couplets and archaic diction that are obviously meant to be reminiscent of Cower's own verse. However, this is not a parody of an old-fashioned literary style. The intention is rather to present the play from a perspective of quaintness and assumed artlessness appropriate to an old romance, as the opening lines of Gower's Prologue suggest:

To sing a song that old was sung,
From ashes ancient Gower is come,
Assuming man's infirmities,
To glad your ear and please your eyes.
It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves and holy-ales;
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.
The purchase is to make men glorious;
Et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius. (Shakespeare, *Pericles*)

"*And the older a good thing is, the better it is*": Gower describes himself as "an old man", and his sententiousness and readiness to fill in the gaps of the story between the scenes add a naive and primitive effect that suits well with the remote, archaic world of the play. On some of his appearances, he also presents episodes in dumb-show, again distancing and stylizing the action in keeping with the non-naturalistic tableaux and pageants that occupy the opening scenes of the play.

Gower is retained in the Shakespearean part of the play, and Shakespeare makes him beguilingly draw attention to his own usefulness as Chorus in telescoping time and space, appealing, like the chorus in *Henry V*, to the audience to let their imaginations license the liberties he takes:

Thus time we waste, and longest leagues make short;
Sail seas in cockles, have an wish but for't;
Making, to take our imagination,
From bourn to bourn, region to region.
By you being pardon'd, we commit no crime

To use one language in each several clime
Where our scenes seem to live. I do beseech you
To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you
The stages of our story. (Shakespeare, *Pericles*)

Gower is the audience's guide in the play. In the opening prologue, he introduces King of Antioch and explains his readers/viewers what has been happening and what is about to happen. His tone is not neutral, he makes emotive commentaries:

This Antioch, then, Antiochus the Great
Built up, this city, for his chiefest seat:
The fairest in all Syria,
I tell you what mine authors say:
This king unto him took a fere,
Who died and left a female heir,
So buxom, blithe, and full of face,
As heaven had lent her all his grace;
With whom the father liking took,
And her to incest did provoke:
Bad child; worse father! To entice his own
To evil should be done by none:
But custom what they did begin
Was with long use account no sin.
The beauty of this sinful dame
Made many princes thither frame,
To seek her as a bed-fellow,
In marriage-pleasures play-fellow:
Which to prevent he made a law,
To keep her still, and men in awe,
That whoso ask'd her for his wife,
His riddle told not, lost his life:

So for her many a wight did die,

As yon grim looks do testify.

What now ensues, to the judgment of your eye

I give, my cause who best can justify. (Shakespeare, *Pericles*)

In Act II, he does not only represent Pericles but compares him with the previous king Antiochus using epithets and metaphors:

Here have you seen a mighty king

His child, I wis, to incest bring;

A better prince and benign lord,

That will prove awful both in deed and word.

Be quiet then as men should be,

Till he hath pass'd necessity.

I'll show you those in troubles reign,

Losing a mite, a mountain gain.

The good in conversation,

To whom I give my benison,

Is still at Tarsus, where each man

Thinks all is writ he speken can;

And, to remember what he does,

Build his statue to make him glorious:

But tidings to the contrary

Are brought your eyes; what need speak I? (Shakespeare, *Pericles*)

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare introduces Time itself as Chorus. Time as Chorus makes his single appearance in the middle of the play, as Shakespeare's final twist to this most flexible conventional device, and appropriately he enters to authorize a leap over sixteen years between the first part of the play and the second:

I, - that please some, try all; both joy and terror

Of good and bad; that make and unfold error, –

Now take upon me, in the name of Time,

To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage that I slide
O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom. Let me pass
The same I am, ere ancient'st order was
Or what is now receiv'd. I witness to
The times that brought them in; so shall I do
To th'freshest things now reigning, and make stale
The glistering of this present, as my tale
Now seems to it. Your patience this allowing,
I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing
As you had slept between. (Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*)

Time as Chorus declares himself to be, not only the presiding spirit of the play (which, considering its concern with the older and younger generations and with the successive seasons of Nature, is an allowable claim), but also the arbiter of dramatic conventions, fashions and rules. If the play requires an interval of sixteen years between the first three Acts and the last two, so be it. No need here to apologize for the limitations of stage-representation; instead, Time proclaims the liberty of the popular Elizabethan stage-traditions to overthrow law and to plant and overwhelm custom.

Shakespeare uses "Time" as chorus, a spectator, who lifts the curtains after the tragic events of the first three acts of the play revealing the progress of the invisible, leading the audience on the side of good, to the romantic beauty of the couple, Prince Florizel and Princess Perdita and also to the pastoral beauty of the land.

Seeking dramatic individuation, seeking to make the three or four or five universal plots and the one or two or three "types" or agent-functions those plots require into varied entertainment, playwrights elaborately developed their

characters' verbal analysis of their own actions. Characters talk about motive and purpose because the playwright hopes the audience will imagine them independent agents. One method, perhaps the oldest, is simple declaration:

A woeful man, O Lord, am I, to see him in this case.
My days I deem desires their end; this deed will help me hence,
To have the blossoms of my field destroyed by violence.(Preston, *Cambises*)

Thus have I with an envious forged tale
Deceived the king, betrayed mine enemy,
And hope for guerdon of my villainy. (Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*)

Related to simple declaration are speeches in which a character describes emotions from the outside:

He's gone, and for his absence thus I mourn.
Did never sorrow go so near my heart
As doth the want of my sweet Gaveston;
And could my crown's revenue bring him back,
I would freely give it to his enemies,
And think I gained, having bought so dear a friend.

. . .

My heart is as an anvil unto sorrow,
Which beats upon it like the Cyclops' hammers,
And with the noise turns up my giddy brain,
And makes me frantic for my Gaveston. (Marlowe, *Edward II*)

Here, the script does not allow the actor playing Edward to *be* "frantic" at Gaveston's banishment, or to enact that frenzy. Rather, the actor *says* Edward is frantic. Humanist rhetorical education stressed adversarial combat, finding or creating "the" two sides of a controversial topic and arguing each against the other. As an educational phenomenon, this binary bias probably derives from legal practice and from humanism's claim to educate counsellors who see and analyse all (but in practice two) sides of a question. As a dramatic phenomenon, the bias produces a bifurcated speaker, two voices in one:

Yet might she love me for my valiancy,

Ay, but that's slandered by my captivity.

