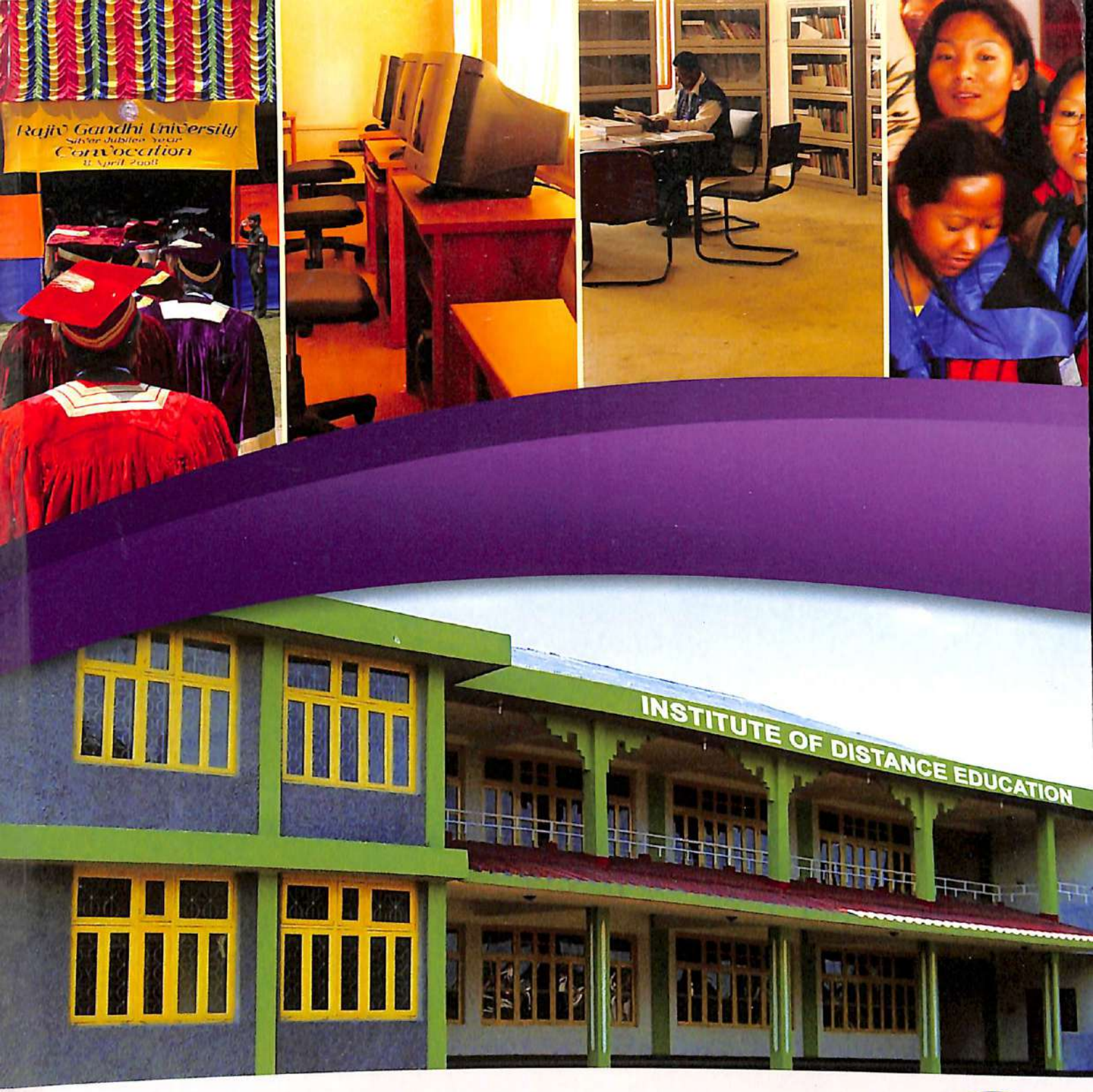


M.A. (English)

FIRST YEAR

MAE-402

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
Rajiv Gandhi University

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ENGLISH DRAMA FROM THE ELIZABETHAN TO THE MODERN PERIOD

English Drama from the Elizabethan to the Modern Period

MA [English]

First Year

MAE-402

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY
Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

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INTRODUCTION

NOTES

English Drama from the Elizabethan to the Modern Period is a book which has been designed to give students of literature an insight into the various aspects of the two most significant theatrical conventions: the Elizabethan and the Modern period. Elizabethan drama broadly refers to the period of Queen Elizabeth's reign, from 1558-1603. Different from the preceding age, Elizabethan drama enjoyed a kind of versatility that was peculiar to the age. People patronized the theatre as it staged motley themes ranging from historical plays, tragedies to bawdy comedies. Although Shakespeare was the most prolific and certainly the most famous of the Elizabethan dramatists, other popular playwrights of the period included Christopher Marlowe and Ben Johnson. English patrons, perhaps for the first time could go to the theatre for a good laugh. This is significant as the theatre could now be seen as a something else apart from being didactic.

As opposed to the somewhat well defined contours of Elizabethan drama, the Modern period was different in its appeal. Considered to have begun in the early twentieth-century, Modern drama owes its genesis to several different forces that changed the ways in which man responded to the unities of time, space and action. Antonin Artaud in an article titled *No More Masterpieces* describes how the classics ought to be kept aside to allow newer theatric preoccupations to flourish. In other words, *Oedipus Rex* could no longer be considered relevant as a Modern concern. Instead, it was time for the anti-hero – the imperfect angst ridden individual to emerge onstage as the protagonist. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is considered to be the seminal existential text of the Modern period; emblematic of a kind of predicament which was peculiar to the Modernists.

This book - *English Drama from the the Elizabethan to the Modern Period* - has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the *Introduction* followed by the *Unit Objectives* for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with *Check Your Progress* questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of *Questions and Exercises* is also provided at the end of each unit. The *Summary*, *Key Terms* and *Activity* further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into nine units:

Unit 1: Reflects on the context that led to the rise of Elizabethan theatre

Unit 2: Gives an in-depth analysis of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Unit 3: Critically analyzes Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Unit 4: Analyzes Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* as a comedy of humours

Unit 5: Explains William Congreve's plot and theme of the play *The Way of the World* (1700)

Unit 6: Summarizes and explains G.B. Shaw's play *Man and Superman*

Unit 7: Describe the plot and dramatic technique of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

Unit 8: Identifies and interprets John Osborne's use of imagery and symbolism in the play *Look Back in Anger*

Unit 9: Discusses the theme of protest and subversion in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*

UNIT 1 ENGLISH DRAMA: THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD TO THE MODERN WORLD

Structure

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1.1 Unit Objectives
1.2 Elizabethan Drama
1.3 Shakespearean Tragedy
  1.3.1 Characteristics of Shakespearean Tragedy
1.4 The Works of William Shakespeare
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Elizabethan age refers to the reign of Queen Elizabeth of England, who ruled from 1558 to 1603. The genre of drama thrived during her reign. This was because the spirit of the Renaissance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had given birth to a rich and varied literature in Europe. There was a general interest among the public in reading about real life situations and an inquisitive curiosity in the personal experiences of individuals other than themselves. Drama was the only medium which combined the brilliance of poetry with the thrill and passion of real life situations. It was fused with the exuberant energy that characterized the Elizabethan Age. The reign of Queen Elizabeth saw renowned playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. However, undoubtedly, the master playwright of the Elizabethan Age was William Shakespeare. Whether it was his tragedies, comedies or his historical plays, few authors have been able to match Shakespeare's universal appeal and his lyrical prose. Shakespeare's plays continue to be performed and enjoyed today with as much gusto as they were when they were written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for a small repertory theatre.

Given these facts, drama in the Modern age underwent several changes. That which was fit for the Elizabethans was no longer appealing to the audience of the twentieth-century. Playwrights no longer looked to the classics for inspiration or design. Instead, the focus was on trying to grasp the changes that marked the twentieth century. Advances made in the field of technology were prominent in contributing greatly to the ever increasing divide between the aesthetic sensibilities that were typical of the two eras under study. In simple words, people could no longer relate to historical figures or themes from the Bible. They were interested in learning about the predicaments that were peculiar to their age. In other words, they were interested in the loss or the memory of the Golden Age of literature. Hercules and King Arthur were replaced by modern heroes such as Sisyphus and Narcissus. Their appeal was not their daemonic stature but their banal fate.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the essence of Elizabethan drama
- Explain Shakespearean tragedy
- Describe the different genres
- Identify the different components of a play
- Discuss theatre in Shakespeare's time
- Explain various forms of Modern theatre
- Critique drama as a performing art
- Interpret drama as a tool for social criticism

1.2 ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The genre of drama developed quite rapidly in England during the last quarter of the sixteenth-century. The people had long been accustomed to watching actors perform on stage and took great delight in their acting skills. Patronage lent its aid towards perfecting plays and people of all classes thronged the theatres. The Elizabethan drama is a genre that managed to establish its own place in the English literary tradition. It was not classic or literary in its form as it did not follow classical precedents, but developed under a genuine popular impulse. Consequently, it does not follow the norms of classical drama, but branches out in all sorts of extravaganza and sometimes even absurdities. It included all sorts of elements—wit, learning, vulgarity, love of combat and bloodshed, affectation, songs and dances—along with simple and natural poetic power of delineating human character and of eloquent declamation and rapid action. In Elizabethan drama, every subject is made use of – popular legends, the history of Greece and Rome, Italian novels, English chronicles, and contemporary domestic tragedies – anything and everything that will bring a London audience that composed of men from all classes of society to the theatres. The audience receives a play and decides its fate after the author has done his job. The Elizabethan audience possessed not only an inherited love of dramatic shows, but the Elizabethan times were characterized by a sort of intellectual ferment which must have affected even the most ordinary inhabitants of this society. The Elizabethan drama reflects the national sensibility and intellect as no form of art has done at any other time.

The literature of the Elizabethan period is evidently the product of a society more complex and subject to a far wider range of influences than that of the Chaucerian or Old English period. It is therefore difficult to analyze all of its aspects in its entirety, because life during this period had become multifaceted. The underlying sentiment and a direct result of the Reformation movement was the perception of the personal answerability of the individual soul to God. The implicit value system of the Renaissance supported that the world is a beautiful place and that sensuous enjoyment of the beautiful is a rational and commendable act. In contrast, the doctrine of the Church stated that a consecrated and authorized priesthood stood between man and the Maker; and the ideal of medieval society was the man who repressed his passions and even his natural instincts, and spent his life in self-denial of innocent enjoyment and 'subdued the flesh' by observing fasts and indulging in self-inflicted tortures. These divergent standpoints imply a profound conflict of views. However, during the Elizabethan age, the Renaissance ideals had begun to perforate down to the masses. The triumph of Renaissance ideals was accompanied by an intellectual excitement which became the source of energy and life for literature.

The drama of the period is written in the representative form, and in many of the plays, the interest lingers not so much on the plot or story as in the representation of human will in vigorous action. The characters are, in many cases, profoundly conceived as active agents, sometimes of exaggerated will and energy. This is in response to the theory of the dignity and self-sufficiency of the individual soul which characterized the Puritan belief system. Again, the love of luxurious ornamentation and variety which marked the Renaissance art can also be observed in many of the Elizabethan dramas.

The position and value of classical literature also underwent a major change as the Old English period passed into the Elizabethan Age. The classic authors came to be read far more than in the former period, since the arrival of the printing press made these works accessible to all, and classical literature became known to a far larger number of people. The old sense of the picturesque of social life resulting from the contrasted orders of society remained, but men were conscious of living in a growing and expanding world, both materially and intellectually, and did not fear to invent new forms of expression. Chaucer had imported Italian stanzas, but the Elizabethan lyricists did not hesitate to invent a hundred new song forms, not initiative, but based on a natural perception of the music of words.

Elizabethan literature is so extensive and the period was marked by so great an advancement that specimens of many different types are present in it. Also, we can surely say that its thoughts rest on a broader and profound philosophy and its form is more varied, and the mental tone it expresses is more vigorous, than those found in any other epoch. To quote Andrew Sanders, the author of *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 'In the late sixteenth-century London, however, suburban theatres, outside the control of less than sympathetic City magistrates, had begun to establish themselves as an essential, and internationally acknowledged part of popular metropolitan culture. They were visited and described and sketched by European visitors; companies of English actors were, in turn, to perform plays on the Continent. Such prestige, even if qualified by incomprehension of the English language as a medium, is testimony to the flourish and flexibility of the public theatres and theatre companies of late sixteenth-century London.'

1.3 SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

One can simply describe 'tragedy' as a play with an unhappy ending. The word 'tragedy' has its origin in Greek 'tragodia', meaning 'goat song', which accompanied the ritual of offering goats to Dionysus, the Greek god of vineyards and wine. The genre of tragedy is rooted in the Greek dramas of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles who had written their epoch-making works *Oresteia* and *Prometheus Bound*, *Medea* and *The Trojan Women* and *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* respectively. One of the earliest works of literary criticism, the Greek Philosopher Aristotle's (384–322 BC) treatise called *Poetics* includes a discussion of tragedy based in part upon the plays of the above triumvirate. It is assumed that Shakespeare would have been familiar with the Latin adaptations of Greek drama by the Roman playwright Seneca. Both Senecan and Renaissance tragedy were influenced by the theory of tragedy found in *Poetics*.

Tragedy deals with the serious aspects of life and is essentially a tale of suffering ending in death. According to the definition given by Aristotle:

Tragedy is a representation of an action which is serious, complete and of a certain length: it is expressed in speech made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted, not narrated, and by exciting pity and fear gives a healthy relief to such emotions.

In the medieval period, tragedy began to be defined by a constant theme: the fall of a man of great stature from grace because of a reversal of fortune. According to Professor Dr Debora B Schwartz, in the middle ages, there was no 'tragic' theatre per se; rather, medieval theatre in England was primarily liturgical drama, which developed in the later middle ages (around 15th century) as a way of teaching scriptures to the illiterate masses (mystery plays) or of reminding them to be prepared for death and God's judgement (morality plays).

With the emergence of the Elizabethan age two prominent changes took place in tragedies. Death was used as a device to bring in the ultimate tragic end for the protagonist and adversity started being associated to the original sin and moral ethics. Unlike Aristotle's concept of a tragedy having unity of time and place, Elizabethan tragedy compressed time and jumped from location to location for different scenes. Elizabethan tragedy also used a whole range of imaginative narratives as tragic subjects. The greatest of all Elizabethan tragic playwrights was William Shakespeare. His tragic plays include *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Let us now look at the features of a Shakespearean tragedy in detail.

1.3.1 Characteristics of Shakespearean Tragedy

Shakespearean tragedy mainly conforms to the definition given by Aristotle but it violates the principles of the Greek philosopher in one important respect; its action is not all serious; its seriousness is often relieved by the comic. In this respect Shakespeare held a mirror to life in which joys and sorrows, tears and smiles, frequently alternate. Shakespeare's tragedy is pre-eminently the story of one person. There are, no doubt, a number of other persons, but the attention is concentrated on the main figure. The story ends with - and includes - the death of the hero. According to the famous English Shakespearean scholar A.C. Bradley, a Shakespearean tragedy is essentially a tale of suffering and calamity concluding with death.

Bradley also writes that 'tragedy with Shakespeare is concerned always with persons of high degree: often with kings or princes: if not, with leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony; at the least, as in Romeo and Juliet, with members of great houses, whose quarrels are of public moment.' Shakespeare's conception of tragedy is medieval. Unlike the moderns, he is not concerned with the fate of the common man, their sorrows and sufferings. The exalted personages suffer greatly; thus Hamlet's soul is torn within. Their suffering is contrasted with their previous happiness. The hero is such an important personality that his fall affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire, and when he falls suddenly from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of the powerlessness of man and omnipotence of fate. This is one of the ways in which the playwright introduces an element of universality in his tragedies.

The tragic hero is not only a person of high degree but he also has an exceptional nature. He has some passion which attains in him a terrible force. He has a marked one-sidedness, a strong tendency to act in a particular way. They are all driven in one direction by some peculiar interest, object, passion or habit of mind. Bradley refers to this trait as the 'tragic flaw.' Thus, Macbeth has 'vaulting ambition', Hamlet 'noble inaction', Othello 'credulity and rashness in action', and Lear 'the folly of old age'.

Owing to the fault of his character, the tragic hero falls from greatness. He errs, and his error - joining with other causes - brings ruin on him. In other words, the action issues out of his character. It is in this sense that the statement 'Character is Destiny' is true of a Shakespearean tragedy. The character of the hero is responsible for his actions and from this point of view Shakespeare's tragic heroes appear to be shaping their own destiny. As Bradley says, 'The calamities and catastrophe follow inevitably from the deeds of man, and the main source of these deeds is character.'

The tragic hero, no doubt, has the particular flaw which spells his doom, but otherwise he is an admirable character — a genius, a great warrior, or an honest and virtuous person. But this exceptional human being suffers and is wasted. Hence it is that a Shakespearean tragedy leaves behind a very strong impression of waste. At the close of the tragedy the evil is expelled, but at the cost of much that is good and admirable. There is no tragedy in the expulsion of evil; the tragedy is that it involves the waste of good. As Bradley puts it, 'The hero may die, but that is not the real tragedy, for man is mortal and death is unavoidable. The real tragedy is that so much good and nobility is wasted.'

Although, character is destiny in Shakespeare, his tragedies are not mere tragedies of character, but, 'tragedies of character and destiny'. There is a tragic relationship between the hero and his environment. Fate places him in just those circumstances and situations with which he is incapable of dealing. In *Hamlet*, swift action would have saved the situation, but the hero is given to brooding thoughts and noble inaction. In other words, the flaw in the character of the hero proves fatal for him only in the peculiar circumstances in which cruel destiny has placed him. As a matter of fact, the characteristic deeds of the hero issuing from his character are influenced and complicated by some additional factors, the first being an abnormal condition of the mind. There is some abnormal condition of mind, such as insanity or an excitable imagination resulting in hallucinations which affect the hero. Thus, King Lear suffers from insanity, Macbeth has hallucinations, and Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep. Such abnormality never originates deeds of any dramatic importance, though it may influence the course of action and precipitate the fall of the hero.

The second important factor influencing the action is the supernatural element. The ghosts and witches or any other supernatural element is not a mere illusion of the hero. The witches in *Macbeth* and the ghost in *Hamlet* have an objective existence as they are seen by others also. Further, the supernatural does contribute to the action, and is often an indispensable part of it. But it is always placed in close relation with the relative character. It gives confirmation and distinct form to the working of the hero's mind. The ghost in *Hamlet* results from suspicion already present in his mind. But its influence is never of a compulsive kind; it is merely suggestive; the hero is quite free to accept the suggestion or to reject it. But the hero follows its suggestion and from there the tragic course of events begins and hastens the downfall of the hero. In the play *Macbeth* the three 'weird sisters' are able to kindle Macbeth's ambition through their prophecy, which starts the chain of events seen in the play. However, Banquo rejects a similar prophecy made for his children.

The third important factor influencing the action is chance or accident. In most of the tragedies, chance plays a prominent part, as it does in life itself. Such chance happenings always work against the hero and quicken his downfall. It is just a chance that Romeo never got the message about the potion, and that Juliet did not awake from her sleep a minute sooner, that Desdemona dropped her handkerchief at the crucial moment and that Bianca arrived on the scene just at the time to serve the purpose of Iago; that the pirate ship attacked Hamlet's ship and he could return to Denmark so soon; and that Edgar arrived too late to save Cordelia's life. Another author who prominently employed fate and chance to influence action was the Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy. Hardy used chance and coincidence to show that man was powerless to alter the workings of fate. The fate of characters was foreshadowed through the action of the characters, natural scene and dialogue. In Hardy's novel *Far From a Madding Crowd*, one of the main protagonists Bathsheba Everdene just happens to inherit all her uncle's wealth after his death, while another character Gabriel Oak's dog causes him to lose all his fortune.