Yet might she love me to content her sire,

Ay, but her reason masters his desire.

Yet might she love me as her brother's friend,

Ay, but her hopes aim at some other end.

Yet she might love me to uprear her state,

Ay, but perhaps she hopes some nobler mate.

Yet might she love me as her beauty's thrall,

Ay, but I fear she cannot love at all. (Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*)

Keeping the rhetorical figure (a form of epanorthosis) and letting the sense go produces Jonson's parody, which shuffles quotations of Kyd:

O, she is wilder and more hard, withal,

Than beast, or bird, or tree, or stony wall

Yet might she love me to uprear her state,

Ay, but perhaps she hopes some nobler mate.

Yet might she love me to content her sire,

Ay, but her reason masters her desire.

Yet might she love me as her beauty's thrall,

Ay, but I fear, she cannot love at all. (Jonson, *Poetaster*)

Numerous variations were rung on this two-speakers-in-one device. A character might ask, then answer, a question: 'What is beauty saith my sufferings, then?' (*Tamburlaine, Part I*, 5.1.160); 'To be, or not to be, that is the question.' Or the character could address an abstraction or a personified self:

Ah, life and soul still hover in his breast

And leave my body senseless as the earth,

Or else unite you to his life and soul,

That I may live and die with Tamburlaine!

…

Now, Bajazeth, abridge thy baneful days

And beat thy brains out of thy conquered head,
Since other means are all forbidden me
That may be ministers of my decay. (Shakespeare, *Tamburlaine*)

The printed text of Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour* (1599) opens with a series of short prose sketches entitled "The Characters of the Persons". Fastidius Brisk, for example, is described as

A neat, spruce, affecting courtier, one that wears clothes well and in fashion; practiseth by his glass how to salute; speaks good remnants (notwithstanding the base viol and tobacco); swears tersely, and with variety; cares not what lady's favour he belies, or great man's familiarity: a good property to perfume the boot of a coach . . .

By "character" Jonson does not quite mean the imaginary, imitated human traits attributed to and distinguishing among the play's personae. The word has a more technical meaning: a description of a type of human behaviour, an abstract form of something we might call a "vignette". Yet the dramatic sense of *character* is not far away since, among other things, these "characters" do discriminate among the persons of the play, and many are so precise they almost lose the generalizing quality typical of the literary character. (When the literary character became a popular Jacobean genre, many appear to have been based on identifiable individuals.) The dramaturgical relevance of these 'characters' becomes clear when Jonson concludes the list: "Mitis, is a person of no action, and therefore we afford him no character." We do not need a profile of, nor can we infer psychological attributes for, an agent who does not act. A prefatory description of Mitis is irrelevant, perhaps even impossible, since his attributes will not be exhibited in or confirmed by the play's action. "Character", then, in the common if complicated dramatic sense, is interdependent with action, with the personage's acts of choice, behaviour, and relation with other personages. This interdependence means that character and the effective arrangement of the characters' actions cannot be plausibly separated in our experience of a play, although Aristotle apparently thought the practising playwright could separate them, and needed to,

as he composed.

When we talk about the composition and ownership of plays, scholars and critics have inherited an almost endless number of literary mystify from the Elizabethan age. A play might be written, handed over to the manager of a company of actors which was produced with or without the author's name. Many a times the author forgot or ignored all subsequent affairs connected with it. If changes were required, perhaps it would be given to some well known playwright to be "doctored" before the next production. Henslowe, who had an interest in several London theatres, continuously employed playwrights, famous and otherwise, in working out new, promising material for his actors.

Most dramatists of the time served an apprenticeship, in which they did anything they were asked to do. At times it so happened that they made the first draft of a piece which would be finished by a more experienced hand that was sometimes they collaborated with another writer or they gave the finishing touches to a new play. They sometimes reconstructed a Spanish, French, or Italian piece in an attempt to make it more suitable for the London public. The written scripts and plays were the property, not of the author, but of the acting companies.

It was so important that ones the parts were learned by the actors and the manuscript locked up. Because, if the piece became popular, rival managers often stole it by sending to the performance a clerk who took down the lines in shorthand. Neither authors nor managers had any protection from pirate publishers, who frequently issued copies of successful plays without the consent of either thus it shows that though it was done so frequently there was no systematic or organized way of doing the same. When such scripts were produced many cases of missing or mutilated scenes, faulty lines or confused grammar were laid to the door of these copy brigands.

Genres of the period included the **history play**, which depicted English or European history. Shakespeare’s plays about the lives of kings, such as *Richard III* and *Henry V*, belong to this category, as do Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* and George Peele's *Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First*. There were also a

number of history plays that dealt with more recent events, like *A Larum for London*, which dramatizes the sack of Antwerp in 1576. **Tragedy** was a popular genre. Marlowe's tragedies were exceptionally popular, such as *Dr. Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta*. The audiences particularly liked **revenge dramas**, such as Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. **Comedies** were common, too *("The Comedy of Errors", "The Two Gentlemen of Verona", "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "The Taming of the Shrew", "Much Ado about Nothing", "As You Like It", "Twelfth Night")*. A sub-genre developed in this period was the **city comedy**, which deals satirically with life in London after the fashion of Roman New Comedy. An example is Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.

Costumes were important elements in theatrical languages. Henslowe's *Diary* reveals that costumes could be the most expensive parts of productions: "Henry the Fifth's velvet gown", "Tamburlaine's coat with copper lace", "six green coats for Robin Hood", a "fool's coat, cap, and bauble [a stick surmounted with a head with the ears of an ass]", a "yellow leather doublet for a clown", "Eve's bodice", "a little doublet for [a] boy", "four torch-bearers' suits", and a "robe for to go invisible" are among those listed, along with devices such as "Cerberus' three heads", lions' and bears' skins, and that "dragon in *Doctor Faustus*'. Thomas Platter, a Swiss traveller to London, narrates that it was a custom for the rich to pass on costumes to their servants who then would sell them to the players. This meant that a rich cloak which had served to fashion the image of an important courtier before the monarch one week could have appeared on stage the next – and it is conceivable that such practice could have been part of a system of political reference.

Some actors began their careers by becoming apprentices under the tutelage of the company. They might then progress to become the equivalent of "journeymen", qualified to work for a day's wages, but occupying a rank below that of "master", the equivalent of which was a "sharer". Famously, women's parts were taken by males, but it may be erroneous to imagine in all performances pre-pubertal youths with unbroken voices boying the greatness of the great female

roles. A boy's apprenticeship might extend until he was about twenty, so that women's parts could be in effect taken by young men. It is difficult to know how much of this aspect of representational form was an important constituent of the meaning of performances. There are accounts of spectators on the prowl for "ingles" (male lovers), 24 ogling the "boys", which may have given a homo-erotic effect to certain performances. The boys dressed lavishly and wore gorgeous wigs – the letting down of hair was a sign of female madness.

In addition to their representational skills, exhibiting fictive others, players used the skills of presentation, exhibiting themselves. First, were their skills of speaking that would have derived in part from their rhetorical study of classical texts and patterns of discourse. This was an aural culture, audiences would have been used to listening – and enjoyed listening to verbal art. Some playhouses had resident troupes of musicians or professional groups of wind instrumentalists ("waits") played at some performances. Surviving play texts often provide very little evidence of the amount of music that was required: significant affective moments may be signalled only by the direction 'song' with no words specified; "flourishes" and "sennets" were probably used more than is recorded to magnify entrances and exits.

Presentational parts of the plays, songs, dances, fights, must have been fully rehearsed, probably under the tutelage of the an important member of the company – book-holder, or prompter. The "book" of the play was an important and precious document: like a modern stage manager's script it could be marked up to record the need for properties or to complete stage directions that were often missing from authorial manuscripts. A second document was the "plot", a paper, sometimes stiffened so it could be hung up, presumably in the tiring-house, which recorded the players required for each scene. Players were not given copies of the whole play but only their "parts", long strips of paper containing their own lines with necessary cues.

New plays were added to the repertory on average every three weeks, and it took about the same time for the text to be prepared for performance. Companies were

comparatively small: there seem to have been between six and eleven sharers in each, which means that, even with about four hired men, boy apprentices, and the possible use of stage-keepers for bit parts, doubling must have been extensive.

Playwrights used language to describe **"special effects"** much of the time; and acting companies also produced very dramatic special effects. **Thunder and lightning** frequently accompanied storms – for example, in *The Tempest* by Shakespeare a reader notices an author's remark about the weather: "*Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel, like a harpy; claps his wings upon the table; and with a quaint device, the banquet vanishes*" or "*He vanishes in thunder…*" or in *King Lear* the playwright draws a reader's attention to the oncoming storm: "*Storm heard at a distance*" // "*A storm with thunder and lightning…*". Four Shakespeare's plays are abundant with numerous author's remarks and characters' dialogues describing **various weather conditions and natural phenomena** (thunder, lightning, storm, fog, tempest, wind, moon, eclipse, clouds, cold, darkness) – *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar*. There was a variety of effects to suggest **magic** was at work. Many special effects needed special ingredients. Buying these made a performance more expensive, so special effects were not used all the time. The easiest way to make the noise of thunder was to beat drums offstage or roll a cannonball across the floor of the Heavens over the stage. Some companies used a thunder machine – a wooden box balanced like a see-saw. A cannon ball could be rolled from one end to the other to make a thundering noise. Storms needed lightning, too. Lightning flashes were made by throwing a powder made from resin into a candle flame. It lit with a flash. The companies could make lightning bolts, too. The machinery for this was called a swevel. They fixed a wire from the roof to the floor of the stage. They fixed a firecracker to the wire and lit it when they wanted the effect. The firecracker shot from the top of the wire to the bottom, making sparks all the way.

Magical spirits, devils and gods and goddesses often appeared in plays from Shakespeare's time. Good spirits and gods and goddesses usually entered through a trapdoor in the Heavens. The actors were lowered on a rope or a wire. This was

called "flying in". Evil spirits and devils came up from Hell, under the stage, through a trapdoor in the stage. Companies often set off firecrackers when devils appeared or magic was used. In one production of Dr Faustus the actors playing devils even put firecrackers in their mouths to suggest they were breathing fire. In tragedy "*Doctor Faustus*", C. Marlowe makes a remark about the appearance of a devil mentioning fireworks: "*Re-enter MEPHISTOPHILIS with a DEVIL drest like a WOMAN, with fire-works* "; or "MEPHISTOPHILIS and FAUSTUS beat the FRIARS, and fling fire-works among them; and so exeunt" [Marlowe, Dr. Faustus]. In general, magical spirits, supernatural creatures and witches were frequent characters of Elizabethan drama: Oberon, Titania, Puck, Peasblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed ("A Midsummer Night's Dream"); Ghost of Hamlet's father ("Hamlet"); three Witches, the Ghost of Banquo ("Macbeth"); the Ghost of Caesar ("Julius Caesar"); Ariel, Iris, Ceres, Juno, Nymphs, Reapers ("The Tempest"); Spirits ("King Henry VIII"); Margery Jourdain, a Spirit ("King Henry VI"); Queen Mab ("Romeo and Juliet"); Lucifer, Belzebub, Mephistophilis, Good Angel, Evil Angel, the Seven Deadly Sins, Devils, Spirits in the shapes of Alexander the Great, of his Paramour and of Helen ("Doctor Faustus"); Ghost of Andrea ("The Spanish Tragedy"); Juno, Iris, Venus, Morpheus ("The Maid's Metamorphosis"); Enchanter ("The Wisdom of Doctor Dadypoll"); Fairies, Oberon ("The Scottish History of James IV").