1.4 THE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare has been admired in every age and in every country as a great dramatist, and the first problem before a student of literary history is to understand the relation of Shakespeare's plays to contemporary drama, and to trace the development of Shakespeare's mind and art. Shakespeare did not suddenly become a great dramatist. He learnt his art in the hard school of experience, and as we study Shakespeare's plays in a chronological order, we become aware of the gradual evolution of Shakespeare's genius. Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays, although there are two or three works which do not seem to be entirely his. His activity as a dramatist covered over twenty-four years, from 1588 to 1612. These twenty-four years have been sub-divided into four periods of about six years each.

1.4.1 The Four Periods of Shakespeare's Dramatic Activity

(a) **The First Period (1588–94):** The first period of Shakespeare's dramatic activity is the period of imitation and apprenticeship when the poet was 'in the workshop'; learning trade as a dramatic craftsman. The plays of this period together with *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are marked by a youthful exuberance of fancy and amorousness, by an artificial excess of fun and horseplay, by euphuistic extravagance of language and by a frequent use of rhymed couplet.

Shakespeare was during this period revising old plays, working in collaboration with other playwrights or imitating other models. Lyly inspired him to write the social play *Love's Labour Lost.* The plays such as *Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and *Romeo and Juliet* belong to this period. The treatment of life in these plays is superficial: there is little depth of thought and characterization. Rhyme predominates and the blank verse is stiff. The plays are full of puns, conceits and other affectations. *Richard III,* his only historical experiment in this period, resembles Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* and *Doctor Faustus.* Shakespeare demonstrated great originality in his comedies from the very beginning and his comedies are singular and unique. As the playwright Ben Johnson has remarked, 'Shakespeare's tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.' There is something original and fresh even in his earliest comedies. They show his dexterity, delight in beauty and a quick wit.

(b) **The Second Period (1594–1600):** This is the period of Shakespeare's fine comedies and history plays. It is the period when he became a man of the world, for he now came in contact with the concerns and affairs of the real world. His early plays are slight or fanciful: now his imagination began to lay hold of real life. He took up the subject matter of history. The compression of the large and rough matter of history into a dramatic form demanded vigorous exercise of his imagination. The fact that he was dealing with reality and a close interaction with the public sphere taught him the nature of the real world. In *Henry IV,* he shows how a man may succeed in attaining a practical mastery of the world. *Henry V* is a national anthem in five acts, but *Henry IV* is far richer in humour and psychological power. It is in this play that we find the immortal character of Falstaff. *The Merchant of Venice* is unparalleled in plot-construction and characterization. It has a sombre background of tragic irony relived by the charm of romantic love. *Much Ado about Nothing* is on a higher plane of wit, while in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, there is a wonderful blend of humour and romance. Shakespeare's work becomes original and independent and shows the development of his power and technical skill. Characterization and humour become deep and psychological in his plays. Thought and language are perfectly balanced. Rhyme gives way to free and flexible blank verse. It was the time when he was prospering and accumulating the fortune on which he meant to retire as a country gentleman. This is the period of his joyous comedies and the reorientation of English history through Shakespeare's eyes.

(c) **The Third Period (1600–1608):** There came a strange turn in Shakespeare's life around the year 1600. It was the period when his heart was ill at ease and he seemed neither to be content with the world nor his own conscience. Several misfortunes overtook him at this time. His father died in debt and poverty. He lost his brother and his only son. His patron and benefactor, Earl of Southampton, was imprisoned for political intrigue, and a 'black-eyed and pale-faced lady', probably Mary Fitton – the dark lady of the sonnets – disillusioned him by her inconstancy and depravity. He had emptied upon her the passionate devotion of his nature only to find her capricious and inconstant. Romeo is stabbed by a 'white wench's black eye'. Biron falls in love with a whitely wanton, but Shakespeare now produces his astounding Cleopatra, with her infinite variety of moods, her stormy sensuality and yet compelling powers. It is definite that Shakespeare at this stage passed through a moral crisis. It is in the obscure confessions of the sonnets that we find the key which unlocks the dramatist's mental sufferings. The memories of hours

misspent, the suffering of love misplaced or rejected, the experience of man's worse nature gained by association with unworthy friends – all these went to the depth of his sensitive mind, and out of that depth he gave visions of human depravity and ingratitude, of the likes of Lear, Hamlet, and Timon. It was a period of darkness and depression for Shakespeare. He now did not care for tales of mirth, for the stir and movement of history, or for the pomp of war. He started his enquiry into the great mystery of evil. His attention is preoccupied with the darker side of human life and his plays are made out of those destructive passions which shake the foundations of the moral order and bring ruin upon the innocent and the guilty alike. Tragedy predominates during this period and the theme of his plays is the faithlessness of a friend, treachery of relations and subjects, ingratitude of children. Even the comedies of this period are essentially tragedies. Beginning with *Julius Caesar,* Shakespeare rises to greater heights of drama and reflective poetry in *Hamlet.* The play *Hamlet* is the story of a cultured man's revolt from the grossness of material life. The plays such as *Othello, Macbeth and King Lear* show that the world is full of mysterious and interesting evil. *King Lear* is a study of private selfishness, and *Macbeth* of public selfishness. In *King Lear* and *Macbeth,* Shakespeare achieved the universal power of Greek tragedy. *Antony and Cleopatra* is psychologically the most intense play. *Timon of Athens* is an astounding study of man's ingratitude to man. It appears that in *Timon of Athens,* Shakespeare broke down under the strain, and gave up such nerve-wrecking analyses of human evil.

(d) **The Fourth Period (1608–12):** This is the period of tragic-comedies or romances. Professor Dowden's view is that reconciliation is the theme of Shakespeare's last plays. He had struggled with evil and triumphed over it, and he could now forgive. The disharmony is resolved. *The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* show cruel wrongs of man to man, but in the end, there is spiritual calm and forgiveness. The evil is no longer to have its way: it is controlled by good. In these plays, virtue always wins over vengeance, wrongs are pardoned, lost children are restored and the plays end on a note of general happiness and reconciliation. At the same time the last plays also show the decline of Shakespeare's dramatic powers. They are often careless in construction and weak in characterization, while in style and versification also they cannot be compared to the tragedies.

Thus, we find that the qualities of the plays of each period are intimately connected with the inner personal history of the dramatist and the development of his art. Shakespeare's mind passed from youthful frivolities to tragic gloom, and from thence to serenity and calm. One has to agree with Professor Dowden that these are the definite stages of the growth of Shakespeare's mind which are reflected in his art through the periods of his dramatic career.

1.4.2 Shakespeare as a Dramatist

1. **The variety of Shakespeare's gifts:** There is hardly any quality in Shakespeare's work that is not found in some other play of the period. He does not surpass the pathos and poetic sublimity of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus.* He created no atmosphere of grief and horror more agonizing than that in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi.* No play of his is so solidly constructed as Ben Jonson's *Volpone,* and none of his comedies is more skilful than Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle.* Every element in his drama is individually matched by some dramatist or the other. His greatness lies in combining all these elements, and in possessing equal command over diverse material. Like Lyly or Marlowe or Kyd, he did not adopt a distinct manner. His flexibility is marvellous. In every type of play – comedy, tragedy, national history, romantic and fairy plays – he is supreme. There is diversity even within these types. Shakespeare is as much at home in a comedy of wits like *Love's Labours Lost* as in a comedy of fantasy like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or a comedy of romance like *Twelfth Night* or a farce of the classical type like *The Comedy of Errors.* Shakespeare is never found twice at the same point. He shows equal aptitude for the tragic and the comic, the sentimental and the burlesque, lyrical fantasy and character-study, portraits of men and women, of kings and clowns. No other dramatist possesses such diverse gifts or has given such various and colourful scenes of life.

2. **Shakespeare's plot-construction:** Plot is the soul of drama, and character comes next, thought Aristotle. But this classical doctrine was found to be inadequate in the Renaissance, because the matter which the playwrights took usually came from storybooks of romance. Romantic drama swayed the public mind and swept away all limitations of the classical drama. Tragedy was mingled with comedy; scenes were multiplied, with long intervals between scenes; the unity of place was disregarded: in fact the whole story was sought to be represented on the stage. The Romantic drama was based on complex plots. In Shakespeare's plays also, there are two or three or four plots running together. Shakespeare's supreme skill lies in weaving these different plots into a harmonious design. He did not tie himself down to any theory. His first concern was to acquire a story. He kept to the old road, and sought first for the story. When we compare his plays with the ill-shaped and ill-constructed romances or novellas, we realize his magnificent skill in plot-construction. He rendered the English drama a new form. None of his predecessors was a dramatic artist. Shakespeare's plots are perfect in their own way – they have a good beginning, a good middle and a good end. Shakespeare did not invent stories. He took up popular stories, and by his dramatic genius transformed them into great drama. He shaped a bare outline of a story by clever manipulation of plot and subplot, and produced dramatic effect, by interweaving plot and character, by recreating original characters, by giving life-like impassioned dialogues, and by such qualities as humour, pathos, passion and poetry. He starts every dramatic story with a conflict. 'No conflict, no drama' seems to be his axiom. All his plots possess the Initial Exposition, the Rising Action or Complication, the Climax or the Turning Point, the Falling Action or Denouement and the Conclusion or Catastrophe in which the conflict is brought to a close. His compact plot-construction is revealed in the opening scenes of the plays themselves, which strike the keynote of the dramas. In addition to a clever plot-construction, Shakespeare, like a romantic artist, has also produced some immortal individual scenes that are imprinted on the mind, like the sleepwalking scene in *Macbeth* or the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice* or the Falstaff scenes in *Henry IV* (Part I), or the Deposition scene in *Richard II* or the Dogberry and Verges' scenes in *Much Ado About Nothing* or the scene in *The Tempest* in which Ferdinand carries logs of wood for Miranda's sake.

3. **Shakespeare's characterization:** Shakespeare reversed the ideal of Aristotle. The plot held the first place for the classical dramatists, and characterization held the secondary place – 'Tragedy cannot subsist without Action, without character it may.' Shakespeare shifted the centre of gravitation from plot to character.

Shakespeare's creative originality consists in making his characters life-like. Lear, Falstaff, Shylock, Richard II, Macbeth, and Prospero are now part of the world's mythology. At his creative breath the dead rise from their graves, and re-enact the scenes of their life. Every single character of Shakespeare is as much an individual as are found in real life: it is impossible to find any two Shakespearean characters that are wholly alike. His characters are neither paragons nor monsters. They act with reason and have motives. Iago had his reasons, and Lady Macbeth reminds us that she is a woman by saying, 'Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it.' Shakespeare's characters act from within. Ben Jonson's characters are broad types, while Shakespeare's characters are complex individuals. Shakespeare possesses the genius of raising characters from their particular circumstances, and giving them universal human traits. We not only see their exterior but also the working of their mind. His characters, said Goethe, are like watches with dial-plates of transparent crystal; they show the hour like others, and the inward mechanism is all visible. His characters are ideal but not abnormal. There is an exquisite blending of the general and the particular, the ideal and the real, which makes his characters types as well as individuals. Shakespeare conceives his persons not from outside, but in the basic composition of their nature. We see them in the course of their development. They grow and unfold themselves before our eyes. Lear is a different man in the beginning, and another at the close of the play; so is Macbeth. Every character has his own distinctive way of speaking. Their words do not seem to come from Shakespeare, who is a kind of impersonal intelligence making everything visible except himself.

Shakespeare was a master of human psychology. His universal humanity and his understanding of human emotions and instincts have made him the greatest philosopher of the human heart. He has created not only such remarkable men as Romeo, Julius, Macbeth, Othello, Iago, Brutus, Antony, Hamlet, Lear; but also the loveliest and radiant women like Desdemona, Imogen, Hermione, Perdita, Ophelia, Miranda and many others. It is in creating such a large number of life-like portraits – of almost real men and women – that Shakespeare surpasses his contemporaries. Marlowe, Jonson; Beaumont and Fletcher – none of them was capable of drawing such life-like characters. The total number of living characters produced by any of these dramatists would counterbalance those in a single great Shakespearean play. Shakespeare's characters, whether good or bad, whether moving among the realities of history or among the most romantic settings, have an unfailing humanity about them. He is indeed 'Fancy's child' as Milton said, and no throng of characters more alive has ever come from human imagination as from Shakespeare's mind.

4. **The epical basis of Shakespearean drama:** A great difference between Shakespeare's work and that of his contemporaries consists in the greater truth, the more serious and substantial character of his plays. Their matter is as much epical as romantic. A dozen of his great plays, based on legendary chronicles accepted as genuine history by him and his public, show that he had been in close contact with the realities of the past. He treats even fantastic tales with seriousness of an epic poet. Other playwrights often made history unreal; Shakespeare made even his romances real. The justice done by the gods was the principal theme in the classical plays, and in the Medieval Age faith was the main theme. With Shakespeare in his history plays, the theme is 'country'; he imparts knowledge of history as the old epic poets taught religion. In his Roman plays, patriotism is no longer his theme. But he keeps intact the glory of old Roman heroes – Brutus, Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, Antony, and Cleopatra. There is little historical realism in his plays and little of local colour. But his study of human nature was so deep and so true that his work can be said to have given the human side of history. The historical drama reaches its apotheosis with Shakespeare. Jonson alone among his contemporaries knew history, but his knowledge was so exact that he was preoccupied with the painting of curious customs and manners of the past. He did not possess the breadth and epic depth of Shakespeare.

5. **Shakespeare's empiricism**

   (a) *Scenic setting* – Shakespeare's greatness lies in the fact that he took the actual conditions of the theatre into account and did not base his plays on abstract theories. He was aware of the poverty of the scenery and of the brutal taste of the groundlings, who were 'capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise'. He was annoyed by the misuse of clowns, who interrupted and held up the most pathetic scenes with ill-timed fooling. He was pained by the declamations of tragic actors, whom he advises, 'not to saw the air too much with your hand' or 'tear a passion to tatters, to very rags'. Yet Shakespeare did not look down upon stage conditions. He did not return to classical simplicity that would soon have emptied the theatres. He lacked scenery, but he depended on his spectators' imagination, and on his own poetic powers, and supplied the scenery that was lacking on the stage in the text. He made the Capulet's ball room, the moonlit balcony or the tomb in which Juliet lay before she died more real and immortal than these would have been by stage-setting. The trees of the Forest of Arden droop and rustle about Rosalind. The storm blows upon the dishevelled Lear on the deserted heath. Hamlet waits for the ghost on the platform at Elsinore. Nowhere else is there more picturesque description of scenes than in Shakespeare's plays.

   (b) *The clown or fool figure* – Shakespeare's empiricism is revealed in his treatment of the clown or the fool. Instead of contemptuously rejecting the fool, Shakespeare undertook his instruction and changed a necessary evil into good. Shakespeare allowed the fool figure to appear in his comedies and even in his tragedies so long as he spoke 'no more than is set down'. Shakespeare makes the fool a king of popular philosopher who says many wise and practical things in the garb of stupidity. As the novelist Isaac Asimov put it, 'That, of course, is the great secret of the successful fool – that he is no fool at all.' One of the most famous fool characters in Shakespeare is the 'Fool' in *King Lear*. Among all the characters in *King Lear*, only the Fool criticizes King Lear. He is wise enough to perceive the wrongs being done to Cordelia and throughout his appearance in the play reproaches his master Lear for being 'foolish' in his treatment of his youngest daughter. The fool takes various forms in Shakespeare's plays. Sometimes he is a craftsman like Bottom, the weaver; sometimes he is a policeman like Dogberry or like Verges. It is a sign of Shakespeare's tolerance and sweet humanity that he transforms the fool and makes him indispensable for the play in which he is introduced.

   (c) *The plots* – Shakespeare's empiricism is also evident by the fact that he did not labour to invent his plots. He preferred subjects which had been tried by others. He usually borrowed from storybooks and romances. All his plays

have been traced to their sources except *The Merry Wives of Windsor, Love's Labours Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and *The Tempest,* and they are enough to show that if he chose, he could have invented a plot quite easily. His plays do not illustrate any moral ideal like Jonson's plays. He holds the mirror to nature and shows 'the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure'. All life is there with its intermixture of good and evil, saintliness and villainy, greed and self-sacrifice, love and jealousy.

6. **Shakespeare's universality:** It was Ben Jonson who said about Shakespeare that 'he was not of an age but of all time'. Milton called him 'Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child, who warbled forth his native wood-notes wild.' Matthew Arnold was thinking of his universality when he said:

'Others abide our question, thou art free

We ask and ask. Thou smilest and art still

Out-topping knowledge.'

Shakespeare's universality is due to the breadth and impartiality of his vision of life, which is revealed in the complexity of his characters. Shakespeare does not merely represent his characters within the short span of a crisis. He shows his heroes at various moments of their lives, in changing, situations and in contact with different persons. His plays possess life's indefiniteness, and therefore they are mysteries. Shakespeare has raised his heroes above their particular circumstances and endowed them with universal human traits, by which they appeal to people in all lands and in all ages. His men and women are not merely superficial studies of contemporary society; they are true to the eternal facts of human nature. His stage is the world; his characters represent universal mankind; his subject is the human soul; and he himself is the very genius of humanity. In his infinite variety, there is 'God's plenty'. He is myriad-minded, the very 'epitome of mankind'.

'A poet,' said Emerson 'speaks from a heart in unison with his time and country'. Shakespeare's heart beats in unison with all times and all countries. All the images of nature were present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily. He needed not the spectacles of books to read nature, he looked inwards and found her there. He is not so much an imitator as an instrument of nature:

'Nature herself was proud of his designs.

And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines.'

He is free from every theory because he accepts everything that life puts before him. He combines the real and the poetic, the comic and the tragic, the ecstatic and the satirical, and appeals to all men. His drama is a great river of life and beauty. His broadmindedness and impartiality combined with his creative genius make him one of the greatest literary geniuses of the world.

ACTIVITY 1

Use the Internet as your resource and make a list of all the plays of Shakespeare chronologically.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. State the different elements of Elizabethan theatre.
2. What was the underlying sentiment of the age?
3. Describe the essence of Elizabethan drama.
4. What is A.C. Bradley conclusion of Shakespearean tragedy?
5. Give the chief characteristics of a tragic hero.
6. Comment on Shakespeare's plot construction.
7. How is Shakespeare's empiricism revealed in the treatment of the clown or the fool?

1.5 GENRES

1.5.1 Tragedy

One can simply describe 'tragedy' as a play with an unhappy ending. The word 'tragedy' has its origin in Greek '*tragodia*', meaning 'goat song', which accompanied the ritual of offering goats to Dionysus, the god of vineyards and wine. According to the philosopher Hegel, the protagonist of a tragedy is someone who is caught in a 'collision of equally justified ethical aims.' Though over the years it has changed its mode of presentation, during the Greek period tragedy mostly centered around the fall of a man of great fortune and status because of divine intervention of destiny, which was irreversible.

Aristotle in Poetics

Aristotle's main intent in his treatise *Poetics* was answering Plato's argument that poetry inflames the passions and weakens the moral fibre of man. Plato's in his work *Republic* had stated that all art is an imitation of the real world; for Plato, this imitation –called mimesis – will always be subordinate and inferior to the real world. Plato's theory of mimesis then was mechanical. On the other hand, Aristotle's theory of mimesis was far more creative. For Aristotle, art may be mimetic but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Imitation is natural to humans as it helps us to learn. In his *Poetics,* Aristotle stated tragedy is 'the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude; in language embellished with each of artistic ornaments…in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.' Thus, tragedy is the imitation of certain kinds of people and actions. Unlike Plato, Aristotle believed that tragedy can be a form of education that provides moral insight and fosters emotional growth.