Theatre companies used smoke mostly as a magic effect, although it was sometimes used to suggest a fire. They could make black, white, yellow and red smoke – depending on the chemicals they mixed together. They used real fire as little as possible, it was very dangerous in a wood and thatch building. If they needed flames they burned strong alcohol mixed with a variety of salts, depending on the colour they wanted the flames to be.

Thanks to numerous conventions used in public performances, Elizabethan theatre is not only known as a specific period in theatre history, but also as a theatre style.

The popularity of the **fool** was one of the most striking features of the English stage at the time of its greatest glory. The history of the courtly fool or jester in England is brief, with these fools making early appearances in the courts of medieval aristocracy during the twelfth century. By the time of Queen Elizabeth's reign, courtly fools were a common feature of English society, and were seen as one of two types: natural or artificial. The former could include misshapen or mentally-deficient individuals, or those afflicted with dwarfism. Such fools were often considered pets—though generally dearly loved by their masters—and appear infrequently in Shakespeare's writing. The artificial fool, in contrast, was possessed of a verbal wit and talent for intellectual repartee. Into this category critics place Shakespeare's intellectual or "wise-fools".

The stage fool satisfied the principal want – the desire of the public for a satirical commentary on the life and events of the times. Shakespearian fool is always shrewd and wise. For example, in the tragedy "*King Lear*" the fool is funny and entertaining, his function is to uplift Lear's mood. However, he utters very clever and serious things. He is not afraid to criticize anyone, even the king, calling him a fool. Moreover, his statements are usually crude and sarcastic. At the beginning of the play the fool comments the fact that King Lear has divided his kingdom between his eldest and middle daughters while he himself is left with nothing:

Fool: That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,−
Do thou for him stand:
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.
King Lear: Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool: All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with. (Shakespeare, King Lear)

The situation is analogous to Shakespeare's comedy "*The Taming of the Shrew*". Grumio, Petruchio's servant, is a fool whose purpose is to serve and entertain his master Petruchio. He can afford to play jokes on Petruchio pretending to misunderstand him:

Petruchio: ...I trow this is his house. Here, sirrah Grumio, knock, I say.

Grumio: Knock, sir! Whom should I knock? Is there any man has rebused your worship?

Petruchio: Villain, I say, knock me here soundly.

Grumio: Knock you here, sir! Why, sir, what am I, sir, that I should knock you here, sir? (Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*)

When Hortensio, having his own interest, offers Petruchio to marry wealthy Katherina, Grumio immediately makes a comment and characterizes his master:

Grumio: Nay, look you, sir, he tell you flatly what his mind is: why, give him gold enough and marry him to a puppet or an aglet-baby; or an old trot with ne'er a tooth in her head, though she has as many diseases as two-and-fifty horses: why, nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal.

One understands that the fool gives a truthful characteristics of Petruchio. What is more, Petruchio allows him to speak like that and does not react to his words.

Considered an outcast to a degree, the fool was frequently given reign to comment on society and the actions of his social betters; thus, some Shakespearean fools demonstrate a subversive potential [https://www.enotes.com/topics/william-shakespeare/critical-essays/shakespeares-clowns-and-fools]. They may present a radically different worldview than those held by the majority of a play's characters, as critic Roger Ellis has observed.

The English fool was almost invariably a lover of creature comforts, hating work, travel, and physical discomfort, and making a terrible fuss when any such trial fell to his lot. Particularly did he object to hunger and thirst, indeed anxiety about food and drink was one of his earliest characteristics. Fine clothes also had

considerable attraction for the clown. And since one needs money for fine clothes and food and drink, the clown loved money too, and used all his wits to obtain it. Such characteristics of the fool can be found in "*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*" where the clown is ready to serve Wagner for a shoulder of mutton – *Clown: How! my soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though 'twere blood-raw! not so, good friend: by'r lady, I had need have it well roasted, and good sauce to it, if I pay so dear*; in "*The Jew of Malta*" where Barabas boasts of numerous treasures – *Barabas with heaps of gold before him: Well fare the Arabians, who so richly pay the things they traffic for with wedge of gold, whereof a man may easily in a day tell that which may maintain him all his life… Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts, jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds, beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds, and seld-seen costly stones of so great price, as one of them, indifferently rated, and of a carat of this quantity, may serve, in peril of calamity, to ransom great kings from captivity. This is the ware wherein consists my wealth*; in "*The Winter's Tale*" where Aotolycus speaks about money and clothes –*Autolycus: I have sev'd Prince Florizel, and in my time wore three-pile…I am robb'd, sir, and beatern; my money and apparel ta'en from me, and these detestable things put upon me."*; in "*King Lear*" where the Fool is frightened by the storm– *Fool: O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better than this rain water out o'door. Good nuncle, in; and ask thy daughters blessing: here's a night pities nether wise men nor fools*."; in "*The Merry Wives of Windsor*" where Slender is interested in his legacy – *Slender: I may quarter, coz?*; in "*King Henry IV*" where petty Shallow talks about compensation for the lost sack – *Shallow: A' shall answer it* and Silence cannot hide his happiness about feasting – *Silence: Ah, sirrah! Quoth-a, - we shall do nothing but eat, and make good cheer, and praise God for the merry year…*; in "*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*" where Speed complains about being left with no reward for his service and demands his money – *Speed: …and she gave me nothing for my labour… Nay, sir, less than a pound shall serve me for carrying your letter*."

The fool was often a coward. He was ready enough to brag and threaten but he usually made a poor show if anyone confronted him, even if it be only a woman. The most illustrative example is Swash in John Day's play "*The Blind Beggar of Bednall-Green*". Swash, having his master's money, boasts of being courageous and fearless of any thief but when he meets the one on his way, he utters obediently: *"I pray you, do bind me hard, do, good Mr. Theef, harder yet, Sir"*.