In chapter 4 of *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses the origin and development of poetry. By poetry, Aristotle meant dramatic poetry. According to Aristotle, tragedy has six parts:

(i) Plot (human experience/action)

(ii) Character

(iii) Thought (intellectual qualities)

(iv) Diction

(v) Melody (means of imitation)

(vi) Spectacle (mode of imitation by which the story is presented on stage)

(vii) 'Katharsis', also written as catharsis (essentially meaning purification through pity and fear)

Aristotle believed that the plot is the 'life and source of tragedy'. In *Poetics*, he continues with a detailed description of plot till Chapter 18. According to Aristotle, an ideal plot is one where:

(i) tragic action is whole or complete in itself, in other words, it should have a beginning, middle and end.

(ii) tragedy should begin *in medias res*, i.e., in the middle of things, or to put it another way, it must refer to the actions in the mid-career of the hero / protagonist. The beginning of the tragedy must be self-explanatory. The middle must follow to the end.

Thus, Aristotle put emphasis on the logical development of the play. He believed that the beauty of a particular art lies in a proper relation between the whole and its parts. A tragedy encourages plot construction which establishes the relationship between part and whole. The plot becomes significant because of this aesthetic stance as suggested by Aristotle.

Aristotle then goes on to says that a tragedy should be 'well-proportioned'. By well-proportioned, Aristotle means it should have a proper beginning, rising action, and dénouement. He compares the plot construction with the body of an animal. Next, he emphasises the importance of unity of plot. The dramatist must imitate one action for the hero. The plot must have unity of time, place and action.

In Chapter 9 Aristotle defines the nature of poetic truth and compares poetry with history. He lays emphasis on imitation or mimesis in order to heighten or elevate the effect of tragedy on the audience. This imitation is not the photographic representation of realism. The poet is being equated with God in the 'capacity of making'. The poet is a maker.

The historian deals with fixed facts of life. He has nothing new to give. He writes his treatises out of moth-eaten documents or facts that may not be relevant to the future. On the other hand, the poet imitates human actions and experiences and recreates them by virtue of his inventive and imaginative power. This imaginative power elevates the poet's position to the height of a maker and what he makes is more enduring than what is available in the real world. The historian can neither add anything new nor can subtract anything out of the given materials. He is not endowed with any inventive power. The kind of truth he arrives at is not as gratifying as the kind of truth the poet arrives at. The poetic truth invariably involves an element of pleasure. A historian might aim at foretelling the future but he fails to derive the kind of pleasure that either poetry or tragedy offers. A historian tries to teach; while the poet tries to teach and please at the same time; thus, the poet for Aristotle is superior to the historian.

For Aristotle, the poet's idea of life as represented in the poem gets elevated over the universal representation of reality. But poetry ultimately becomes universal because of the poet's ability to relate the individual context to the universal one. This is how poetry acquires universality. The poet is a creator because he creates from his imagination the poem; the historian does not have this power.

In chapter 10 of *Poetics*, Aristotle deals with simple and complex plots. For Aristotle, a simple plot is linear and can anticipate the end whereas in a complex plot there are parallel plots and changes in direction.

Aristotle says that the plot of a tragedy entails the following aspects:

(i) Peripetia (reversal)

(ii) Anagnorisis (recognition / discovery)

(iii) Suffering

(iv) Movement (from ignorance to knowledge about self)

In chapter 12, Aristotle deals with different parts of tragedy:

- Prologue
- Episode - organic unity of drama would depend on episode
- Exode - exode is the part of tragedy which has no choric song after it. There is a reciprocal relationship between part (I – IV) and the whole
- Chorus - divided into parode and stasimon

Parode is the entire part of the tragedy which is to be enacted or followed; and is to be begun with a song. Stasimon is a choric ode.

Chapter 14 of *Poetics* emphasises spectacle - Ignorance to knowledge and knowledge to ignorance. Recognition can be done in following ways:

(i) Birth

(ii) Memory

(iii) Reason

Tragedy after Aristotle

The medieval period saw tragedy being defined by the fall of a man of great stature from grace because of a reversal of fortune. Tragedy in the medieval period started underlining human follies, thus becoming didactic. With the emergence of the Elizabethan age two prominent changes took place. Death was used as a device to bring in the ultimate tragic end for the protagonist and adversity started being associated with the original sin and moral ethics. Unlike Aristotle's concept of a tragedy having unity of time and place, Elizabethan tragedy compressed time and jumped from location to location for different scenes. The greatest of all Elizabethan tragic playwrights was William Shakespeare. His tragic plays include *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

Tragedy in the modern era deviated from its predecessor in a major way by portraying its protagonist as a common man, unlike the earlier ages when the protagonist had to be a man of great fortune. But conceptually, tragedy in the modern era remained the same because it narrated the story of a man who is unable to attain his desires for various reasons despite his best attempts. An example of a modern tragedy is Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

Ancient Tragedies

The earliest Greek tragedies were conducted for the god Dionysus. The celebration consisted of the presentation of four successive plays - three tragedies and one comedy. Each story had its roots in the myths, and the tragedies ended in catastrophe for the protagonists. The most famous ancient tragedies are probably Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, and *Trojan Women* by Euripides.

Renaissance and Later Tragedy

Roman dramas served as the archetype for such Renaissance dramas as Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1587) and Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1594). *The*

Spanish Tragedy is often considered as the first revenge tragedy in English. Plays like *Tamburlaine* (1587) and *The Spanish Tragedy* in turn were the models for the great tragedies of the period including Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus,* Shakespeare's *Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet,* and *King Lear* (1600-1607) and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614).

Moral, Domestic, and Political Tragedy

According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, tragedy is a reflection of life. The mystery and morality plays of the Medieval Ages were introduced to reflect this wider spectrum of the human crisis—confronting evil, falling prey to temptation. These plays, revolved around ordinary people unlike the earlier Greek tragedies. *Everyman* is the best play of this age.

The tragic happenings of the ordinary man and woman were also the subject matter for later ages. George Lillo's *London Merchant* (1731) is a domestic tragedy. Georg Buchner *Danton's Death* (1835) is an example of a political tragedy. Henrik Ibsen's *Doll's House* (1879) is a domestic tragedy and his *An Enemy of the People* (1882) is a political tragedy.

Twentieth-Century Tragedy

The eventful twentieth century saw two world wars, which resulted in fragmented lives became the subject matter of contemporary tragedies which expressed itself in works of Eugene O' Neil's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) and Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* (1941). In each of these works the protagonist is, as always, defeated by opposing forces such as, wartime trouble, loss of family, ambition and jealousy.

1.5.2 Comedy

We usually associate comedy with a performance which is a representation of life, moving around humour, courtship and matrimony; it has hilarious characters, frivolous moments mostly arising out of the complications related to love, and ends in a joyful way.

The word Comedy is derived from Greek 'komos' meaning 'revelry' and 'oide' meaning 'song'. Aristotle explained comedy as 'an imitation of persons inferior' who possess 'one defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive.' The counterparts of English 'comedy' are Greek 'komoida', Latin 'comoedia' and French 'comedie'. One major difference between tragedy and comedy is that tragedy involves intense emotions and sympathies; on the other hand, comedy strives to entertain by ridiculing man's customs and institutions. During the Middle Ages, comedy was associated with colloquial speech and a happy ending. The term comedy was also used for Dante's non-dramatic but religious poem *The Divine Comedy.*

Comedy is a broad genre and comedies are usually categorized according to the following subgenres:

- **Comedy of Common Sense:** Such comedies move around an individual's struggle to maintain a balance between the society's anticipation of human conduct and the abstract notion of expected human conduct.
- **Comedy of Humours:** This type of comedy gets its name from the four basic humours that were believed to constitute the human body. The four humours were phlegm, melancholia, choler and blood; and corresponding to these were the four human types: phlegmatic, melancholic, choleric and sanguine. Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1598) is based on this theory of humours.
- **Comedy of Ideas:** Mostly associated with the plays which discuss existing ideas and notions from a critical perspective but in a subtle and humorous way. For example, George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Devil's Disciple* (1897), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Pygmalion* (1913), and *St. Joan* (1923).
- **Comedy of Intrigue:** This form took its birth in Spain before moving into the English theatrical scene. In this kind of comedy, the plot is more important than the characters. The detailed plot and the various surprises and planning that are interlaced in the play are of vital significance. For example, Ben Jonson's *Epicoene,* Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One,* and Shaw's *You Never Can Tell.*
- **Comedy of Manners:** This kind of comedy gained prominence during the Restoration period in England; that is why it is also known as Restoration Comedy. These plays mostly dealt with the life of the aristocrats and the rich and their amorous pursuits. The comedy resulted not from any lack of ethics but from some aberration in intelligence and behaviour. An example of a restoration comedy would be Wycherley's *The Country Wife.*
- **Comedy of Morals:** This type of comedy is based on satire. It tries to rectify negative human traits such as pride, hypocrisy and discrimination by highlighting them through stories. For example, Moliere's *Tartuffe* (1664) is often considered a comedy of morals.
- **High Comedy:** High comedy is serious in nature and appeals to the intellect. The laughter invoked is a result of ideas that are appealing to the mind. It talks about the inconsistencies of human nature and displays the follies hidden behind social manners. George Meredith reiterates in *The Idea of Comedy* that the laughter aroused in High Comedy is due to intellectual triggering. The term can be applied to works of Congreve, some Shakespearian plays such as *As You Like It* and to the comedies of George Bernard Shaw.
- **Low Comedy:** Low comedy is also known as 'elemental comedy'. It is not serious, subtle or intellectually appealing. Some common characteristics of this type of comedy are arguments, duels, noisy singing, rowdy behaviour, tall talking, burlesque, trickery, buffoonery, clownishness, drunkenness, coarse jesting and low puns. Some examples from Shakespeare would include the porter scene in *Macbeth*, the Launcelot scene in *As You Like It*, the Trinculo-Stephano-Caliban scene in *The Tempest* and the famous Falstaff scenes in *King Henry the Fourth.*

The Evolution of Comedy

Dramatic Comedy grew out of the rowdy choruses and dialogues of the fertility rites associated with Greek god Dionysus. The Old Comedy of ancient Greece was a series of flexibly linked scenes that had either or both chorus and individual characters. In these scenes a specific situation was analysed and presented through various means like fantasy, satire, farce and parody. The series of episodes concluded with a lyrical celebration of unity. Aristophanes was a master of the Old Comedy plays.

Old Comedy soon paved the way to a new form of comedy called the New Comedy. New Comedy is generally considered to have started sometimes around the mid 400 BC. These plays were more literary, usually romantic in nature and definitely much milder and less satirical and critical. Menander was the most prominent writer of New Comedy.

During the Middle Ages, due to the intervention of the Church, the celebratory and buffoonery performances in plays was reduced. However the comic plays survived in medieval folk plays and festivals, in some of the Italian comedy forms, in some liturgical dramas which were mocking in tone, and in the farcical mode of presentations of miracle and morality plays.

With the emergence of the Renaissance in the 16th century, the drama in England saw a new change. John Heywood and his contemporaries developed the Elizabethan comedy which was a combination of interludes and Latin classic comedy. This form reached its pinnacle with the works of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

Shakespeare's comedies covered a vast range from being farcical to being tragic-comic. He also wrote a number of romantic comedies. Ben Jonson, on the other hand, was influenced by the Greek or Roman classics and thus wrote satire.

In the seventeenth-century France, Moliere combined the commedia dell'arte and the classical form in the drama which earned him the reputation of being a great comic and satire writer. Moliere specialized in satirizing the hypocrisy and pretension of aristocracy in France. His plays were part of a genre called 'the Comedy of Manners' which mocked the manners of a social class, typically contained stock characters, and were more concerned with witty dialogue rather than plot. A few famous plays by Moliere include *The School for Wives* and *The Misanthrope*.

A few other prominent English comic drama writers were Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve who also wrote witty comedy of manners. The Restoration period in England saw a new form of comedy in the form of sentimental comedy.

During the later part of eighteenth-century England, simultaneously satirical and witty characters appeared in the plays of Sheridan. The mid-nineteenth century saw comedy being produced by Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and dramatist Anton Chekhov in Russia.

The twentieth century chronicled some distinct trends in comedy. These include the erudite and witty comedy of manners by Noel Coward, SN Behrman, Philip Barry and others; romantic comic fantasies produced by James M. Barrie and Jean Giraudoux; and the Irish comedy of JM Synge, Lady Gregory, Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, and Brian Friel. Also important are the musical comedies produced by WS Gilbert and AS Sullivan. Dramatists of the Theatre of the Absurd also wrote comedies that had both comic and tragic elements.

1.5.3 Tragi-comedy

A tragi-comedy has the thematic seriousness of a tragedy but does not end in a catastrophe but rather on a happy note like that of a comedy. The term was coined by the Roman dramatist Plautus in the second century BC. Plautus' *Amphitryon* is an example of such a work. For Plautus, tragi-comedy denoted a play where traditional roles are reversed where gods and men, masters and slaves take up reverse roles. The other difference with a tragedy is that for a good tragedy the plot must create the illusion of being real whereas in tragi-comedy one can take liberty of not having to maintain the illusion of reality. The tragi-comedy play of Shakespeare *The Winter's Tale* (1610–11) has a tragic climax but ends with a happy conclusion. The presence of tragi-comedy is quite common in the Theatre of the Absurd. Some examples are Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967).

1.5.4 Farce

The English word farce has its roots in Latin 'farcire' which means 'to stuff' or Old French farce meaning 'to show'. In contemporary times, any play which relies on buffoonery, crude funny situations and such low brow devices to create comedy is labeled as a farce. One major difference between comedy and farce is that comedy is more positive in its approach where as farce is more pessimistic. In farce, laughter is aroused through mannerisms, loud behaviour and contrived and highly improbable situations. It mostly turns into burlesque, apart from its tendency to point out larger human problems. It portrays the stupidity of man while picturing his troubles. Farce is a go-between the classical drama form and modern European form.

Farce gained appreciation and retained popularity in France till the late seventeenth century. The writer John Heywood was deeply influenced by the farce genre. In his early life, Molière too acted in farce, before he became established as a writer. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries short, one-act farces gained popularity in England and America. They were staged along with, five-act tragedies. Many of these performances achieved great success mostly because of the acting of some particular actor in a comic role. In today's contemporary usage, the word farce is associated to any full-length play which deals with some absurd situations. They are mostly based on extra-marital themes, hence they are also referred to as a 'bedroom farce'. Pinero was one of the early exponents of modern farce in England. A full-length farce which is still popular is *Charley's Aunt* (1892) written by Brandon Thomas. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Ben Travers produced many successful farces that were staged at the Aldwch Theatre.

1.5.5 Melodrama

The word is derived from the Greek word 'melos' meaning 'song' and French 'drame' meaning 'drama', translating into musical drama. During the eighteenth-century, French playwrights composed plays which were full of spectacle, music and happy endings. But by the nineteenth-century, the use of music gradually receded. Initially, melodrama represented the encounter of good and evil, but gradually it referred to any play of excessive emotional nature. According to the noted critic Heilman both melodrama and tragedy are of equal seriousness. He states, 'both offer different perspectives on the catastrophe that follows from human evil.' According to him, since modern man is a common man and not at par with the great figures, modern plays cannot fit into Aristotle's model. Moreover 'being small encourages self-pity, which works against tragedy and promotes its easy counterpart, melodrama, a drama of pathos centered on sick characters.'

Melodrama was highly popular all over Europe in the nineteenth century. Thomas Holcroft, who wrote *A Tale of Mystery* (1802), which was based on Pixerecourt's *Coelina*; *L'Enfant de Mystère* (1800) is considered to be the first melodrama to be produced in England.

The French 'mélodrame' influenced English melodrama in the initial period in terms of themes that revolved around horror and mystery, vice, and virtue tales. The most important authors of this period were Schiller, Kotzebue and Pixerecourt. The later melodramas were less Gothic and musical, such as *The Brigand* (1829) by Planche. *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life* (1828) was the foremost domestic melodrama produced around that period. Some melodramas of the mid-eighteenth century are *Murder in the Red Barn, Jonathan Bradford; or, Murder at the Roadside Inn* (1823); and *Sweeney Todd; or, The Fiend of Fleet Street* (1847).

Broadly, the melodramas of France or England provided snapshots of merchant families, the underworld. They dealt with less violent domestic tragedies. Dramatizations of popular novels mostly written by women were popular. Some of these are Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). A few other melodramas of note are *The Corsican Brothers* (1852), *Trilby* (1895), *The Only Way (1899), The Worst Woman in London (1899)* and *The Bad Girl of the Family* (1909).

1.5.6 Masque

It is the French word for the English 'mask'. It is a short form for masquerade. The word was first used by Ben Jonson and it appeared in print in *Hall's Chronicle* for 1512 in the context of a dance which had masked figures. The history of the 'masque' as a form of theatre goes back to Italy from where it travelled to England and got special patronage from Queen Elizabeth I and her two immediate successors James I and Charles I. Masque was a form of entertainment that was exclusive to the court. In fact, most of the actors were from nobility, some even from royalty. It was all about spectacle where both drama and action revolved around spectacle.

A masque dealt with characters from mythology or pastorals and was made ornate with songs, dances and extravagant costumes. It was a spectacular entertainment which had both music and poetry with vivid scenery and elaborate costumes. It dated back to primitive folk rituals featuring the arrival of guests, mostly in disguise, carrying gifts. Thus masque is part of the folk tradition. The presentation of gifts gave way to flattering speeches, and the wearing of outlandish costumes and masks followed dancing. Wearing disguises was the earliest and simplest form of the mask celebrations.

During Renaissance Italy, Lorenzo de'Medici was responsible for popularising song, dance and scenery in the performances. The French Court saw the rise of *ballet de Cour,* the colourful *mascarade* (from which the word 'masquerade' comes), and the comédie ballet.

In the sixteenth century the 'masque' became popular and this form got the patronage of the Tudor rulers of England. People in masks and elaborate dresses performed before the king, with all the essential requirements like scenery, machinery, and ornate speech. During the Elizabethan period, masques were popular sources of entertainment even for the Queen and these were staged either in the palace or outside. In Shakespeare's *Love's Labour Lost* he pokes fun at the simple country masque; Shakespeare also uses the element of disguise in *The Tempest.*

By the time court masques were staged for James I and Charles I many innovations and changes had taken place. Ben Jonson was appointed Court Poet in 1603. One of Jonson's notable contributions was the anti-masque which incorporated the earlier elements of antic or grotesque dancing. First introduced in 1609, the anti-masque was in stark contrast to the main theme. The simplicity of the early masque gave way to the double masque, which employed two different groups of characters. With the passage of time, the literary quality of the masque declined, and the spectacular aspect, like the dancing, in which Charles I and Henrietta Maria became performers, became fashionable. Jonson's last masque was performed in 1634.

The English Civil War rang the death knell of the masque tradition in England and it could never be revived. In the Restoration period, Restoration theatre borrowed many of a masque's spectacular effects.

1.5.7 One-act Play

The term refers to one-act plays written in the late nineteenth century, though this form existed much before the term emerged. The Little Theatre movement was a major reason behind the popularity of these one-act plays because they supported and popularised experimental drama. This form of play has a limited number of characters and very few scenes. The play is short but comprehensive as it revolves around a single incident; it has two or three characters and has no sub-plots or minor characters. Jeffrey Adams' *Shooting Tori* (1996) is an example of a one-act play. The play is a ten-minute political comedy which is set inside an elevator on a late afternoon in October.