The emotion which often exhibited the fool in a ridiculous light is that of love. Sometimes his passion was hopeless but it always found expression in a flood of absurdly extravagant exclamations. Of his horseplay and his more acrobatic tricks we know little. We can see, however, that there was a great deal of rough-and-tumble fighting, especially in the case of the Vices ("Vice" was the actors' name for the strongest role from their standpoint on the side of evil) and the earlier regular clowns, who usually scattered blows very liberally around them. That fighting was regarded as a regular source of diversion. Of the clown's dancing but few traces remain in the plays, but contemporary references show that dances accompanied by the pipe and tabor were sometimes given between the acts, and also formed an important part of the concluding jig. As for the songs, which were an important element of the clown's role, they were a forming part of the inter-scenary and concluding entertainments, frequently interspersed in the play themselves. This is notably the case with Vices, very few of whom do not at least propose a song, even if it is not given. No other Elizabethan fool gives such an atmosphere of music to a play as Clown does in *Twelfth Night:*

Clown. [Sings.]

Come away, come away, death.

And in sad cypress let me be laid;

Fly away, fly away, breath;

I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,

O, prepare it!

My part of death no one so true

Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,

On my black coffin let there be strown:

Not a friend, not a friend greet

My poor corpse where my bones shall be thrown:

A thousand thousand sighs to save,

Lay me, O, where

Sad true lover never find my grave,

To weep there!

Clown. [Sings.]

When that I was and a little tiny boy,

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,

A foolish thing was but a toy,

For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,

'Gainst knave and thief men shut their gate,

For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,

By swaggering could I never thrive,

For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my bed,

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,

With toss-pots still had drunken head,

For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,

But that's all one, our play is done,

And we'll strive to please you every day. (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*)

Simplicity, in particular, seems exceedingly fond of music, and is undoubtedly a good singer, for when he joins forces with the beggars he earns twice as much by his songs as they do. One specimen of his songs may be traced in *The Three Ladies of London* by Robert Wilson:

Simplicity sings it, and 'sperience doth prove,
No biding in London for Conscience and Love.
The country hath no peer,
Where Conscience comes not once a year,
And Love so welcome to every town,
As wind that blows the houses down.
Sing down adown, down, down, down.
Simplicity sings it, and 'sperience doth prove,
No dwelling in London, no biding in London, for Conscience and Love.

The fool more than any other performer had his audience continually in view. Other actors might forget the spectators in their roles, but the role of the clown was to remember them and keep them entertained. Often, especially in the case of the later Vices, one finds direct appeals to particular members of the audience, Nichol Newfangle (in *Like Will to Like* by Ulpian Fulwell) being particularly remarkable in this respect. His appeals are numerous and bold – "*How say you, little Meg?*" or "*How say you, woman? You that stand in the angle, were you never acquainted with Nichol Newfangle?*".

Among the clown's mirth-provoking devices, nonsense of all descriptions figured largely. Sometimes that was simply unmeaning rubbish, possibly an absurd question:

Fool: Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?
King Lear: No.
Fool: Nor I neither.
Fool: …The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.
King Lear: Because they are not eight?
Fool: Yes indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool. (Shakespeare, *King Lear*)

Sometimes that nonsense took the form of a string of contradictions:

Gratiano.

I have a wife whom, I protest, I love;

I would she were in heaven, so she could

Entreat some power to change this currish Jew. (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*)

One more typical feature of Elizabethan drama was frequent **use of soliloquies and asides.** The fourth-century work *Soliloquies* by Saint Augustine is, in fact, a dialogue between Augustine and the personification of a faculty of his mind called Reason. The term "soliloquy", from the Latin solus (alone) and loqui (place), was not used in a theatrical sense until the late seventeenth century and consequently, it is highly unlikely that Shakespeare was familiar with the term. Hirsh defines the word soliloquy as a speech spoken by a single actor who does not intend the words to be heard by any other character. He notes, however, that the word has tended to be used indiscriminately to refer to three types of theatrical practice, namely:

• audience-addressed speech, in which the character is aware of and speaks to playgoers;

• self-addressed speech, in which the character is unaware of playgoers and speaks only to herself;

•interior monologue, in which the words merely represent thoughts passing through the character's mind.

The soliloquy is a passage of dramatic speech delivered by a character when alone upon the stage. They were mostly used by Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare. The soliloquy was generally used as a means of revealing the inner working of the mind of a character. It is a device by employing which the dramatist could communicate to the audience or the readers the secret thoughts of a character while at the same time preserving the secrecy of those thoughts vis-a -vis the other characters in the drama. By thus communicating to the audience or the readers the secret working of a character's mind, the dramatist threw additional light on the mental make-up of that character as also the mental progress or deterioration, if

any, of that character. A soliloquy was thus a means of character revelation. Besides unfolding the inner life of the speaker, a soliloquy might also throw some light on another character by disclosing to us what the speaker thought of that other character or those other characters. A soliloquy might contribute to the development of the plot by acquainting us with what the speaker proposed to do or decided to do. According to Wolfgang Clemen, it is a sole medium by which the characters are presented and their states of mind and motives for action revealed. Thanks to soliloquies, the playwrights created for the first time an "inward drama" – a drama portraying a human emotion rather than merely reciting events. Among the plays using soliloquies are *"The Spanish Tragedy*" by **T. Kyd**; *"Tamburlaine the Great"* and *"Dr. Faustus"* by **C. Marlowe**; *"Richard III", "Henry VI", "King Lear", "Romeo and Juliet", "Julius Caesar", "Hamlet", "Macbeth" and "Richard II"* by **W. Shakespeare**.

For example, Hamlet's Soliloquy, Act 1. Scene II:

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown

By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--

Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!—

A little month, or ere those shoes were old

With which she follow'd my poor father's body,

Like Niobe, all tears:—why she, even she—

O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,

Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,

My father's brother, but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules: within a month:

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears

Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,

She married. O, most wicked speed, to post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

It is not nor it cannot come to good:

But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

This soliloquy begins with Hamlet desiring death, saying, "*this too solid flesh would melt*", but this desire comes coupled with the fear that God does not condone "*self-slaughter*". This reveals that Hamlet feels melancholic suffering from depression. Apart from desiring suicide, he also states that he finds the world "*weary, stale, flat and unprofitable*". As we read further, we find that Hamlet's depression leads to bitterness and disgust. This is most apparent when Hamlet describes the world as "*rank*", "*gross*", and "*unweeded*".

Hamlet's growing sense of melancholy and disgust is a result of two events. First, his father, the king, died less than two months prior to Hamlet's soliloquy. Hamlet is grieving for his father, whom he honoured and loved, comparing him to "*Hyperion*". Second, his mother, who should be sharing his grief, has betrayed his father's memory. She has celebrated a hasty and unseemly marriage to the old king's brother, Claudius. Hamlet's distress and disgust are illustrated in his comment, "*a beast that wants of reason would have mourned longer*". Here, we see that Hamlet feels as though his mother has sullied his father's memory saying,

"*Frailty, thy name is woman*". The matter torments him so much that he can hardly bear to consider it. "*Must I remember?*" he asks in desperation, and then he says, "*Let me not think on't*".

He is not only shocked and upset by the haste with which his mother has decided to remarry, but he is also disgusted by the husband she has chosen. Because she marries her dead husband's brother, Claudius, Hamlet believes that she is committing incest. Hamlet dislikes Claudius, whom he compares to a "*satyr*". Hamlet despises being called Claudius's "*son*". While he agrees to "*obey*" his mother's wishes, he mocks Claudius's irritating comments. It is obvious that Hamlet cannot stomach seeing Claudius in such a high position of power. It is likely that he may also feel that his own place has been usurped. He has not inherited his father's crown, but rather, it is now worn by Claudius. This renders Hamlet powerless. Hamlet is convinced that this unfortunate situation "*cannot come to good*", but feels impotent. How can Hamlet lead his country and honor his father's death when such a malicious buffoon sits on the throne? He feels depressed, suicidal, fearful, regretful, grief-stricken, angry, disgusted, betrayed, frustrated, confused and impotent. His thoughts are of death and decay. This speech indicates the level of negativity to which Hamlet has fallen. He is haunted by his father's death, tormented by his mother's marriage to Claudius, and infuriated by his inability to change either event.

For example, Dr. Faustus' soliloquy:

Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come;
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,

The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.

O, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—

See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!

One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!—

Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!

Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, Lucifer!—

Where is it now? 'tis gone: and see, where God

Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!

Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,

And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

No, no!

Then will I headlong run into the earth:

Earth, gape! O, no, it will not harbour me!

Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon

O God,

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,

Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me,

Impose some end to my incessant pain;

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,

A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!

O, no end is limited to damned souls!

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?

Or why is this immortal that thou hast?

Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true,

This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd

Unto some brutish beast! all beasts are happy,

For, when they die,

Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;

But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.
Curs'd be the parents that engender'd me!
No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath depriv'd thee of the joys of heaven…
O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!
O soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!
My God, my god, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah, Mephistophilis! (Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*)

Faustus' soliloquy begins as the clock strikes eleven. Faustus knows his fate and begins his soliloquy by wishing that time would stand still so that midnight would never come or that the sun, *"Fair Nature's eye,"* would rise again and make the day everlasting. He moves from wishing that midnight would not come altogether to merely wishing that his last hour would be stretched out to *"A year, a month, a week, a natural day/ That Faustus may repent and save his soul"*. Next, he decides that he will look to God and acknowledges that one drop of Christ's blood can save him. Instead of calling on God to save him he turns his attention back to the devil by pleading to him that he does not harm him for naming Christ and ends up calling for Lucifer to spare him instead of God. Concluding that God is too angry with him Faustus talks himself right out of repentance. After his failed attempt at repentance, Faustus, in despair, calls for the mountains to fall on him and wishes for the earth to swallow him up. But then, concluding that the earth will not hide him, he turns his attention to the heavens:

You stars that reign'd at my nativity,
Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,
Now draw up Faustus, like a foggy mist.
Into the entrails of yon labouring cloud[s],

That, when you vomit forth into the air,

My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths,

So that my soul may but ascend to heaven! (Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*)

What Faustus means by this is that he wishes to be taken up and hidden in a cloud where he would be compressed into a thunderstorm, which would purify his soul and make it possible for him to enter heaven. The clock chimes the half hour. Faustus is forced to acknowledge the reality that *"no end is limited to damn'd souls"*. Faustus then wishes that he would become like an animal that had no soul, so that when he dies he would merely return to the dust of the earth. Faustus concludes his soliloquy by recognizing the fact that he is still a creature with a soul and is doomed to spend eternity in hell. He curses his parents for having him, but quickly takes it back and decides to curse himself and Lucifer, who "*hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven*". The clock then strikes midnight and Faustus calls his body to be turned into air or drops of water that are forever lost in the ocean never to be found. This is to no effect and Faustus is carried off to eternal torment.

He spends his final hour in vain hopes that he may be spared from his fate. In his final hour, Faustus comes to the realization that he is getting the short end of the deal he has made with the devil and how even all the power he had possessed is fleeting in the face of eternity. Faustus' final soliloquy is a realistic look inside the mind of someone who stands on the threshold of forever and knows his destination.

Another special form of speech in drama is the so-called aside. Asides are spoken away from other characters, and a character either speaks aside to himself, secretively to (an)other character(s) or to the audience. It is conspicuous that plays of the Elizabethan Age make significantly more use of asides than modern plays, for example. One of the reasons certainly has to do with the shape of the stage. The apron stage, which was surrounded by the audience on three sides, makes asides more effective since the actor who speaks, inevitably faces part of the audience, while our modern proscenium stage does not really lend itself to asides as the vicinity between actors and audience is missing. Asides are an important device

because they channel extra information past other characters directly to the audience. Thus, spectators are in a way taken into confidence and they often become "partners-in-crime", so to speak, because they ultimately know more than some of the figures on stage. Most often the aside is a quick commentary that shows a character's private opinions or reactions. The thoughts in an aside are private, but shared with the audience. Usually, the aside also makes reference to the main conflict of the play, but it does not always involve a personal moral issue. W. Shakespeare made use of a variety of asides in his plays *"Romeo and Juliet", "Macbeth", "Hamlet", "Henry V"* and *"Twelfth Night"*.