1.5.8 Dramatic Monologue

In a monologue a single person carries on the conversation, unlike a dialogue which requires the presence of at least two people. A monologue differs from a soliloquy because a monologue implies the presence of one or many listeners whereas a soliloquy implies a private conversation with oneself, without any listeners. Monologues help in defining and shaping the atmosphere of the drama. An extreme example of monologue is Strindberg's one-act play *The Stranger.* In the play the lines are spoken entirely by one person. On the other hand, the most prominent example of soliloquy is Hamlet's "To be or not to be..." soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

ACTIVITY 2

Using the Internet as your resource, find out the difference between a satire and a farce. Draw a list of various farcical and satirical plays.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. Give the origins of the word 'tragedy'.
9. Define catharsis.
10. Give Aristotle's explanation of tragedy.
11. Trace the etymology of the term 'comedy'.
12. Define tragic-comedy.
13. Explain melodrama.
14. What is a dramatic monologue?

1.6 COMPONENTS OF A PLAY

1.6.1 Setting

Setting usually refers to the exact geographical and temporal location of the characters or the story. However, in theatre, setting also refers to the external aids that are used to create the scenery. In Europe, a person designated as a scenographer designs the sets, costumes and lights. In the US, these are usually taken care of by three separate

departments. Set design is the proper arrangement of the stage. The set or setting creates the visual environment in which a play takes place. Its function indicates the time and place, and is used to create the required mood or ambience. Settings are classified as realistic, functional, abstract or suggestive.

Realistic Setting

On stage, a realistic setting introduces a specific location. For example, during the height of naturalism towards the end of the nineteenth century, directors used real meat to hang in a butcher-shop scene. American producer-director David Belasco's demands for realistic sunset effects led to significant innovations in stage lighting design and equipment as early as the twentieth century. Naturalism also led to the evolution of illusionism in theatre. Some examples of illusionism in theatre include:

- The walls of a stage are not built from wood or plasterboard, but are constructed from 'flats' or panels of canvas. Flats are mostly light and hence easy to move and to store, and they are reusable.
- Trees and rocks may be constructed from papier-mâché
- Elaborate mouldings are made from plastic
- Wallpaper, shadows, and inlaid woodwork are more often painted than real
- False perspective may be painted or built into the set
- The stage floor and furniture are suitably adjusted to counterbalance the audience's viewing and the staging perspective; thus successfully creating the illusion of a room, park, or forest which in actuality is a distorted amalgamation of canvas, glue, and paint.

From the Renaissance to the mid-nineteenth century, realistic settings mostly had painted backgrounds and wings-flats were placed parallel to the front of the stage to hide the offstage space. They were often painted to complement the scenic illusion. Some furniture or other props were sometimes placed on the stage, but generally it was left unoccupied for the use of actors. The settings usually had an interior set, an exterior set, and other variations that were necessary for the performances. Since the early 19th century, most interior scenes have relied on having a room with three walls, a ceiling and three-dimensional furniture and other required props. Such an arrangement places the spectator in the position of a voyeur. In actuality, the setting, as mentioned earlier, creates an illusion. The arrangement of furniture and the positions and movements of actors are created in such a way that the audience can conveniently view the stage.

Even in the most realistic setting, the designer controls most of the aspects of viewing, like choice of colours, arrangement of props and set pieces, and placement of entrances. All this creates the desired effect on the audience.

Abstract Setting

The abstract setting was very popular in the early twentieth century. Such settings owe their existence to Swiss designer Adolphe Appia and English designer Edward Gordon Craig. The theories of stage setting introduced by these two men have left impressions on design and on contemporary theatre. An abstract set, unlike a realistic set, never specifies time or place because it is irrelevant to the plot or because there is a desire to create a sense of timelessness and universality. In Shakespearean productions, since

locales keep changing swiftly, such settings are helpful. Language and performance, costume and lighting are important in these kinds of settings.

Suggestive Settings

Most of the settings in contemporary commercial theatre are suggestive. They follow the new stagecraft that was brought in during the first half of the twentieth century. This type of setting is also called 'simplified realism'. The scenic effect in a suggestive setting is accomplished by doing away with any non-essential requirements. This is an approach that was advocated by the American designer Robert Edmond Jones. Universality and imagination play an important role in this setting which lacks details. At the same time, exactness of time, place, and mood is defined. Such sets usually evoke dreamlike, fragmentary or surrealistic moods.

Functional Setting

Functional settings are the result of the requirements of a specific theatrical form. Though they are not much used in dramatic presentations, they are essential to certain kinds of performances. Functional settings are commonplace in circuses where the basic scenic compositions are determined by the demands of the performers.

1.6.2 Plot

A plot of a play is the logical, rational and coherent arrangement of the incidents that have a causal effect relationship and which help in building the story of the play. Aristotle considered the plot to be the soul of the drama and stated that a good plot should have a beginning, middle and an end. He categorised plots as single or double, complex or simple. He preferred single and complex plots to double and simple plots.

Aristotelian view of Plot

In *Poetics,* Aristotle defines the plot as 'the arrangement of the incidents', i.e., not the story itself but the way the incidents in a play are presented to the audience. According to Aristotle, tragedies that resulted from a compactly constructed cause-and-effect chain of actions are qualitatively better than those that rely mostly on the character and personality of the protagonist. According to him, a good plot must be 'a whole,' with a beginning, middle, and end.

The beginning, also termed by critics as the incentive moment, starts the cause-and-effect chain where its causes are not highlighted but the effects are emphasized. The middle, which is the climax, should be in connection to the earlier events and is responsible for the incidents that follow it again highlighting causes and effects. The end or resolution follows from the preceding events but does not lead to other incidents outside the preview of the play. The end brings the solution to the problem created in the beginning. Aristotle calls this cause-and-effect chain starting from the incentive moment to the climax as *desis*, i.e., complication. He calls the resolution that takes place as *lusis* or dénouement.

According to Aristotle, the plot should be complete and possess unity of action. The structure of the plot should be strong enough to carry on itself where the incidents are connected by internal requirements. Every action leads the way to the next action without *deus ex machine,* i.e., without external influence. According to Aristotle, 'episodic' plots are the worst variety. In this, the episodes or acts follow one another without apparent or necessary sequence. The only reason why these events are interrelated in

such a plot is that they happen to the same person. He advocates doing away with coincidences from the plot. He states that even if coincidence is required, it should be incorporated in such a way that it should look like having being connected to the events of the play through fate.

Similarly, the poet should make sure that the irrational is not part of the play unnecessarily. While the poet cannot change the myths that are the basis of his plots, the poet 'ought to show invention of his own and skillfully handle the traditional materials' to create unity of action in his plot. The plot must be 'of a certain magnitude,' both in terms of quantity and quality. The plot should not be too brief or too long. The playwright should also keep the universal appeal of his play in mind to attract a wider range of audience.

For Aristotle a simple plot revolves around 'change of fortune' which is *catastrophe*. Complex plots deal with both 'reversal of intention', i.e., *peripatetic* and 'recognition', i.e., *anagnorisis*, both of which are essential to catastrophe. Both *peripatetic* and *anagnorisis* lead to surprise. Aristotle explains that *peripatetic* occurs when a character invokes an effect which is very opposite to that which he or she had intended to produce originally. On the other hand, *anagnorisis* is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons 'destined for good or bad fortune'. Aristotle states that the best plots should combine *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* in such a way that the *peripeteia* leads directly to the *anagnorisis* which results in creating the *catastrophe* leading to the final action.

1.6.3 Characters

The word character is derived from Greek '*karakter*' meaning 'stamp' or 'kharassein' meaning 'to engrave'. In drama, a character is identified as 'the differentiation of one agent from another.' In a play there could be many types of characters:

- extraordinary
- stock
- representative
- narrator
- dominant trait
- minor

Aristotelian View of Character

In *Poetics,* Aristotle allots character the second place in the order of importance. He believed that in a drama a characters qualities should be revealed in a few telling scenes. According to Aristotle, in a perfect tragedy, characters and the cause-and-effect chain of actions that induce pity and fear in the audience are intertwined. For Aristotle, in a perfect tragedy, the protagonist should be flourishing and in high office, such that his change of fortune evokes pity and fear in the audience. This change 'should come about as the result, not of vice, but of some great error or frailty in a character.' Such a plot, which highlights the error of judgement, arouses pity and fear in the audience, because 'pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves.' Aristotle uses the term *hamartia* or tragic flaw to underline the error of judgement that brings the downfall of a character.

For Aristotle, characters in tragedy usually possess the following qualities:

- They are 'good or fine.' Aristotle points out that this goodness is relative. According to Aristotle, 'Even a woman may be good, and also a slave, though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless.'
- A character should be true to the type they are representing. For example, valour is appropriate in context to a warrior but not for a woman.
- Characters should be 'true to life', i.e., they should be realistic.
- Consistency is important for characters. They should be true to themselves. Once a character is established, his personality and intentions are recorded and the play should continue with it.
- Characters should be rationally sketched according to 'the law of probability or necessity' so that the actions of the play can take place.
- Characters should be 'true to life and yet more beautiful'.

1.6.4 Structure

The structure of a drama relates to the construction of the plot. For Aristotle, the plot structure needed to have a beginning, a middle and an end. This three part view of plot was popular until Renaissance dramatists started using the five-act structure. In the ninettenth-century, the German playwright Gustav Freytag gave what has come to be seen as the most definite study of the five-act play. The structure that Freytag gave came to be known the Freytag's pyramid. It can be classified into exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion or resolution.

Exposition: This part of the play introduces the characters and setting, provides necessary information about the relationships between characters, and familiarises the audience with the conflict between them. For example in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* the exposition of the play introduces the audience to the fact that Hermia has no interest in marrying Demetrius, the man her father has chosen. This is a key plot element of the play. In the exposition of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear,* Cordelia does not praise her father like her sisters do and thus loses her share in the kingdom.

Rising Action: In this phase of the play the plot intensifies. Characters take decisions in relation to the conflict introduced in the exposition. These decisions create complications in the action and diversify the plot, suggesting different possibilities of resolution. For example, In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Hermia's elopement with Lysander leads to further action. In *King Lear,* Goneril and Regan disown Lear making him aware of his error in judgement.

Turning Point or Climax: In this section, characters or circumstances change due to an action upon which the main plot hinges. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* chronicles the lovers being matched appropriately, after a lot of confusion. In *King Lear* the discovery of his error of judgement leads to Lear's madness but simultaneously brings profound insight.

Falling Action: After the unfolding of complications, resolution of conflict takes place. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the lovers' decisions are accepted. In *King Lear,* Cordelia comes back to Lear in his madness and the evil characters get proper punishment.

Conclusion: In comic and romantic plays, the end of a play is harmonious. While in tragedies, social and moral order is established with evil people being removed by some

means. For example, in the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* the conclusion sees three marriages and a wedding feast takes place. In the tragedy *King Lear,* the death of many characters results in political stability.

Analyzing the plot structure leads to recognizing the fact that the actions in a play have purpose and are not just random episodes.

1.6.5 Style

Style is the perspective from which reality is presented. The word 'style' is derived from the Latin word *stylus,* which was a Roman writing utensil. Style encompasses not only linguistics, but also costumes, customs, elaborate performances and authentic representation of a certain phase.

Linguistic Style

The classical Greek and Roman scholars have provided the best analysis on linguistic style. The effects of words in a drama are related to the right choice of words used to convey meaning, keeping in mind the social and psychological connotations associated with it. Playwrights also pay attention to purpose and utility while using archaic and contemporary words. The usage of words is altered keeping in mind the demands of the topic. This is called decorum, i.e., changing the style according to the demands of the situation. The Roman philosopher Cicero argued that using an elevated style for trivial subjects creates a ridiculous effect and using colloquialisms for grave occasions should be avoided. He also warned against the excessive use of ornate speeches.

It is important to remember that linguistic style varies from one medium to another, and from one situation to another. It also varies from period to period and from genre to genre. One can identify an author by reading a text because of the 'style' in which the author writes. The three ways in which speaking or writing can be categorised are the 'high or grand style', the 'middle style', and 'plain or low style'.

The grand style is found in the epic poetry of Homer and Virgil and in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). The middle style is used mostly for the purposes of education. It was the style adopted to write sermons and treatises. Aelfric used it in the tenth century and so did Sir Thomas Moore in the sixteenth century. The plain or low style is closer to colloquial speech. It has a comparatively simple vocabulary and syntax. It is used in mass mediums like ballads and folk-tales.

1.6.6 Theme

Theme is commonly misinterpreted to mean the subject of a drama. However, theme relates to the underlying meaning and tenor for which the play is written. A play can have multiple themes. For example, the themes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* include madness and revenge, mortality. The themes of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* include power, principles, honour and family.

1.6.7 Audience

The term audience comes from Latin 'audentia' meaning 'a hearing'. The word implies the act or action of hearing and a congregation of hearers. In theatre, audience implies the collective gathering of people who have come to watch the performance. In plays, the audience is part of the fourth wall, i.e., the imaginary wall at the front of the stage through which the audience sees the action of the play. The Dramatic performances are subjected to criticism because every member of the audience has an opinion about the performance they have just seen.

According to the legendary theatre director Constantin Stanislavski, 'spectators come to the theatre to hear the subtext. They can read the text at home'. However, this is not a very accurate description of the situation. In a play, the script, actors and the scene are inseparable parts of the theatre, but an audience is also an indispensable element. The success of the play depends on the on stage interactions between the performers and the audience.

One technique of involving the audience in actions of the play is called breaking the fourth wall. This involves a character, usually a narrator, speaking directly to the audience. A famous example of this is the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Henry V,* where the Chorus speaks directly to the audience watching the play imploring them to use their imagination to make up for whatever imperfections setting the grand events of *Henry V* on a small stage may cause.

1.6.8 Dialogue

The words exchanged by the actors while conversing in a performance is known as dialogue. The dialogues of a play are not merely words, a dialogue is a significant, economical use of words which builds up the atmosphere, highlights the intonations, and defines the gestures and movements to carry forward the plot in a play.

The playwrights of the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth-century England, that is of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, were the first to experiment with the convention of writing and presenting proper dialogues in English. Being influenced by the Greek/Roman classical tradition, they used dialogues mostly in blank verse. In blank verses, the speaker waits for his or her turn to come and then makes a lengthy speech, irrespective of the situation that they are in at that moment (whether in a jovial mood or surrounded by trouble). This usage of dialogue can be seen in the plays of Shakespeare. On the other hand, dialogues also take the form of short and crisp sentences, just as it happens in real life.

1.7 THEATRE IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

In Shakespeare's time, female actors were absent because acting was not looked upon as an honourable job. Therefore, women kept away from it. As a result, young boys played the female characters. Boys yet to attain puberty were chosen for this because of the voice quality. Shakespeare himself had acted in some of his own plays but no one is clear as to which were the plays.

A lot of work in these plays was done at the last minute. Some actors even received their script just before the play was to be staged. With the method of 'cue acting', some actors received their lines while they were performing on stage. The lines were whispered to them from behind the curtains. This was mainly because the actors hardly had time to practice before staging the play.

The audience at The Globe Theatre comprised people from all walks of life and from all age groups. This goes to prove that a variety of plays were staged there. The audiences reacted to what they saw on stage by making fun of and booing at the bad characters and praising or cheering for the good ones.

The spectators could opt for cheap tickets and stand around the stage through the entire performance. They were referred to as 'groundlings'. The galleries were occupied by those who paid a little extra. By shelling out a wee bit more, they could enjoy the

comfort of a cushion under them. The most expensive tickets were for the chairs on the stage itself.

Two performances were scheduled every day. Afternoons were chosen for the performance because the lighting was just right. Neither was the sun too blinding or bright nor was there a need for artificial lighting.

Scenery was hardly used. Instead, the language itself was used to set the scene. In fact, there wasn't any curtain between the audience and the stage. A change of scene was indicated by the characters exiting together, and a new character entering. At times, the characters remained onstage but their dialogues and actions indicated a change of time and place. Properties such as chairs, thrones, beds were used. Some characters made their entry through trapdoors and some even descended from above using ropes.

What modern theatre is able to achieve using lavish sets, interesting props and grand costumes, Shakespeare was able to give his audiences almost entirely through language. The audience would realize that the characters were in the forest, or inside a castle, or on the seacoast of a certain place, because the characters told them so. The stage remained mostly bare, with galleries and balconies on either side. Importance was given to dialogue rather than visuals.

ACTIVITY 3

Browse the internet and look for images of the Globe theatre. Write an essay comparing the Globe Theatre with the Modern stage.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

15. List the different types of characters that can be found in a ply.
16. Discuss Aristotle's view of a dramatic structure.
17. What is the significance of 'falling action'?
18. Critically explain the relevance of theme(s).

1.8 INTRODUCTION TO VARIOUS FORMS OF THEATRE

1.8.1 The Theatre of the Absurd

The term usually refers to a body of plays produced by a group of dramatists around World War II, the popularity and prominence of which continued till the 1950s. In 1962, Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* used the term for the first time. Esslin states in his book that the Theatre of the Absurd 'strives to express the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach, by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.'

The absurdist theatrical tradition in many ways was deeply influenced by the impact that the Second World War had on society. The death of millions of people in the concentration camps of the Second World War had made human life out to be meaningless. This meaninglessness also started reflecting the art of the time. The theorist Theodore Adorno summed up the feeling of the time by stating, 'To write a *poem after Auschwitz* is *barbaric*'.

Absurdist playwrights who came into prominence after the Second World War seemed to echo the core existentialist philosophical thoughts of Albert Camus as espoused in his *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Existentialism is a philosophy that suggests that man is in a solitary existence and his life is essentially meaningless, thus, trying to decipher any meaning or purpose in it is futile and absurd. In his book Camus stated, 'In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger…This divorce between man and life, the actor and his settings, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.' It was this absurdity of human life that the playwrights of the theatre of the absurd wished to bring out. Some prominent writers of the Theatre of the Absurd are Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot; Endgame*) and Eugène Ionesco (*The Bald Soprano, Rhinoceros*).

Samuel Beckett, the most influential of all writers in this movement, was an Irishman living in Paris, who wrote in French and then translated many of his own works into English. His plays project the senseless irrationalism and absurdity of life, in dramatic forms that go against realistic settings, logical meaning or a consistently evolving plot. *Waiting for Godot* presents two tramps in a waste place, fruitlessly and hopelessly waiting for an unidentified person, Godot, who may or may not exist and with whom they sometimes think they remember that they may have an appointment. One of them remarks 'nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful.' The play is 'absurd' in the double sense that is grotesquely comic as well as irrational. It is a deliberate parody of the traditional assumptions of Western culture, of traditional drama and even of its own inescapable participation in the dramatic medium.