In Act 3 Scene 1 of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare uses an aside to directly reveal a character's internal conflict and struggle with guilt. Claudius, the current King of Denmark, is an evil murderer. The entire play of Hamlet revolves around the murder of Hamlet's father, the deceased King of Denmark. In a ghostly revelation, Hamlet discovers that his uncle Claudius is the murderer. Throughout the play, Hamlet attempts to deal with this horrible truth. At one point, when some events that Hamlet has planned cut too close to home, Claudius turns to the audience and says: *O, tis too true! How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience. The harlot's cheek beautied with plast'ring art. Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it than is my most painted word. O heavy burden!*

Claudius admits that his conscience is being whipped by the burden of guilt. He sees his own false dishonesty. Claudius, in this aside, admits to carrying a heavy burden of guilt. This type of revelation is a perfect example of how important it is that an aside cannot be heard by the other characters onstage. If the other characters could hear, Claudius would be trapped. Notice that all this is revealed in one or two lines. That is why this is considered an aside and not a soliloquy, since a soliloquy is much longer.

Soliloquy	**Aside**	**Monologue**
No one else hears	No one else hears	Other characters can hear and respond

Character speaks directly to self	Character speaks directly to audience	Character speaks directly to other characters
Character sometimes speaks to audience	Character sometimes speaks to self	Other characters may react
Longer speech	Shorter speech	Longer speech
Similar to monologue	One or two lines	Similar to soliloquy
Reveals internal conflict	Reveals short judgments about other characters	Explains or tells a story
Reveals secrets or moral dilemmas	Reveals brief reaction to events	Advances action of the play

In Act I, Scene 3 of *Macbeth*, the asides of Macbeth do much to reveal his inner thoughts, thus providing character development. When Ross comes to him and upon orders from the king bids Macbeth "Thane of Cawdor" Macbeth incredulously wonders in an aside, "What can the devil speak true?" Up until this point, he may not have taken the three witches seriously, but now he wonders because their prediction that he would become Thane of Cawdor has come true. Then, in an aside to Banquo, Macbeth encourages Banquo to believe what the witches have told him because they have been proven true by him:

Do you not hope your children shall be kings,
When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me
Promis'd no less to them?

This aside is of great importance to the characterization of Macbeth because he begins to believe that reality and fantasy are equal. As equals, then chance may bring him good fortune without his "stir".

The afterlives of Renaissance drama

<u>Shifting tastes in the eighteenth and nineteenth senturies</u>

Revivals of Renaissance plays formed a significant proportion of the repertoire of the Restoration theatres, Beaumont and Fletcher were the most popular

Renaissance playwrights; Shakespeare had not yet achieved his ascendancy, and was less popular and highly regarded than either of these authors or Ben Jonson. Revenge tragedies and city comedies were performed fairly frequently in the 1660s, but declined in favour over ensuing decades. When Shakespeare's plays were performed, they were often in adapted form, such as **Davenant and Dryden's** *The Tempest; or the Enchanted Island* (1667), which added a musical setting and four new characters including a sister for Miranda and a love-interest for Ariel; or **Nahum Tate's** *King Lear* (1681), which notoriously added a happy ending.

Over the course of the eighteenth century Shakespeare rose in esteem, assisted by a series of prestigious editions of his collected works by editors like **Nicholas Rowe** (1709), **Alexander Pope** (1725), and **Samuel Johnson** (1765). In 1741 his statue was erected in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, while at Drury Lane **David Garrick** (1717-1779), the foremost actor of his generation, staged and starred in numerous productions of Shakespeare's plays. Garrick promoted himself as well as Shakespeare by means of events like the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769, a three-day festival in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare's works were also popular because they harmonized with the literature of sentiment that became fashionable from the 1740s onwards. Jonson's works, however, did not suit this development in taste, and were increasingly disparaged in order to praise Shakespeare by contrast, although Garrick made a great success of the role of Abel Drugger in an adaptation of *The Alchemist*. Some other city comedies continued to be performed, and in 1744 **Robert Dodsley** published *A Select Collection of Old English Plays* in twelve volumes. However, on the whole, other Renaissance dramatists were reduced to little more than footnotes to Shakespeare, and many disappeared from view almost entirely. Marlowe, for instance, was not performed at all in London throughout the eighteenth century, nor was Webster after 1707. One notable exception, however, was **Philip Massinger's** *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625), a play which is hardly performed or studied today. It tells the story of a grasping businessman, Sir Giles Overreach, who accrues wealth by ruining others and

finally goes mad. It was revived several times by Garrick and became a regular feature of the repertoire after John Henderson triumphed in the role of Overreach in 1781, establishing it as a starring role; Edmund Kean created even more of a sensation in 1816.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw adulation of Shakespeare rise to unprecedented heights, as he was held to personify the Romantic idealization of the artist as a divinely inspired genius. Other Renaissance playwrights began to regain attention thanks to the efforts of **Charles Lamb**, who in 1808 published *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare*, offering appreciative discussions of extracts from Renaissance plays. Lamb also provided William Hazlitt with materials to write his lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (delivered 1819, published 1820). Hazlitt praised the artless yet "truly English" vitality of the Elizabethan playwrights, seeing them as "a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy". He particularly extolled Marlowe as a kind of forerunner of the Romantic anti-hero, with "a lust for power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by anything but its own energies".

A gradual re-awareness of non-Shakespearean Renaissance drama was assisted by the growth of antiquarianism and of literary scholarship as a profession, leading to the publication of editions. **John Ford's works** appeared in 1811 and 1827 and Marlowe's in 1818 and 1826. **Alexander Dyce** was an important editor, producing editions of Webster (1830), Middleton (1840) and Marlowe (1850). He was followed by **F.J. Furnivall**, whose *Early English Text Society* (founded in 1864) and *New Shakespeare Society* (founded in 1873) sponsored editions and scholarship. **A.H. Bullen** followed with a series called *English Dramatists* which included editions of Marlowe (1885), Middleton (1886), Marston (1887) and Peele (1888), and with a seven-volume *A Collection of Old English Plays* (1882-90) which included a number of plays never published before. Mermaid editions,

published from the late 1880s onwards, were significant in making Renaissance plays available to a wider audience.