Some common features of absurdist plays are:

- Metaphysical anguish related to the absurd condition of human life.
- Rejection of any coherent narrative or logical pattern of thoughts, unlike conventional drama.
- Invariably it depicts a disjointed world, in the form of dreamlike surroundings or nightmares, where the protagonist tries to bring sense to the absurdity he is placed in.
- Most of the playwrights of this mode mixed farce and tragedy, which results in the creation of an unpredictable world.
- The tragic sense of loss that is so prominent in these works is interlaced with a sense of religious quest.
- Disconnected language, use of repetition and puns

1.8.2 Theatre of Cruelty

The credit for introducing this new form of theatre goes to Antonin Artaud. The Theatre of Cruelty relies heavily on excessive gesticulation and sensory reactions of the actors so that a psychological correspondence with the audience is established, something that is not possible merely through words. In 1931, Artaud came across a performance by Balinese dancers at the Colonial Exhibition in the Bois de Vincennes which gave him the idea that theatre can be 'used as a means of overcoming the dualism between impulse and articulation'. In 1932, he first coined the term 'Theatre of Cruelty'. The play *Les*

Cenci (1935) is the only one that he produced under his banner of Theatre of Cruelty. Unfortunately, the play was staged only seventeen times, making the play a failure during Artaud's time. About fifteen years after Artaud's death the form of Theatre of Cruelty became extremely popular, especially in France. The works of P. Brook, the theatre director and critic, and director Charles Marowitz can be considered under this group.

1.8.3 Epic Theatre

Although Bertolt Brecht is credited with using the term 'epic theatre' in the modern context, the term epic theatre can be traced back to Aristotle. Aristotle used it to refer to an instructional play which expresses in a very simple and direct way certain episodes without being constrained by the unity of time. Aristotelian theatre then emphasized the propagation of truth over illusion. It captured the audience's attention by highlighting the socio-political agendas hidden in the play.

When Brecht re-introduced the term 'epic theatre' in the twentieth century, he used it to signify something that was non-dramatic, something that was devoid of emotional involvement. According to Brecht '...the essential point of epic theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feeling than to his reason.' Brecht's epic theatre thus proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage. One goal of epic theatre was to make the audience aware that they were watching a play. By highlighting the fact that all plays were constructions of reality and not reality itself by using techniques such as having actors play multiple characters, having actors also rearrange the set in full view of the audience and 'breaking the fourth wall', Brecht hoped to communicate to the audience the constructed nature of their own reality, which according to Brecht, was changeable. The play *Mann ist Mann (Man is Man)* was Brecht's first epic drama. The most famous of Brecht's play was the *Life of Galileo*. The German theatre director and producer Erwin Friedrich Maximilian Piscator was also one of the major proponents of this form in the contemporary world. He incorporated still and cinematic projection techniques into his theatre.

The modern epic theatre in its essence is very similar to its predecessor but with certain additions and changes. It presents before the audience a social reality which is Marxist in its approach and it is presented with narrative, song and chorus.

1.8.4 Feminist Theatre

As the name suggests, feminist theatre usually deals with issues relating to women in plays usually written and performed by women. Feminist theatre came into prominence in the charged atmosphere of the mid-to-late-1970s, where the women's movement began to take the centre stage in socially relevant theatre. A number of taboo issues found expression and acceptance through this type of theatre. Though feminist theatre was an emergent cultural form in the 1970s, it had its origin in the experimental theatre and the agenda of group and women's movement. The form of the experimental theatre and the agenda of the women's movement shaped the content and staging of feminist plays.

Some characteristic features of Feminist Theatre are:

- Productions and scripts characterized by the consciousness of women
- Dramaturgy in which art is inseparable from the condition of women
- Performances (written and acted) that deconstruct sexual differences and thus undermine patriarchal power
- Scripting and production that present transformation as a structural and ideological replacement for recognition
- Creation of women characters

Some mainstream plays by women writers are *Crimes of Heart* (1981) by Beth Henley, *Mother* (1983) by Marsha Norman, *The Heidi Chronicles* (1989) by Wendy Wasserstein. In India, women entered the Indian theatre scene in the 1980s and 1990s in a large way. Today, Indian women directors, previously a rarity, have also come to the fore. Names like Laxmi Chandra, Chama Ahuja, Ipshita Chandra, Usha Ganguli, Neelam Mansingh Chaudhury, Rani Balbir Kaur, Sheila Bhatia, B. Jayashree, Arundhati Raje, S. Malati are very much a part of the Indian Feminist Theatre movement.

1.8.5 Street Theatre

When a performance is staged outdoors, especially in the streets, it is called Street Theatre. Many a time the purpose of conducting a street theatre is to reach a wider audience and disseminate an agenda which could be political in nature or could be related to some civic society movement.

1.8.6 Poor Theatre

It was a concept that was evolved by the Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999). Grotowski in his plays played with exclusionism and highlighted the absolute essentials. In his book *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski wrote:

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, live communion.

Grotowski suggested that in a play, things that are considered essential - text, stage, light and sound effects - are not really essential. For Grotowski, there are only two prerequisites in a theatre - actors and audience – the rest can be done away with. In 1959, Grotowski and Ludwick Flaszen started Teatr Laboratorium in Opole, Poland which eventually translated into an Institute for Research in Acting (Wroclaw).

In South Africa, Poor Theatre productions enjoyed huge popularity during the Apartheid years. The South African playwrights Athol Fugard, Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa had become interested by the concept of Poor Theatre after reading Grotowski's book. In Fugard's play *Boesman and Lena* the Poor Theatre setting is emphasised through the desolation of the characters.

1.8.7 Angry Young Man

This phrase is taken from Leslie Paul's autobiography which was published under the same name in 1951. The term became popular after the publication of John Osborne's 1956 play *Look Back In Anger.* The play had Jimmy Porter, a first-of-his-kind hero, who became the epitome of an angry young man who, dissatisfied with the social and political attitudes around him, reacts against the middle class.

The British novelists and playwrights who come under this group echoed similar dissatisfaction against socio-political issues of the society they lived in. Their discontent rose on seeing the hypocrisy of the upper classes and the mediocrity of the middle class. Most of these writers hailed from middle-class and lower-middle-class families. Some prominent writers of this genre are Arnold Wesker, the novelists Kingsley Amis, John

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Braine, John Wain, and Alan Sillitoe. However, by the 1960s these writers began to concentrate on distinctive themes and were no longer part of the original Angry Young Man group.

Amis' works include the satire on academia *Lucky Jim*, *That Uncertain Feeling*, *Take a Girl Like You*, *One Fat Englishman*, *Stanley and the Women* and the *Old Devils* which won the Booker Prize in1986. Wesker's significant contribution to the genre is his trilogy *Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots* and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem*. One of Silitoe's major works was *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* which was also adapted into a film. His other works are *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, *The Flame of Life*, *The Open Door*, *Leonard's War*, and *Snowdrops*.

1.8.8 Ritual Drama

A drama that follows the pattern of ceremony is called ritual drama. Jerry Grotowski introduced the concept of ritual drama in the twentieth century. During the middle ages, drama evolved from religious ceremonies and interludes known as 'mystery plays'; the twentieth century form of ritual drama was different from its ancient form.

The ritual drama form insists on the active participation of the audience, unlike other forms of drama where the audience are passive viewers. In ritual drama, actors address everyone in the audience, breaking the 'fourth wall' and also ask the audience to perform with them as fellow performers. Grotowski's intention was to create a more secular and interactive form of drama. *The Ancestors* by Mickiewicz was directed and presented by Grotowski as a ritual drama.

1.9 DRAMA AS A PERFORMING ART

Performance is an indispensable aspect of human life. It is a result of several unconscious and conscious reasons. The performing arts include dance, music, drama and magic. Drama is that branch of the performing arts which relates to the performance of a narrative in the presence of an audience. The narrative can take many forms including tragic, comic, tragic-comic, absurd, epic, farce making drama the most expressive of all the performing arts. Apart from simply delivering the dialogue, plays can also appear in other forms. These forms include musicals, opera, ballet, comedy, pantomime, illusion, mime, classical dance, kabuki, mummers' plays, improvisational theatre, stand-up and non-conventional or art-house theatre.

In a drama, the dramatist or playwright uses a combination of movements and techniques like speech, dance, sound, gesture, music, and spectacle to enact his or her plays for the audience. The audience's mind, with the aid of sensory organs, helps build up mental imagery. Dramatic performance is a result of this capacity. When an audience views a drama, they share an imagery that is similar to the one that is taking place in the minds of the actors performing it. This is called 'shared imagery'. Drama thus requires the suspension of disbelief in the minds of the audience. A drama can only be enjoyed if the audience imagines that the stage where the drama is being performed is a world in and of itself. As the Chorus of William Shakespeare's *Henry V* states, the audience watching a play must learn to 'Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts'. Dramatic performance thus revolves around shared knowledge and mental images. With each performance, the drama is reinvented; a drama is only recognized in relation to its performance.

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Chorus. O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention,
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword and fire
Crouch for employment. But pardon, and gentles all,
The flat unraised spirits that have dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object: can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million;
And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder:
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide on man, And make imaginary puissance;
Think when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times,
Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass: for the which supply,
Admit me Chorus to this history;
Who prologue-like your humble patience pray,
Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play.

Prologue of Henry V by William Shakespeare

The limited scholarly study of drama that sees it only as something written and to be read or sung is only partly useful. The performance of drama leads to its expansion, which cannot be exploited only by verbal and theoretical means. Dramatic performance leads to a confluence between verbal and visual representation of the art and consciousness. When a performance takes place the director and the actors work together in building up a unique imagery of the drama they are staging. Every performance etches out a specific association with the audience, so much so that the audience starts relating the drama to the performance.

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The director of a drama plays an important role in staging a performance. The dramatic performance is the vision of the director who is directing it. Therefore, the director is responsible and accountable for the meaning it conveys to the audience. In most plays, the audience views the drama through the vision of a director. The actors perform according to the thought processes of the director. However, this is not always the case. Plato in his *Ion* made the director dispensable. For him God was the ultimate source of inspiration, as it was he who passed on an idea to the writer, the writer wrote it and the actors who performed, passed it on directly to the audience. This implies that it is the duty of the playwright to take care of the fact that the performance is consistent with the play written, the actors are compatible with the concept and the other artistic elements are coordinated with the performance. Disharmony in any of these areas will affect the unity of the dramatic performance.

Through performance and acting, drama is adorned with actual, and not imagined, emotions, thus placing actors in a very significant position in the dramatic mimesis. Any performance devoid of emotion is never appealing to the audience. The structure and content of the dramatic medium carries information of which the actors are aware. That is why it is important for the actor to know what emotion is, the nature of various kinds of emotions, how to induce it and how to perform it in a manner which will be appropriate to the nature of drama that is being performed. By understanding and controlling the emotional requirement of a role during the rehearsal, an actor prepares the sensory and nervous mechanisms in such a way that he or she is able to trigger the right emotion at the appropriate moment.

Aristotle says that drama evolves from those who put effort in drawing inspiration and involving creativity. But performance relates to spontaneity. The repeated rehearsals liberate the performer from the dilemma of what to perform providing him or her with the scope to perform at ease.

1.10 DRAMA AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CRITICISM

Although it is true that drama is meant to entertain an audience, it is also meant to inform, teach and make an audience think. The use of drama as a tool of social criticism and commentary is almost as old as the history of drama itself. In the 15th and 16th century, European secular drama focused on giving moral lessons to the audience through the use of allegory and personifications. These 'morality plays' consisted of a everyman protagonist, i.e., a character that is supposed to represent humanity as a whole, who is met by personifications of moral characteristics who try to convince him to either choose a life of godly virtue or evil. One famous morality play was *Everyman*. The play used allegorical devices to examine the question of salvation. In the Renaissance drama *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe, considered by some critics to be also a part of the morality play tradition, the protagonist Faustus sells his soul to the devil to gain power and knowledge. Marlowe used the play to comment on the conflict between the Renaissance man and his thirst for unlimited knowledge and a society which kept heavenly virtue and spiritual knowledge on a pedestal.

In the nineteenth-century, with the advent of naturalism in the literary tradition, false romanticism and theatrical heroics paved way to more natural, believable and credible characters on stage. The Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, considered the father of realism, spearheaded this trend. Literary realism essentially was the belief of depicting objective reality that focused on showing the everyday activities of a social

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class without overt dramatisation. Ibsen's most famous play *Doll's House* underlined and criticised the roles played by a man and a woman in a marriage in the nineteenth century. The 19th century was a period when marriage was considered to be one of the most scared social institutions. Ibsen's portrayal of a family who had departed from the traditional norm earned him criticism as well as accolades. The playwright George Bernard Shaw stated that Ibsen's plays are 'stories of lives, discussion of conduct; unveiling of motives, conflicts of characters in talk, laying bare of souls, discovery of pitfalls - in short, illumination of life.' In England, Sir Arthur W Pinero (author of *Second Mrs. Tanquery* and *The Thunderbolt*) and Henry Arthur began following Ibsen's footsteps and started writing about the evils and hypocrisies of the society. Writers like Galsworthy too made an important contribution in terms of drawing our attention towards the ills of society. His *Strike* is about a strike that takes place in a small factory in South Wales. It was an unofficial strike, because the workers were not supported by the union in their demands. The play focusses on the relation between employers, the workers' union and workers, and questions the validity and utility of this structure. Another important writer whose drama was a vehicle for social criticism was Shaw. His *Joan of Arc* reflected the way a woman's ideas were rejected and condemned in medieval times. Though Shaw was accused of having distorted history, he himself did not take any position; he merely presented information. In his latter works like *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906) Shaw continued to highlight and register his strong views about some or other form of evil.

Candida represents Shaw's New Woman; by depicting Candida as an independent and strong woman in contrast to her idealistic and conventional husband Morrell, he has given support to the feminist cause.

In the twentieth century, playwrights like Bertolt Brecht took social criticism towards a different direction. Brecht was a practitioner of political theatre and developed the style known as 'epic theatre'. A reaction against popular forms of theatre, epic theatre proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage. Thus, it could be stated that the objective of epic theatre was to make the audience aware that they were watching a play and thus alienate the audience from the actions presented in it. Brecht hoped that highlighting the fact that play was a representation of reality would help communicate to the audience the constructed nature of their own reality, which according to Brecht, was changeable.

Despite the popularity of Brecht, traditional forms of theatre continued to remain dominant throughout the twentieth-century and were used as the main outlets for social critique by playwrights. The American playwright Arthur Miller, through his play *The Crucible*, criticized the persecution of artists and activists living under the fear of McCarthyism. The British playwrights JB Priestly and Jacquetta Hawkes, in the experimental *Dragon's Mouth*, discussed some important aspects of society. George Kaiser's play *Gas* emphasized the war between man and machine. Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) dealt with a theme similar to Kaiser's play, highlighting the problems machines caused in the life of man. JM Synge, one of the proponents for the revival of Irish Drama and Theatre usually highlighted the plight of the peasant community in his plays. His *Riders to the Sea* is a tragic story about the life of fishermen. Sean O' Casey, in his play *The Plough and the Stars* depicted the struggle for Irish liberation under the garb of humour.

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The impact that the two World Wars had on society was also to influence playwrights. After the World Wars, society was in a state of disintegration and isolation. Lord Dunsany through his plays pointed out this void which had engulfed the world after the Second World War. In Dunsany's play *The Glittering Gate,* two thieves are shown to enter Paradise, but are surprised to find nothing. One important theatrical tradition that came out of the Second World War was the Absurdist theatrical tradition which was based on the idea that life is irrational, illogical, incongruous, and without reason. The most famous of all Absurdist plays, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, through its dialogue between the two main characters captured the anxiety of the Cold War world.

It is said that drama is a medium of reflection on society. Thus, playwrights have always used this medium to make constructive criticisms of their societies in the hope of affective some positive changes for the better. Thus, drama apart from being a source of entertainment is also a vehicle for various agendas and can be used as a mirror to showcase the wide range of social evils that surround us.

Check Your Progress

19. Define the 'Theater of the Absurd'.
20. Trace the etymology of the phrase, 'Angry young Man'.

Did You Know

Elizabethan theatres were quite a bit different to today's modern theatres. They were mostly open air and looked like an O from above. The stage came out into the centre of the O and the audience stood all around it in an area called the yard or the pit. The rich could sit in covered galleries around the edges of the yard. A building was built to the back of the stage. This was brightly painted and used by the actors in scenes of the play they were performing.

1.11 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The genre of drama developed quite rapidly in England during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.
- The Elizabethan drama is a genre that managed to establish its own place in the English literary tradition. It included all sorts of elements- wit, learning, vulgarity, love of combat and bloodshed, affectation, songs and dances- along with simple and natural poetic power of delineating human character, and of eloquent declamation and rapid action.
- In Elizabethan drama, every subject is made use of – popular legends, the history of Greece and Rome, Italian novels, English chronicles, contemporary domestic tragedies – anything and everything that will bring a London audience that composed of men from all classes of society to the theatres.

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- One can simply describe 'tragedy' as a play with an unhappy ending. The word 'tragedy' has its origin in Greek 'tragodia', meaning 'goat song', which accompanied the ritual of offering goats to Dionysus, the Greek god of vineyards and wine.
- Tragedy deals with the serious aspects of life and is essentially a tale of suffering ending in death.
- Unlike Aristotle's concept of a tragedy having unity of time and place, Elizabethan tragedy compressed time and jumped from location to location for different scenes. Elizabethan tragedy also used a whole range of imaginative narratives as tragic subjects.
- Shakespearean tragedy mainly conforms to the definition given by Aristotle but it violates the principles of the Greek philosopher in one important respect; its action is not all serious; its seriousness is often relieved by the comic.
- Shakespeare's tragedy is pre-eminently the story of one person. The story ends with - and includes - the death of the hero. According to the famous English Shakespearean scholar A.C. Bradley, a Shakespearean tragedy is essentially a tale of suffering and calamity concluding with death.
- Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays, although there are two or three works which do not seem to be entirely his. His activity as a dramatist covered over twenty-four years, from 1588 to 1612. These twenty-four years have been sub-divided into four periods of about six years each.
- Shakespeare shows equal aptitude for the tragic and the comic, the sentimental and the burlesque, lyrical fantasy and character-study, portraits of men and women, of kings and clowns. No other dramatist possesses such diverse gifts or has given such various and colourful scenes of life.
- It was Ben Jonson who said about Shakespeare that 'he was not of an age but of all time'.
- Shakespeare's universality is due to the breadth and impartiality of his vision of life, which is revealed in the complexity of his characters. Shakespeare does not merely represent his characters within the short span of a crisis. He shows his heroes at various moments of their lives, in changing, situations and in contact with different persons.
- One can simply describe 'tragedy' as a play with an unhappy ending. The word 'tragedy' has its origin in Greek 'tragodia', meaning 'goat song', which accompanied the ritual of offering goats to Dionysus, the god of vineyards and wine.
- In his *Poetics,* Aristotle stated tragedy is 'the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude; in language embellished with each of artistic ornaments…in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.'
- Aristotle then goes on to says that a tragedy should be 'well-proportioned'. By well-proportioned, Aristotle means it should have a proper beginning, rising action, and dénouement. He compares the plot construction with the body of an animal.
- Aristotle's concept of a tragedy having unity of time and place, Elizabethan tragedy compressed time and jumped from location to location for different scenes. The greatest of all Elizabethan tragic playwrights was William Shakespeare.

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- Comedy is usually associated with a performance which is a representation of life, moving around humour, courtship and matrimony; it has hilarious characters, frivolous moments mostly arising out of the complications related to love, and ends in a joyful way.
- The word Comedy is derived from Greek '*komos*' meaning 'revelry' and '*oide*' meaning 'song'. Aristotle explained comedy as 'an imitation of persons inferior' who possess 'one defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive.'
- Dramatic Comedy grew out of the rowdy choruses and dialogues of the fertility rites associated with Greek god Dionysus.
- A tragi-comedy has the thematic seriousness of a tragedy but does not end in a catastrophe but rather on a happy note like that of a comedy. The term was coined by the Roman dramatist Plautus in the second century BC. Plautus' *Amphitryon* is an example of such a work.
- The English word farce has its roots in Latin '*farcire*' which means 'to stuff' or Old French farce meaning 'to show'. In contemporary times, any play which relies on buffoonery, crude funny situations and such low brow devices to create comedy is labeled as a farce.
- Setting usually refers to the exact geographical and temporal location of the characters or the story. However, in theatre, setting also refers to the external aids that are used to create the scenery. Settings are classified as realistic, functional, abstract or suggestive.
- A plot of a play is the logical, rational and coherent arrangement of the incidents that have a causal effect relationship and which help in building the story of the play. Aristotle considered the plot to be the soul of the drama and stated that a good plot should have a beginning, middle and an end.
- The word character is derived from the Greek word '*karakter*' meaning 'stamp' or '*kharassein*' meaning 'to engrave'. In drama, a character is identified as 'the differentiation of one agent from another.' In a play there could be many types of characters.
- The structure of a drama relates to the construction of the plot. For Aristotle, the plot structure needed to have a beginning, a middle and an end. This three part view of plot was popular until Renaissance dramatists started using the five-act structure. In the 19th century, the German playwright Gustav Freytag gave what has come to be seen as the most definite study of the five-act play. The structure that Freytag gave came to be known the Freytag's pyramid. It can be classified into exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion or resolution.
- The term audience comes from Latin 'audentia' meaning 'a hearing'. The word implies the act or action of hearing and a congregation of hearers. In theatre, audience implies the collective gathering of people who have come to watch the performance. In plays, the audience is part of the fourth wall, i.e., the imaginary wall at the front of the stage through which the audience sees the action of the play.
- The words exchanged by the actors while conversing in a performance is known as dialogue. The dialogues of a play are not merely words, a dialogue is a significant, economical use of words which builds up the atmosphere, highlights the intonations, defines the gestures and movements to carry forward the plot in a play.

- During Shakespeare's time, the success of the plays depended entirely on the dialogues. Hardly any importance was given to props. Change of scene was always indicated through language/dialogue/script.
- In 1962, Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* used the term for the first time. Esslin states in his book that the Theatre of the Absurd 'strives to express the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach, by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.'
- The Theatre of Cruelty relies heavily on excessive gesticulation and sensory reactions of the actors so that a psychological correspondence with the audience is established.
- Brecht's epic theatre proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage.
- Feminist theatre came into prominence in the charged atmosphere of the mid-to-late-1970s, where the women's movement began to take the centre stage in socially relevant theatre.
- Drama is that branch of the performing arts which relates to the performance of a narrative in the presence of an audience. The narrative can take many forms including tragic, comic, tragic-comic, absurd, epic, farce, making drama the most expressive of all the performing arts.
- The director of a drama plays an important role in staging a performance. The dramatic performance is the vision of the director who is directing it. Therefore, the director is responsible and accountable for the meaning it conveys to the audience.
- In most plays, the audience views the drama through the vision of a director. The actors perform according to the thought processes of the director.
- Although it is true that drama is meant to entertain an audience, it is also meant to inform, teach and make an audience think. The use of drama as a tool of social criticism and commentary is almost as old as the history of drama itself.
- In the nineteenth-century, with the advent of naturalism in the literary tradition, false romanticism and theatrical heroics paved way to more natural, believable and credible characters on stage. The Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, considered the father of realism, spearheaded this trend.
- In the twentieth-Century, playwrights like Bertolt Brecht took social criticism towards a different direction. Brecht was a practitioner of political theatre and developed the style known as 'epic theatre'.
- A reaction against popular forms of theatre, epic theatre proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage.
- Despite the popularity of Brecht, traditional forms of theatre continued to remain dominant throughout the twentieth-century and were used as the main outlets for social critique by playwrights. The American playwright Arthur Miller through his play *The Crucible* criticised the persecution of artists and activists living under

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the fear of McCarthyism. The British playwrights JB Priestly and Jacquetta Hawkes, in the experimental *Dragon's Mouth*, discussed some important aspects of society.

- It is said that drama is a medium of reflection on society. Thus, playwrights have always used this medium to make constructive criticisms of their societies in the hope of bringing about some positive changes for the better.

1.12 KEY TERMS

- **Irony:** Is the use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning
- **Renaissance:** Is the revival of art and literature in Europe under the influence of classical models in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries
- **Puritan:** A member of a group of English Protestants of the late sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries who regarded the Reformation of the Church of England under Elizabeth as incomplete and sought to simplify and regulate forms of worship
- **Epoch:** Is the beginning of a distinctive period in the history of someone or something
- **Imitation:** The action of using someone or something as a model
- **Amorousness:** Is a feeling of love or fondness
- **Dionysus:** Is the Greek god of grape harvest, winemaking and wine. In Greek mythology, he is the son of Zeus and Semele
- **Restoration comedy:** English comedies written during the restoration period, i.e., 1660—1710, were known as restoration comedies. Such plays were characterized by witty dialogue and sexually explicit content. One of the first professional women playwrights was a restoration comedy playwright named Aphra Behn
- **Elizabethan tragedy:** Elizabethan tragedy refers to the genre of theater during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1558-1603. Unlike Aristotelian tragedy, the feature of Elizabethan tragedy was not the 'unity of time and place' but rather the compression of time and jumping from location to location. The foremost playwright of the Elizabethan age was William Shakespeare
- **Existentialism:** Essentially, a twentieth-century philosophy that believes that the Universe is without meaning and as such an individual must take ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad. The philosophy of existentialism found a voice in the theatre of the absurd, most notably, the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett
- **Morality plays:** Morality plays were fifteenth and sixteenth century allegorical dramas in Europe that became the forerunners to Renaissance dramas. Morality plays usually contained a protagonist that represented mankind who faced moral questions while meeting characters that personified moral qualities like charity or vice or abstractions like death or youth. An example of a famous morality play is *Everyman*
- **Breaking the Fourth Wall:** A technique of theatre or a movie where a character speaks directly to the audience or viewer watching the play or movie

- **McCarthyism:** Refers to 1950s America where during the Cold War artists, actors, directors, and other prominent people were accused of being 'Communist agents' by Senator McCarthy

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1.13 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. It included all sorts of elements—wit, learning, vulgarity, love of combat and bloodshed, affectation, songs and dances- along with simple and natural poetic power of delineating human character and of eloquent declamation and rapid action.
2. The underlying sentiment and a direct result of the Reformation movement was the perception of the personal answerability of the individual soul to God. The implicit value system of the Renaissance supported that the world is a beautiful place and that sensuous enjoyment of the beautiful is a rational and commendable act.
3. The drama of the period is written in the representative form, and in many of the plays, the interest lingers not so much on the plot or story as in the representation of human will in vigorous action. The characters are, in many cases, profoundly conceived as active agents, sometimes of exaggerated will and energy. This is in response to the theory of the dignity and self-sufficiency of the individual soul which characterized the Puritan belief system. Again, the love of luxurious ornamentation and variety which marked the Renaissance art can also be observed in many of the Elizabethan dramas.
4. According to the famous English Shakespearean scholar A.C. Bradley, a Shakespearean tragedy is essentially a tale of suffering and calamity concluding with death.

   Bradley also writes that 'tragedy with Shakespeare is concerned always with persons of high degree: often with kings or princes: if not, with leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony; at the least, as in Romeo and Juliet, with members of great houses, whose quarrels are of public moment.' Shakespeare's conception of tragedy is medieval. Unlike the moderns, he is not concerned with the fate of the common man, their sorrows and sufferings. The exalted personages suffer greatly; thus Hamlet's soul is torn within. Their suffering is contrasted with their previous happiness. The hero is such an important personality that his fall affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire, and when he falls suddenly from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of the powerlessness of man and omnipotence of fate. This is one of the ways in which the playwright introduces an element of universality in his tragedies.
5. The tragic hero is not only a person of high degree but he also has an exceptional nature. He has some passion which attains in him a terrible force. He has a marked one-sidedness, a strong tendency to act in a particular way. They are all driven in one direction by some peculiar interest, object, passion or habit of mind. Bradley refers to this trait as the 'tragic flaw.' Thus, Macbeth has 'vaulting ambition', Hamlet 'noble inaction', Othello 'credulity and rashness in action', and Lear 'the folly of old age'.
6. In Shakespeare's plays also, there are two or three or four plots running together. Shakespeare's supreme skill lies in weaving these different plots into a harmonious

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design. He did not tie himself down to any theory. His first concern was to acquire a story.

7. Shakespeare's empiricism is revealed in his treatment of the clown or the fool. Instead of contemptuously rejecting the fool, Shakespeare undertook his instruction and changed a necessary evil into good. Shakespeare allowed the fool figure to appear in his comedies and even in his tragedies so long as he spoke 'no more than is set down'. Shakespeare makes the fool a king of popular philosopher who says many wise and practical things in the garb of stupidity. As the novelist Isaac Asimov put it, 'That, of course, is the great secret of the successful fool – that he is no fool at all.' One of the most famous fool characters in Shakespeare is the 'Fool' in *King Lear*. Among all the characters in *King Lear*, only the Fool criticizes King Lear. He is wise enough to perceive the wrongs being done to Cordelia and throughout his appearance in the play reproaches his master Lear for being 'foolish' in his treatment of his youngest daughter. The fool takes various forms in Shakespeare's plays. Sometimes he is a craftsman like Bottom, the weaver; sometimes he is a policeman like Dogberry or like Verges. It is a sign of Shakespeare's tolerance and sweet humanity that he transforms the fool and makes him indispensable for the play in which he is introduced.
8. One can simply describe 'tragedy' as a play with an unhappy ending. The word 'tragedy' has its origin in Greek 'tragodia', meaning 'goat song', which accompanied the ritual of offering goats to Dionysus, the Greek god of vineyards and wine.
9. Catharsis is the essential meaning purification through pity and fear.
10. Aristotle put emphasis on the logical development of the play. He believed that the beauty of a particular art lies in a proper relation between the whole and its parts. A tragedy encourages plot construction which establishes the relationship between part and whole. The plot becomes significant because of this aesthetic stance as suggested by Aristotle.

    Aristotle then goes on to says that a tragedy should be 'well-proportioned'. By well-proportioned, Aristotle means it should have a proper beginning, rising action, and dénouement. He compares the plot construction with the body of an animal. Next, he emphasises the importance of unity of plot. The dramatist must imitate one action for the hero. The plot must have unity of time, place and action.
11. The word Comedy is derived from Greek 'komos' meaning 'revelry' and 'oide' meaning 'song'. Aristotle explained comedy as 'an imitation of persons inferior' who possess 'one defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive.' The counterparts of English 'comedy' are Greek 'komoida', Latin 'comoedia' and French 'comedie'. One major difference between tragedy and comedy is that tragedy involves intense emotions and sympathies; on the other hand, comedy strives to entertain by ridiculing man's customs and institutions. During the Middle Ages, comedy was associated with colloquial speech and a happy ending. The term comedy was also used for Dante's non-dramatic but religious poem *The Divine Comedy.*
12. A tragi-comedy has the thematic seriousness of a tragedy but does not end in a catastrophe but rather on a happy note like that of a comedy. The term was coined by the Roman dramatist Plautus in the second century BC. Plautus' *Amphitryon* is an example of such a work.

13. The word is derived from the Greek word 'melos' meaning 'song' and French 'drame' meaning 'drama', translating into musical drama. During the eighteenth-century, French playwrights composed plays which were full of spectacle, music and happy endings. But by the nineteenth-century, the use of music gradually receded. Initially, melodrama represented the encounter of good and evil, but gradually it referred to any play of excessive emotional nature.
14. In a monologue a single person carries on the conversation, unlike a dialogue which requires the presence of at least two people. A monologue differs from a soliloquy because a monologue implies the presence of one or many listeners whereas a soliloquy implies a private conversation with oneself, without any listeners. Monologues help in defining and shaping the atmosphere of the drama. An extreme example of monologue is Strindberg's one-act play *The Stranger.* In the play the lines are spoken entirely by one person. On the other hand, the most prominent example of soliloquy is Hamlet's "To be or not to be..." soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*
15. In a play there could be many types of characters, such as: extraordinary, stock, representative, narrator, dominant and minor.
16. The structure of a drama relates to the construction of the plot. For Aristotle, the plot structure needed to have a beginning, a middle and an end. This three part view of plot was popular until Renaissance dramatists started using the five-act structure.
17. After the unfolding of complications, resolution of conflict takes place. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the lovers' decisions are accepted. In *King Lear,* Cordelia comes back to Lear in his madness and the evil characters get proper punishment.
18. Theme is commonly misinterpreted to mean the subject of a drama. However, theme relates to the underlying meaning and tenor for which the play is written. A play can have multiple themes. For example, the themes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* include madness and revenge, mortality. The themes of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* include power, principles, honour and family.
19. The term usually refers to a body of plays produced by a group of dramatists around World War II, the popularity and prominence of which continued till the 1950s. In 1962, Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* used the term for the first time. Esslin states in his book that the Theatre of the Absurd 'strives to express the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach, by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.'
20. This phrase is taken from Leslie Paul's autobiography which was published under the same name in 1951. The term became popular after the publication of John Osborne's 1956 play *Look Back In Anger.* The play had Jimmy Porter, a first-of-his-kind hero, who became the epitome of an angry young man who, dissatisfied with the social and political attitudes around him, reacts against the middle class.

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1.14 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. How can Shakespeare's literary career be classified into different periods of his dramatic activity? What was the nature of his works in each of these periods?
2. How did the Renaissance influence the themes and motifs seen in Elizabethan drama?
3. What are the chief characteristics of a Shakespearean tragedy?
4. Write a short note on tragic flaw.
5. What were the main features of Elizabethan drama?
6. Write a short note on the evolution of comedy in theater.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Bring out the differences between comedy and tragic-comedy? Give one example of each.
2. Examine the Aristotelian conception of plot.
3. What is the Freytag's pyramid? Discuss.
4. Discuss the various types of setting a play can have.
5. What is the theatre of the absurd? Give one prominent example of an absurdist play.
6. Write short notes on (i) Theatre of Cruelty; (ii) Poor theatre
7. When Brecht re-introduced the term 'epic theatre' in the twentieth century, he used it to signify something that was non-dramatic, something that was devoid of emotional involvement. Discuss.
8. What is feminist theatre? List some characteristics of feminist theatre.
9. Drama is that branch of the performing arts which relates to the performance of a narrative in the presence of an audience. Explain.
10. How is drama used as a tool for social criticism?
11. Shakespeare's universality is due to the breadth and impartiality of his vision of life, which is revealed in the complexity of his characters. Discuss.
12. Analyze Aristotle's conception of tragedy in his treatise '*Poetics*'.

1.15 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 MACBETH BY SHAKESPEARE

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Structure

2.0 Introduction
2.1 Unit Objectives
2.2 Summary of all the Acts
2.3 Macbeth as a Typical Shakespearean Tragedy
2.4 Shakespeare's Skill in Plot Construction
2.5 Banquo as Foil to Macbeth
2.6 Macduff: the Man not Born of Woman
2.7 A Study of Evil in the Play
2.8 A Conflict of Good and Evil in Macbeth
2.9 Themes in Macbeth
2.10 Significance of the Porter Scene
2.11 Shakespeare's use of Soliloquy
2.12 A Study of Fear Rather than Ambition
2.13 Poetic Justice in Macbeth
2.14 Summary
2.15 Key Terms
2.16 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
2.17 Questions and Exercises
2.18 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is one of the greatest tragic plays ever written. It is set in Scotland and narrates the life and times of a Scottish lord named Macbeth. Essentially, the play dramatizes the corroding psychological and political effects produced when Macbeth decides on the path of evil as the way to fulfill his ambition for power. The theme of regicide that is dominant in the play is shown to be as an evil act. Furthermore this has been seen by critics as Shakespeare's response to the gunpowder plot of 1605 that shook James I's court. Macbeth's over-arching ambition is evident from the very beginning of the play itself. Although not naturally inclined towards evil, ambition gets the better of him. He plots to assassinate the King and take his place on the throne. After having succeeded, Macbeth's begins a reign of terror to sustain his control over the throne of Scotland. Eventually, other feudal lords revolt against his unjust regime and in the ensuing civil war, Macbeth throne gets usurped. Like Shakespeare's other tragedies, *Macbeth* is a character study par excellence. As it progresses, we see the character of Macbeth becoming increasingly isolated and paranoid, filled with guilt for the crimes that he has committed. He is forced to commit murder again and again to hide his previous crimes. Through Macbeth, Shakespeare seems to be commenting on the dangers of ambition. In fact, ambition is the central force that drives all the major characters in the play. Lady Macbeth, the second most important character in the play and one of Shakespeare's greatest creations, fuels Macbeth's ambition to fulfill her own burning desire to become the Queen. But like Macbeth, she falls victim to her own ambition. Shakespeare does not allow either character to enjoy the fruits of their labour. The moral lesson that Shakespeare seems to be giving is that ambition when it crosses the threshold of moral constraints leads to calamity. Another important aspect of *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's use of the supernatural as a plot device. The use of the supernatural is

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common to many of Shakespeare's other plays as well, notably *Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest.* One reason for this was that one of Shakespeare's patrons King James I was greatly interested in and fearful of the supernatural. In *Macbeth,* Shakespeare uses the supernatural premise of witches and ghosts as a catalyst for action. *Macbeth* begins with the supernatural, it is present throughout the acts and it is also used to unfold the climactic sequence (denouement) of the play.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Summarize the acts of the play
- Critically analyze all the major characters
- Discuss the play as a tragedy
- Comment on the conflict of good and evil in the play
- Discuss the element of poetic justice

2.2 SUMMARY OF ALL THE ACTS

Act I

Scene I: The play opens by building up the dark and gloomy atmosphere that defines the play throughout. There are three witches on the heath, there is thunder and lightning and the witches invoke the supernatural powers to foretell the future of Macbeth. The witches' words 'Fair is foul and foul is fair' gives direction to the play.

Scene II: The next scene is in a camp near Forres where King Duncan and his two sons Malcolm and Donalbain are present. An injured and bleeding soldier brings the news that Macbeth has won the battle against the rebel nobleman Macdonwald. He also reports about the fresh attack by the King of Norway who is being aided by the traitorous Thane of Cawdor. Duncan orders that the wounded soldier be attended to and immediately, Ross, a nobleman, brings confirmation of the news of defeat of the rebels by Macbeth and Banquo. Duncan is extremely pleased with Macbeth and orders the execution of the Thane of Cawdor and transfers the title and the estates to Macbeth.

Scene III: The witches meet Macbeth and Banquo returning from battle and prophesize that Macbeth will become the Thane of Cawdor and then the King of Scotland and that Banquo will be the father of kings. Macbeth's hidden ambition begins to work and the seed of the assassination of Duncan at his hands has been sown. Banquo, on the other hand, dismisses the witches and their predictions.

Scene IV: Macbeth and Banquo meet Duncan at Forres where they are received with honour and affection. Duncan praises both Macbeth and Banquo for their bravery, valour and loyalty. Duncan also declares his eldest son Malcolm as the next heir to the throne of Scotland, thus blighting Macbeth's hopes. He also proposes to honour Macbeth by visiting his castle named Inverness.

Scene V: Lady Macbeth receives a letter from Macbeth where he tells her about his meeting with the witches and their prophecies. Her ambition is obvious from the start. The idea to kill Duncan occurs to her immediately. However, she is doubtful whether Macbeth would be ready to kill Duncan. At the same time a messenger comes to give

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news that King Duncan will be visiting Inverness. Lady Macbeth now devises the plot to kill Duncan on his visit. On Macbeth's arrival, she warns him to disguise his thoughts and desires with a smooth countenance and assures him that she will take care of everything else.