Meanwhile the Shakespeare industry continued to grow, powered by star performances by great Victorian actor-managers like **William Charles Macready** (1793-1873) and **Henry Irving** (1838-1905), popular editions, the growth of Stratford-on-Avon as a tourist centre, and the rise of English Literature as a subject of academic study. Colonialism also played a part, as Shakespeare was carried to the outposts of the Empire as the epitome of all that was great about Britain and as a supposedly civilizing influence. America, too, over the course of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, increasingly embraced Shakespeare as a hero of democratic values.

Renaissance drama in the twentieth century

In **1894** William Poel founded the Elizabethan Stage Society, which was dedicated to stripping away the lavish and spectacular trappings of most Victorian productions of Shakespeare, attempting instead to recreate a more authentic style of staging. The Society also revived a number of plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries, including *Marlowe*, *Jonson*, and *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*. It was succeeded in **1919** by the Phoenix Society, whose express purpose was to revive neglected Renaissance plays. The growing interest in Renaissance drama received a significant boost from **T.S. Eliot**, who in **1920**, on the brink of great fame as the defining poet of the modern age, published a volume of criticism, *The Sacred Wood*, which included essays on *Hamlet*, *Marlowe*, *Jonson* and *Massinger*. These, together with Eliot's 1921 essay on *The Metaphysical Poets*, and more on drama in his volume *Elizabethan Essays* (**1934**), were instrumental in redefining the canon of English literature, shifting attention away from the Romantics and their successors and back to relatively neglected Renaissance authors. For Eliot the English Renaissance was not a golden age, but an age "of anarchism, of dissolution, of decay", and it was this that gave it a particular resonance with the modern condition.

The rise of Renaissance drama was assisted by the establishment of the Arts Council in 1947 and by its financial subsidy from the 1950s onwards of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the national Theatre. Increasing access to education and the growth of English Literature as a university subject also produced directors, actors and audiences with an enthusiasm for Renaissance plays. There was a brief moment in the 1980s and early 1990s when some iconoclastic academics questioned the dominance of Shakespeare in the literary canon, and the ideological and commercial interests that had grown up around him. Books such as *Political Shakespeare* (edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 1985), *The Shakespeare Myth* (edited by Graham Holderness, 1988), and Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1990) invited readers to re-examine Shakespeare's cultural pre-eminence and challenge "Bardolatry". To some extent other Renaissance dramatists benefited from this; Taylor, for instance, made a case for Middleton to be regarded as no less significant than Shakespeare, and set about editing an Oxford University Press *Collected Works* of Middleton (published 2007), similar in format to the Oxford Shakespeare which he had co-edited.

Renaissance drama in the twenty-first century

Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* was followed by a string of American high-school rom-coms based on Shakespearean plots, including *10 Things I Hate About You* (**1999**, based on *The Taming of the Shrew*), *Get Over It* (**2001**, based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and *She's the Man* (**2006**, based on *Twelfth Night*). International films based on Shakespeare have also proliferated and are becoming increasingly visible to UK and US audiences. A **Maori** version of *The Merchant of Venice* (*Te Tangata Whai-Rawa o Weniti*) was made in **2002**, while Bollywood has produced Shakespeare adaptations including *Maqbool* (based on *Macbeth*, **2003**) and *Omkara* (based on *Othello*, **2006**). In China, *The Banquet* (**2006**) converted *Hamlet* into a martial arts film, while *Prince of Himalayas* (also **2006**) relocated the same play to ancient Tibet. Critics debate whether such films represent the homogenisation and suppression of local cultures by a commercially driven global

culture, or subversive retorts to global culture by developing nations and previously disenfranchised communities. Either way, twenty-first Shakespeare on film is frequently concerned with multiculturalism, creatively exploring tensions between the global and the local, and using Shakespeare's plays to communicate local traditions and languages to a wide audience. Experiences of displacement and of friction between communities are frequent themes, and are readily found in plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello*. At the same time for the UK, and for England in particular, Shakespeare will always be bound up with ideas of national identity and national pride. In 2009 he was voted Britain's greatest national treasure, and his plays and related events were at the centre of the cultural festival that accompanied the 2012 London Olympics.

It is hard to find a time when there is not at least one Shakespeare production running on the London stage. Some of these, especially at the Globe, foreground authenticity and participate in Britain's very successful heritage and tourist industries, but at the same time Shakespeare continues to be claimed as our contemporary. In **2005**, for instance, the BBC screened a series of television plays titled *Shakespeare Re-Told*. These were adaptations of four Shakespeare's plays (*Much Ado about Nothing*; *Macbeth*; *The Taming of the Shrew*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) to present-day settings, aimed at demonstrating his enduring, interest and relevance. Many other Renaissance plays also continue to be revived, especially revenge tragedies, and for these too relevance to modern life continues to be a touchstone. Few playgoers now have direct experience of the kinds of atrocities of war that could be invoked to explain the success of revenge tragedy in the twentieth century; rather than being enured to horrors as were soldiers returning from the First World war trenches, audiences today are perhaps more likely to be seeking sensationalism in order to enliven their relatively tame lives. Yet at the same time revenge tragedy does still seem to offer a form of catharsis, and to speak to cultural anxieties around sexuality, violence, and the costs of individualism. The plays lend themselves to addressing twenty-first-century concerns about the consequences of unbridled self-interest, materialism, violent

crime, gang rivalries, and the sexualisation of culture, and productions often make imaginative links between the disturbing world of revenge tragedy and some of the edgier forms of modern popular culture. In **2008**, two productions of T. Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* opened in the same week, one at the National Theatre in London, the other at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. The National production was praised as "the precursor of Tarantino's Pulp Fiction or Coppola's *The Godfather"* (The Mail on Sunday), while Charles Spencer's review in The Daily Telegraph was headed "the enduring appeal of nastiness and perversity".

Renaissance drama, then, continues to thrive, to enthral and provoke, and to address ever wider audiences. We can only speculate as to the new and diverse forms it will take and the unexpected responses it will inspire as the twenty-first century progresses.

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