Scene VI: King Duncan arrives at Inverness and praises its scenic beauty. He is completely unaware of the plot being hatched inside the castle. Lady Macbeth greets him on his arrival, making excuses for her husband's absence, who is too disturbed to meet the guest he proposes to kill.

Scene VII: This scene has the famous soliloquy of Macbeth. While the King is being entertained Macbeth thinks upon the foul act he is about to perform. His conscience chides him for contemplating to kill his good King who has bestowed upon him honour, is his guest and is also old enough to be his father. It is a triple disloyalty from which he balks. Lady Macbeth arrives to look for him because it appears odd that the master of the house should leave his own table. Macbeth tells her his decision to not go ahead with the plot to murder the King, but Lady Macbeth pours scorn on him. She brings her strong will into play to overpower Macbeth's wavering mind and convinces him that he cannot draw back now from a deed he has committed to perform. This is the first example in the play of Lady Macbeth fueling Macbeth's hidden ambitions.

ACTIVITY 1

Watch the Japanese film adaptation of Macbeth called *Throne of Blood* directed by the great Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa.

Analysis of Act I

The first act of Macbeth establishes the dramatic premise of the play and introduces its major characters and their interrelationships. The dark and somber setting that runs throughout the play is evident from the first scene. We see the interaction of supernatural forces and are also given a taste of the brutality of the battle being fought. The murders that are going to be witnessed through the course of the play will all be linked to the act of bravery shown by the soldiers in the battle. If a character has the ability to murder another being and then showcase his head, he can surely kill others for the sake of his own power and welfare. The protagonist, Macbeth, is a faithful warrior of the king but his overreaching ambitious nature is evident from the first act itself. Therefore, his belief of the prophecy of the witches does not come as a surprise as his desire for power and fame seems to surpass every other trait of his character. Even though he realizes that he may need to commit heinous acts of crime in order to assume the position of the king, he does not stop to think about its moral aspects. Even though he is shown to debate the crime he is about to commit, it does not alter his actions or thoughts. Though the concept of a moral order seems to underlie these scenes, Macbeth does not stop himself at the thought of the possible consequences. His own conversations show that he is aware that his acts could initiate a chain of violence that may eventually destroy him and his family. Even though he is not an evil man, it is evident that he is not able to resist temptation and the taunts made by his wife.

Lady Macbeth is also introduced in Act I of the play. In Act 1 itself, it is evident that Lady Macbeth is the force that propels Macbeth's ambitions. Once Lady Macbeth hears of the witches' prophecy from her husband's letter, Duncan's life is doomed. She

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seems to be made of sterner stuff than her husband, or rather seems to be more committed to the conspiracy to kill the king. Her main role in Act I of the play is to convince Macbeth that killing Duncan is a good idea. Her influence on Macbeth in this matter is obviously great. Macbeth does not decide to kill Duncan; Lady Macbeth does it for him. Macbeth at first seems averse to the idea, but Lady Macbeth tells him he must commit murder to fulfill his destiny as prophesized by the witches. Every time he reconsiders, she gives him a pep talk. She then is the foundation of all of Macbeth's actions in this matter, and it would not be farfetched to assume that she has always had an extreme influence on him. In short, Lady Macbeth uses Duncan's presence and the opportunity to take his life to influence Macbeth into fulfilling the witches' prophecy and sealing his destiny. Shakespeare also uses Lady Macbeth to spark a discussion on the accepted notions of gender from the very beginning. While the nature versus nurture debate is visible in most plays of Shakespeare, in *Macbeth* it is clearly spelt out.

Lady Macbeth seems to defy the traits of nurture that are considered to be inherent in women; she asks the evil spirits to fill her with cruelty and give her the strength to kill the king. Moreover, whenever Macbeth falls weak in his path of cruelty, she instigates him by questioning his manhood. At this point in the play, Lady Macbeth is the character that is most vicious and dominates and often manipulates people and situations around herself. Her soliloquies in Act I go a long way in creating an impression of her on the mind of the reader. A soliloquy is an essential theatrical attribute that is visible through the actions of various characters of this play. Shakespeare's soliloquies are famous as occasions of self-address where the character seems to be talking to him or herself and no other character is being addressed. It also has the ability of being a theatrical convention that separates the stage from real life where the audience has the privilege of listening in on the thoughts of the characters.

Some of Shakespeare's most well-known asides have been seen in *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* continues on the same tradition. While Lady Macbeth represents cruelty, the three witches represent darkness, chaos and conflict and act as agents and witnesses to the course of action in the play. All these women have a lot of agency in their hands and seem to control almost all actions in this play, either directly or through suggestion. The three 'weird sisters' make use of their rhyming speeches to create an impact as opposed to the blank verse used by all the other characters. They speak in a language of contradiction and the word 'equivocation' has often been used for their famous speeches. Almost all the lines spoken by them have contradictory references or more than one underlying meanings. Lines like 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' and 'lesser than Macbeth, and greater' are prominent examples. This kind of speech goes a long way in adding to the moral confusion of the play and suggesting that there are various realms of meanings to each statement and action. This ambiguity and confusion may be the result of intentional or unintentional actions of the three witches. More often than that, the ambiguity in their speech seems intentional and they aim to bring about the latent streak of ambition in Macbeth. The power of the witches is 'prophecy through suggestion'. The dilemma that lingers on even after the reader has read the entire play is whether Macbeth was being tested by the words of the three witches or were they just taking him towards his pre determined end. The free will in Mankind, then, lies tangled along with fate and character. The presence of the witches seems to suggest impending doom as the borders between the real and supernatural cannot be usually transcended. Their intention seems to be only to trouble humans around them. An analogy between the witches and the three sisters of Fate (Moerae) in Greek mythology has often been drawn. The three daughters of Zeus and Themis were named Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos and were often called the 'hags of destiny'. They were known to sit and spin the wool yarn of life and the three

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witches seem to do the same for Banquo and Macbeth. They use subtle forms of temptation and strong powers of guidance in order to lead Macbeth to the murder of Duncan and Banquo to the rejection of the prophecies. Another theme that can be clearly traced across this act is the comparison of people through opposing characteristics. In the very first instance, as King Duncan thinks about the unfaithful behaviour of the Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth enters who till then is a faithful soldier of the King's army. Banquo and Macbeth are also stark opposites since the former does not allow the witches to guide him and does not attach value to them whereas the latter lives out the prophecies of the witches. The differences between Macbeth and the ruling king, Duncan, are also heightened by making Macbeth, the increasingly evil ruler deliver a soliloquy on the virtues of the peaceful and noble king. However, the highest level of difference in Act I is between Macbeth and his wife. The former is indecisive whereas Lady Macbeth is just the opposite. She possesses such vision and focus for advancement that she is able to manipulate her husband as well.

Act II

Scene I: This scene opens with Banquo thinking about the prophecies and the evil thoughts they have given birth to. While Macbeth has surrendered to the evil, Banquo fights against it. Macbeth meets Banquo and indirectly seeks to make him a co-conspirator in his murderous plans. Banquo replies that he will support Macbeth so long as it does not entail disloyalty to Duncan. At the appointed hour Macbeth approaches Duncan's chamber but he is deeply disturbed by the act he is about to commit and imagines a dagger leading him on. He, however, subdues his conscience and goes ahead with the plan.

Scene II: Lady Macbeth is dismayed to find that she is not mentally strong enough to commit the murder. She gets the dagger ready for Macbeth and then waits for him to do the deed. Soon Macbeth returns with the stained dagger indicating that the deed is done. They are both overcome with the implication of what they have done, yet both react differently. Macbeth is beset with remorse whereas his wife thinks of the practical steps that must follow to hide the traces of the trail that could lead to them. She takes the dagger from Macbeth and smears the blood on the faces of the guards to put the blame upon them. She also tells Macbeth to wash himself of the stains and put on his gown so that no suspicion befalls them.

Scene III: Macduff and Lennox come to meet King Duncan, unaware that he has been killed. The porter opens the gate to the visitors after an ironic speech comparing his duties to the duties of a porter at the gates of Hell and this leads to the discovery of the assassination. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth feign grief but the other subjects are filled with sorrow at the grisly end of a well loved King. Lady Macbeth faints and this is the first sign that her conscience, that she has brutally subdued, is now reacting against the dreadful crime she has been a party to. Macbeth, on the other hand; is now in control. He goes and kills Duncan's guards, whom he himself had drugged. He pretends that anger at their dereliction to duty made him kill them. Banquo seeks to find out the killers. In the meantime the sons of Duncan, realizing that their lives are in danger flee Scotland, Malcolm to England and Donalbain Ireland.

Scene IV: The news of King Duncan's assassination soon spreads and everyone wonders who could have killed him. The suspicion falls on the sons who have fled and it is believed that they had bribed the guards who were later killed by Macbeth. Macbeth is crowned king but Macduff is wary of his willingness to be crowned and suspects him.

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ACTIVITY 2

Using the Internet or the local library as your resource read William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, a play that closely resembles *Macbeth* in its plot. Write a brief essay comparing the two plays.

Analysis of Act II

The second act of the play moves forward the action. The act begins with a conversation between Macbeth and Banquo. Banquo is a potential threat to Macbeth's ambition to become the king. Fleance, Banquo's son, is also introduced in this act; this follows quite logically from the first act since the witches had prophesized that Banquo's successors would take over the throne. Fleance's appearance in the first scene of this act serves as a reminder of the prophecies of the witches. Even though Macbeth seems distrustful of Banquo and pretends to have hardly thought of the witches, his plans of conspiracy and prospective murder are quite clear to the audience. Another point that comes across due to Fleance is that if Macbeth is successful in the murder of Duncan, he will also have to take the life of Fleance (Banquo's successor) to secure his own position.

The central concern of this act however is the murder of King Duncan. All scenes before it lead up to it and the following scenes begin to portray its repercussions. However, the act of the murder has not been shown in the play and the blood and gore has been left out with only references to it. Shakespeare uses this technique quite extensively across his works where the actual act being talked about does not appear on stage. The chamber of King Duncan is a hidden place which the characters walk into and are changed as individuals when they come out from it. This technique seems to have been inspired from the classical Greek tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles where the violence was not shown on stage but was alluded to continuously in the work. Almost all the supernatural occurrences in this play have been read psychologically by critics besides the encounter with the witches since Banquo also witnesses the same along with Macbeth. Macbeth immediately has pangs of guilt after committing the murder. After the 'deed' is done, he rambles to his wife that 'Macbeth shall sleep no more'. This is an early foreshadowing of the torment that Macbeth will undergo in the latter acts. The soliloquy of Macbeth at the beginning of this act begins to portray his degenerating mental health that has been brought about by fear and guilt. The dagger that he sees before him when he goes to murder Duncan is a hallucination and is merely a manifestation of his inner struggle. The theme of blood that had been discussed in the accounts of the battle reappear here and Macbeth feels that he was unable to wash his hands clean of them. However, Lady Macbeth shows him the path and says that the blood can be washed away with a little water. This act also experiences a comical interlude through the presence of a porter. The technique of using a comic interlude has also been used by Shakespeare quite extensively, as can be seen in plays like *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*, where such scenes tend to cut out the possible monotony of dark and gloomy settings. The porter's comparison of himself to a porter at the gates of Hell and his nonsensical ranting of the ill-effects of alcohol provide a much needed break from the primary course of action in the play. However, there is an underlying comparison of Inverness to Hell at this point in the play. The porter speaks in prose unlike all the other characters of noble birth, who use the iambic verse to communicate. The conversation that takes place between Ross and the old man outside the castle at the end of the act shows the symbolic value of the

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unnatural occurrences that had taken place on the previous day. Horses are shown to have been eating each other and there is also a reference of an owl eating a falcon. Shakespeare often uses such unnatural events to symbolize an impending tragic situation for the protagonist and consequently, shows the decaying of the state. His tragedies like *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear* have similar unnatural events. The moral and political occurrences in his plays are usually represented in manifestations of nature. The murder of Duncan unleashes chaos on Scotland just as the assassination of Julius Caesar had done for Rome. The older order of an understanding, kind and benevolent king is eventually taken over by a dictator who tortures his subjects in order to further his own ends. In conclusion to the analysis of this act, it can also be stated that dreams, symbols and hallucinations have a major impact on the world of reality. The real world seems to border on the thin line between the supernatural and the imaginary. The 'dagger of the mind', the scene of the porter's comment on Inverness as Hell and the unnatural events taking place outside the castle all embody the moral decay caused by Macbeth's actions and the repercussions that are likely to occur.

Act III

Scene I: This scene shows that Banquo also hopes that the witches' predictions regarding him and his family might prove to be true just as they have for Macbeth. However, he is a true and loyal general and does not plan crimes to anticipate the future. Macbeth's slide towards corruption has begun and gains momentum. He plans to kill Banquo and his son in a futile effort to prevent the witches' prediction regarding Banquo's descendants coming true. Macbeth announces that he will hold a banquet that evening in which Banquo will be the chief guest. Macbeth plans Banquo's murder alone whereas earlier he had needed all of Lady Macbeth's persuasive skill to convince him to kill Duncan showing that he has become hardened. He hires killers and directs them to kill Banquo as he arrives for a feast that Macbeth has thrown.

Scene II: Macbeth gives hints to Lady Macbeth about his plans to kill Banquo and his son but Lady Macbeth is too oppressed with the murder of King Duncan. Her strong character is in disarray and she is no longer able to dominate and plan as earlier. It is Macbeth who now plans and executes all the evil deeds. However he is also not without his own pangs of guilt. Macbeth says that he envies Duncan, who is sleeping peacefully in his grave. Lady Macbeth asks him to be cheerful in the presence of their guests at the banquet, but is herself disturbed. She was able to subdue her conscience by force but the reaction is now upon her. She is consumed by regret for the killing of Duncan and slowly losing control of herself.

Scene III: The two hired murderers are joined by a third. The third murderer informs them that he has also been hired by Macbeth. The three of them manage to kill Banquo; however, Banquo's son Fleance manages to escape. All the three murderers leave the scene to report back to Macbeth.

Scene IV: Macbeth receives the news of Banquo's murder and Fleance's escape during the feast. Macbeth's conscience starts reacting as he sees the ghost of Banquo seated at the table. It is not visible to anyone else. Macbeth is fearful that his secrets will be exposed and behaves wildly. Lady Macbeth saves the situation by saying that Macbeth had such fits since his youth as well. Macbeth recovers and toasts Banquo's health and the ghost reappears. Macbeth loses all control and almost reveals his guilt. Lady Macbeth ends the feast to avoid further indiscretions and Macbeth pretends ill health is troubling him.

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Macbeth has noticed the absence of Macduff from his banquet and deems it a personal insult. He is also suspicious of Macduff and has set his spies upon him. He decides to consult the witches again and determines that if more murders are required to secure his position, then so be it. Macbeth is also sure that now he would not betray himself as he did after Banquo's murder. While Macbeth is set on the path to doom, Lady Macbeth is overcome by remorse and guilt which is eating her up from within.

Scene V: This scene shows the three witches again. They are with their goddess Hecate who tells the other witches that Macbeth will visit them the next day. Hecate decides to take command of Macbeth's destiny.

Scene VI: People are beginning to suspect Macbeth and hint at his guilt but do not speak clearly for fear of spies. Lennox hints to a friend that Macbeth is guilty of Banquo's murder. Macduff has gone to England to seek help from the King to free Scotland from the grasp of Macbeth. Malcolm is already there and the King is reported to be ready to send his army to assist Malcolm.

ACTIVITY 3

William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has been a subject of many theatrical superstitions, the most famous being the superstition of the 'Scottish curse'. Using the Internet or the local library as your resource, find out about more theatrical superstitions related to Macbeth and how they came into being. Draw up a list of theatrical superstitions related to *Macbeth*.

Analysis of Act III

The theme of manhood comes up again in Act III of the play. Macbeth had been previously provoked by his wife to commit the murder of King Duncan by questioning his manhood when he was contemplating the murder. This time Macbeth employs the technique to manipulate the men he has hired to kill Banquo. More than being hired for money, their motive for killing Banquo is the wrongs done against them by him. Macbeth points out these causes, thereby leading them to the murder of Banquo and his son. However, as Fleance manages to escape from the murderers and flee from the scene, Macbeth's death and the fulfillment of the prophecies of the witches become even more certain. A fact that is evident here is that the concept of manhood is closely associated with blood, gore and ruthlessness in this work of Shakespeare. In the first act, Duncan praises Macbeth and Banquo for the manhood they had exhibited in the battle in which they had chopped off the head of the traitor and put it up on the castle. In this act, Macbeth tries to motivate the men towards the murder by using the same concept. The foil to this idea of manhood comes about when both Macbeth and his wife are left unsatisfied even after committing heinous acts of crime. Even after usurping the throne, they are left restless and concerned about their position. They are also worried about the stains that refuse to be washed off. These stains symbolize the mental blotches of grime that refuse to leave them. Another theme that William Shakespeare employs in Act III is that of juxtaposition and contrast. Just like *Macbeth*, the interplay between good and evil, light and shade and power and authority has been used throughout many Shakespearean plays. The most evident comparison in Act III is between the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Neither of them are flat characters and through the course of the play, while the former becomes increasingly evil and gains power, the latter moves

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towards the brink of insanity that has been brought about by immense guilt. Lady Macbeth also loses the agency she possessed at the beginning of the play when she asked spirits to 'unsex' her and reprimanded her husband for being 'too full of the milk of human kindness'. They seemed to have swapped their roles as Macbeth uses the same rhetoric that his wife had employed to convince him to kill Duncan in the first act. In Act I, Lady Macbeth had also told him to 'look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't', while in Act III Macbeth tells her to 'make faces vizords to our hearts, disguising what they are'. However, the inner turmoil that they face is common to both. The contrast between light and shade embodies the comparison between Banquo and Macbeth. Banquo is the light of the Scottish state while Macbeth represents the darkness that sets in when Banquo is killed and Macbeth reigns. Banquo has control over his ambition that does not engulf his morality. When he is finally killed, one of the murderers asks, 'who did strike out the light?' symbolizing the death of kindness and nobility. The last streak of sunlight also fades away around this time showing the involvement of nature in the destiny of the characters of the play. The trope of involving nature in the destiny of characters will once again be used by Shakespeare in final act of the play. Macbeth represents the vices of unrestrained moral ambition and at this point, it is quite obvious that the only end that is possible that can save Scotland from ruin is the death of Macbeth. The intermingling of the real, the illusory and the supernatural, a common trope in Shakespeare, is once again seen in the Banquet scene in Act III. The banquet scene actually leads the reader to question whether Banquo's ghost is a figment of Macbeth's imagination or has his spirit actually come back to haunt the ruthless tyrant. It is possible that the ghost may have been inspired by the guilt of Macbeth. Lady Macbeth certainly seems to think so when she suggests that, 'this is the very painting of your fear; this is the air-drawn dagger which you said, Led you to Duncan'. The appearance of Banquo's ghost is similar to the incident of the dagger and even though they are imaginary occurrences, their significance is very evident. It also hints that Macbeth's remorse is making him lose his own mind.

Act IV

Scene I: Macbeth goes to meet the witches wanting to know the future. The witches reveal the end to him; however, they do so through signs that deliberately mislead him. The witches summon forth many apparitions. The first apparition appears with an armed head. It warns Macbeth to beware of the 'Thane of Fife' (Macduff). The second apparition is of a bloody child and it declares that 'none of women born/Shall harm Macbeth'. The third apparition is of a crowned child and with a tree in his hand. It informs Macbeth that he 'shall never vanquished be until/ Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill Macbeth's castle/Shall come against him.' Macbeth also sees the vision of the kings that will succeed him and he knows that it is not his progeny that will rule. At this moment Lennox reports to him that Macduff has fled to England. Thwarted, Macbeth resorts to wanton cruelty, ordering the storming of Macduff's castle and the killing of Macduff's innocent family.

Scene II: This scene reveals the idyllic charm of Macduff's household where his wife plays with her son. Macduff's wife is saddened by the news of her husband's flight to England thinking that he does not love his family. Ross tries to console her but she develops hatred towards her husband. She feels that her husband is a traitor. Her son enquires about his father's absence. She tells him that his father is no-more. However, the son finds this difficult to believe. The charming scene is violently disrupted as a messenger comes with a warning for them to flee but before they can escape assassins barge in and kill Macduff's wife and son.

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Scene III: This scene reveals the meeting of Malcolm and Macduff in England. Malcolm is suspicious of Macduff fearing him to be a spy of Macbeth. Macduff tells Malcolm of the deterioration in Scotland where no one is safe and everyone fears for his life. However, Malcolm wants to test Macduff's loyalty and shows himself to be greedy and not a worthy son of Duncan. Now Macduff is indeed grieved at the miserable condition of Scotland. Malcolm gets convinced of Macduff's sincerity and reveals himself to be a true Scotsman who wants to deliver the country from the clutches of the tyrant Macbeth. The contrast between the Scottish and the English King is highlighted when it is shown that the English monarch provides the healing touch to his subjects as against Macbeth who is killing them. Macduff's satisfaction is however, ruined when he hears of the killing of his family. Malcolm turns this personal grief to a public cause of deliverance of Scotland from the hands of Macbeth.

Analysis of Act IV

This act shows the witches for the last time in the play symbolizing that the play is drawing to a close. The weird sisters are supernatural creatures that seem to aim only at mischief and cause harm to humans. Their dance around the cauldron and the apparitions that they present to Macbeth regarding his destiny leave scope for ambiguity. The apparitions shown by the witches provide a false sense of security to Macbeth and he ends up interpreting them on how he wants things to work out. There is also some doubt as to whether the witches deliberately mislead Macbeth. The question whether they are just guiding Macbeth to a predetermined fate or luring him to destruction by fueling his ambition remains unanswered. This question of free will versus fate is a theme of many Shakespearean tragedies. Many critics have also compared the role of the witches in the play to the Biblical reference of temptation and how a character's acceptance or refusal of it builds his or her destiny. During his meeting with the witches, Macbeth also sees the eighth child carrying a mirror that portrays the face of Banquo. Critics of Shakespeare believe this to be a reference to James I under whose reign the works of Shakespeare flourished. James I was also considered to be the eighth-generation descendant of Banquo. Another allusion to this is when Malcolm says that the King of England had the power to heal people who had been affected by 'the evil'. Many critics believe that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* especially for James I. The murder of Lady Macduff and her child in the act shows that Macbeth's moral compass has completely deteriorated and he is now beyond redemption. Until this time, Macbeth had murdered people to fulfil his ambition but now Macbeth starts descending into insanity by killing innocent people out of spite. Lady Macduff uses the symbolism of the bird to describe her fate as she tells Ross that, 'the poor wren, the most diminutive of birds, will fight, her young ones in her nest, against the owl'. While Macbeth is the owl, she herself is the wren. Through the conversation between Malcolm and Macduff at the end of the act Shakespeare highlights the qualities that a noble and a just king should possess. Shakespeare in the scene compares kings like Duncan and James I to a tyrant like Macbeth. For Shakespeare, the rule of great kings can lead the country to flourish while the cruelty of tyrants can ruin the health of a state and lead to its desolation. Shakespeare underlines this message throughout the play through the dark sombre settings and the imagery of desolation after Macbeth begins his reign. Through the scene Shakespeare also underlines that Malcolm and Macduff seem to comprehend the true meaning of the notion of manhood as Macduff answers to Malcolm, 'I shall do so, but I must also feel it as a man'. Shakespeare thus portrays that a brave and valiant man need not be ruthless and may also have emotions attached to his family and loved ones. This notion of manhood contrasts the notions of manhood seen in Act I and III of the play where it is used to provoke characters to commit murder.

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Act V

Scene I: In this scene it is shown that Lady Macbeth has lost her senses completely. In her royal home, a gentle woman tells a physician that Lady Macbeth has become somnambulistic. She also informs the doctor about Lady Macbeth's strange behaviours. Lady Macbeth enters with a candle in her hand. She sleepwalks, imagines her hands are bloodied and keeps trying to wash them. Lady Macbeth's remorse has overtaken her. She thus unwittingly reveals the truth about herself and Macbeth to all.

Scene II: This is a short scene that leads on to the next. The joint armies of England and Scotland are ready to attack Macbeth. Macbeth's predicament before the battle is that his own people are deserting him.

Scene III: Macbeth is beset from all sides. He is in despair about Lady Macbeth's condition and is also besieged by attacking enemies. The physician reveals Lady Macbeth's condition to him. Macbeth asks the physician to find a cure for her. Macbeth knows that he cannot survive and yet desperately holds on to what the witches had told him, which was that no one born of a woman can kill him and that he can only be defeated when Birnam wood start marches uphill. Macbeth reasons that it is unheard of a wood coming back to life and marching up a hill. Macbeth's descent from high favour when Duncan honoured him to the present condition where he is hated and feared has been rapid and his doom is sealed.

Scene IV: Birnam wood is seen marching up the hill. Malcolm's soldiers each carry a branch so that Macbeth's spies cannot gauge their numbers and for someone watching from the castle this gives the appearance that the woods are moving.

Scene V: Seyton informs Macbeth about Lady Macbeth's death. Macbeth realizes the worthlessness of his ambition that has led him to his present situation. His best friend, his wife is lost and he has lost his peace of mind. A messenger comes with strange news of what appears to be Birnam woods walking towards the castle. Macbeth curses the witches for having started him down this path and ultimately decides to fight his last battle bravely.

Scene VII: The battle is being fought fiercely by both sides. Macbeth is surrounded and fights a desperate but losing battle. Macbeth kills Young Siward in a fierce battle. Macduff swears to kill Macbeth and avenge the death of his wife and son. Despite realizing that the witches have tricked him through their cleverly worded predictions Macbeth still has hope that he cannot be killed because no one born of a woman can kill him as the witches have predicted.

Scene VIII: Macduff, who has sworn revenge on Macbeth, challenges him and they engage in a fight to the death. Macbeth is confident that he will win against Macduff, however, Macduff tells him that he was taken untimely from his mother's womb and thus fulfils the criteria of the witches' prediction that no one born of a woman can kill Macbeth. Macbeth realizes that in this too the witches have fooled him and he dies fighting Macduff in a despairing mood. Macduff cuts off Macbeth's head and holds it high on his lance to signify his victory. The victorious armies of England and Scotland are thus triumphant. Malcolm soothes those who have been tyrannized by Macbeth and offers them consolation. He also promises that those who acted at the behest of Macbeth would be punished as per law. He also rewards with titles and lands those who supported

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him. The play had built up to the crescendo of the battle from the beginning when Macbeth first met the witches and began his descent towards moral corruption and degradation. Now it ends on a quiet, positive note where justice prevails. Tyranny and overweening ambition run amok are defeated in the end.

ACTIVITY 4

Using the Internet of the local library as your resource, find out about the historical King of Scotland called Macberth (1005-1057) upon whom the play is based. How true was Shakespeare to the historical Macbeth? Draw up a list of historical inaccuracies in Shakespeare's play.

Analysis of Act V

The last act of *Macbeth* is very fast-paced and it evidently builds up to the scene on the battlefield outside Dunsinane Castle. The opposing armies prepare for battle and the fulfilment of the prophecies of the witches seems near. Till this point in the play, Macbeth has been shown to be disturbed and tormented by the murders that he had committed. In this act the effect of the crimes on Lady Macbeth is brought to the fore. Her progression as a character is very clear. At the beginning of the play, she is a fiercely ambitious character and is decisive and focused. Nothing can sway her from her goal as she manipulates, motivates and chides Macbeth into murdering Duncan. In the final act, Lady Macbeth is shown sleepwalking and muttering in her sleep. This seems to have come about by her sense of guilt and paranoia. After the murder of Duncan, she had told her husband, 'a little water clears us of this deed'. However, the guilt associated with the act goes on to haunt her. In her mind, despite washing her hands many times, her hands cannot wash away the blood. She goes on to say that even the sweetest perfume of Arabia would not be able to sweeten her hand. Just like Malcolm, Lady Macbeth's death does not take place on the stage. Macbeth, who is overcome by his ambition, seems to disregard the value of the news and says that she should have died at a more appropriate time. However, the soliloquy that follows exposes his inner thoughts as he contemplates on the meaning of life. He says,

'Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.'

This soliloquy also comments on the theatrical aspect of life along with reawakening the reader to the fact that Macbeth too is just an actor on the stage of life. This is often believed to be Shakespeare's own interpretation of the theater. These lines also echo another Shakespearean play called *As You Like It* where a character called Jaques says, 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages.' In *Macbeth*, Macbeth ceased to be a sympathetic hero once he made the

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decision to commit regicide by killing Duncan; by the end of the play, he has become so morally repulsive that his death comes as a powerful relief. Shakespeare through *Macbeth* suggests that ambition and bloodlust must be checked by virtue for order and form to be restored to the sound and fury of human existence. Only with Malcolm's victory and his assumption of the crown can Scotland, and the play itself, be saved from the chaos engendered by Macbeth. Near the conclusion of the play, the *hamartia* of Macbeth is also evident to reader. Macbeth is too trusting and fails to see beyond the veneer of the witches. According to their prophecies, Birnam Wood does come to Dunsinane, not as the entire forest itself, but in the form of branches carried by Malcolm's soldiers. Moreover, Macduff who has been 'untimely ripped' eventually kills Macbeth. The play completes a full circle as it ends with a battle just as it had started. Macbeth kills the traitor at the beginning and he himself is killed at the end of the play and is labeled a traitor. Thus, the play ends with a structure that is parallel to its beginning. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is thus a tragedy that shows the circle of life, with evil, noble and supernatural elements in its various hues.

2.3 MACBETH AS A TYPICAL SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

Macbeth has all the salient features of a Shakespearean tragedy, but it also has certain unique features of its own. It is the last written of the four great tragedies. Shakespeare came to it when his art was fully matured and this maturity is seen in its concentrated construction, in the richness of its verbal texture, and in the fact that in it a hero turns villain but still we sympathize with him, A brief survey of the tragic action fully brings out the typical as well as distinctive qualities of the play.

For Macbeth Shakespeare drew his material from Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, but it is not a 'history'. It is entitled the Tragedy of Macbeth. 'It is a vision of life that has the concreteness of history, and yet also has the wisdom of philosophy.' Tragedy shows the punishment of evil-doers at its conclusion. Although most discussions of tragedy concerns a man who does a deed of horror in ignorance,

Macbeth, when he kills the king who is his guest and generous lord, knows that he does a 'horrid deed'.

Nor does Macbeth lose his moral sense after his first crime. Midway in the play, when he has already suffered violent feeling of guilt, he determines to toughen himself in villainous practice; he has seen the ghost of one of his victims because (he thinks) he is still a fearful novice in crime and he has not yet inured himself by 'hard use.' A little later, when he fears he is losing his control over his mind he determines that his course must be bloodier. Chief of his opponent is Malcolm, the heir to the throne—a man chaste, trustworthy, and patriotic-and also other men who are distressed to hear that Macbeth has made 'each new morn/New widows howl, new orphans cry.' To these enemies of Macbeth, he is a butcher, a tyrant, a hell-kite, a hell-hound.

At the outset of the play we meet not Macbeth but the Weird Sisters. The next time they assemble, the third one says, it will be to meet with Macbeth. The incantatory quality of their verse—the power of the rhyme, the alliteration, and the mysterious paradoxes—can be felt even in a single couplet:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

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We may insist, on reflection, that Macbeth is a free agent who need not have yielded to the witches hints: certainly he harbors within him what they present to our eye. Yet can we feel sure that he has not been ensnared: the charm has been wound up, and if he is the tyrant, viewed another way he is the victim of infernal tyranny. The witches can control the winds, and we first see Macbeth on a 'blasted heath.' The very air he breathes, as it is in part made up of the witches who 'melted as breath into the wind,' is infected. This second view of Macbeth as victim, finds support from Shakespeare's other tragedies and even in his use of the word 'tragedy'. No English play before Macbeth has such imposing witches, and if the Weird Sisters resemble witches in their ability to sail in a sieve and in their animal-killing and in their revenge on the sailor's wife, they nevertheless seem also to merit the title Macbeth gives them—'juggling fiends.'

Macbeth early recognizes the unnaturalness of his thoughts, and as the asides in Act I make it clear, they estrange him from his fellows and even almost from himself

They, make my seated heart knack at my ribs,

Against the use of nature.

The soldier who fought along with his countrymen-who is described as a savior—becomes by the last Act, a man who knows that he has no friends (enemy troops, rather than troops of friends, surround him); his soldiers at the end—those who do not desert him—are, mere 'constrained things/whose hearts are absent too.' His course in blood has separated him not only from God and from his subjects but even from his wife.

Macbeth's own death's effect on us is complex. When his severed head is brought in, perhaps we sense a parallel between Macbeth's career and that of the treacherous Macdonwald, whose head Macbeth had justly fixed upon the battlements, and a contrast between first Macbeth and the Thane of Cawdor, who confessed his treasons and yielded up his life. But perhaps too we feel that there is something of the soldierly Macbeth in his final contest, and equally important, that his death is the release (hence it is not wholly painful to him) of one who knows he harvested what he sowed, and who is aware of his sin.

The speech Macbeth makes before he dies can here be used to remind us that he holds our interest partly by his language. It is not a matter of confusing the character with the author, but simply a matter of recognizing that one of the things that make us interested in Macbeth is memorable speech. The final speech of Shakespeare's Macbeth is an almost indescribable blend of corrupted pride, desperation, animal fury, and courage; it is not one of the meditative or descriptive passages that even out of context has a life of its own, but like all the other lines in the play it holds us rapt.

Macbeth is certainly one the most 'villainous' of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, and yet he enlists our sympathy for him, his courage in defence of Scotland is emphasized in the opening scenes, yet even this is of a singularly brutal kind—it is perhaps when he kills Macdonwald that he appears most like a 'butcher'. There is no doubt of his humanity, even when he commits inhuman crimes. We live with him; in the scenes before and immediately after Duncan's murder we are immured not only in Macbeth's castle, surrounded by the darkness and the creatures of the night that inhabit his and his wife's imaginations, but within his mind, sharing his moral conflict and imprisoned in the mental world created by his hallucinations.

We not only see through his eyes, but are taken into those parts of his mind that he desperately tries to conceal from himself When he first thinks of murder there is no

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doubt of the horror with which he regards it; in his soliloquy he refers to it only obliquely as if he cannot bear to look at it directly.

This conflict between the explicit statement and the imagery through which it is expressed mirrors the conflict in Macbeth's mind. He suffers from a sort of schizophrenia as he tries to repress the moral side of his nature. The unity of his personality, his 'single state of man', was already shaken when he heard the prophecies of the witches, and from that moment he is torn by the contradictory impulses which his wife analyses so precisely in her first soliloquy—he would not play false, and yet would wrongly win. He can commit murder only by shutting his eyes to the real nature of the deed; he must let 'the eye wink at the hand', as if the hand were acting mechanically without his being aware of its action.

After the murder his disintegration is complete. Neither his physical nor his moral being seems his own. He regards his hands as if they no longer belong to him—'What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine eyes'—and the moral sense that he has disowned projected out of his own mind into the hallucinations that he is forced to dwell on compulsively.

It is a tragedy of atmosphere: the dramatist has concentrated more on the creation of atmosphere than on the subtleties and complexities of character. This atmosphere is one of all—pervasive darkness, even blackness, relieved by flashes of garish light or splashes of blood. The tragedy is remarkable simple both in characterization and construction. The characters have been delineated boldly and broadly and are lacking in those subtle touches and delicate hints which we get in the other tragedies. Still the dramatist has succeeded in imparting a rare loftiness and grandeur to the figure of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who stand out sublime above the others. Its construction too is equally simple. Its action moves swiftly, even vehemently onwards. Macbeth is the shortest play of Shakespeare, and this brevity results from its classical simplicity. It is stronger in the melodramatic element and this makes it a greater success on the stage.

It is the only tragedy in which Shakespeare has introduced the witches. The witches impart the touch of mystery, awe and supernatural dread to it. It is a tale of murder but the dramatist has made out of it a great dramatic poem. There is no other of Shakespeare's tragic heroes who invariably speaks such pure poetry as does Macbeth.

Conflict in it is more violent than in the other tragedies. The external conflict is violent and powerful. It is more powerful and more keenly felt than in the others and this lends to the play a certain violence of passion which is very impressive.

This conflict sustains the interest of the readers throughout. It is only in this play that Shakespeare has depicted a 'hero turned villain'. Macbeth turns a villain soon after the play opens; this is not the case with Hamlet, Lear or Othello. The Fate which overtakes him is not undeserved; Macbeth is the only tragedy in which the suffering of the hero is proportionate to his wickedness. It is the only tragedy in which poetic justice is meted out to the hero.

2.4 SHAKESPEARE'S SKILL IN PLOT CONSTRUCTION

Shakespeare is one of the greatest dramatists of the world, and none equals him in the universality of his appeal. Ben Jonson, his great contemporary, was right when he called him, 'the soul of the age'. All over the English speaking world, his plays are still taught in

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schools and colleges; and public performances of his plays are frequent. This is more surprising as Shakespeare did not have the benefit of university education. But again as Ben Jonson said, 'He was naturally learned'. He did not care to invent his own plot; he borrowed freely from all possible sources. But what he borrowed he made it entirely his own. Marlowe, Lyly, Greene, Peele and Kyd—held the stage and thrilled the audiences. But each of these dramatists had his own distinctive gift. But Shakespeare was the dramatist who combined in his plays, the various qualities which they had separately. He learned from all what each had to teach, and then combined and fused all that he learned from them. He is the only dramatist, who had together all those virtues which the others had separately. That is why he towered head and shoulders above them in his own times. Of all the world's greatest dramatists, he alone displays an equal aptitude for tragedy and comedy.

Shakespeare's understanding of human life, of human nature and its complexities, is amazing. Throughout his works we find practical wisdom and philosophical truth, which are as true and valuable today as when they were penned. We go to him for moral truth and practical guidance in day to day affairs of life. His works are mines of Beauty, Wisdom, and Truth, and hence they can never grow stale. Shakespeare not only mirrors life, he also tells us how best it should be lived. Shakespeare does not hesitate to laugh even at the most tragic moments. In his mature art there is perfect interpenetration of the comic and the tragic.

Probably composed in late 1606 or early 1607, *Macbeth* is the last of Shakespeare's four tragedies. It is comparatively a short play without a sub-plot and it is considered his darkest work.

The structure of a play may be defined as the organization of the material of which the play is made up, and relation of its parts to each other and to the whole play. Macbeth has only a single plot or action, and no subplot as is the case with King Lear. The entire play is concerned with the career of Macbeth, the central figure, his inherent nobility and grandeur, and its gradual disintegration, decline and fall. It depicts the spectacle of a hero gradually turning into a villain of the blackest dye. There are no digressions, no subplots and no superfluity. It has now been established that even the porter-scene is an integral part of the play and that each of the witch scenes has its own place and significance. Nothing is superfluous, nothing that can be done away with. The dramatist has focused on the main action—how does over-ambition of Macbeth lead to his destruction.

Macbeth is the central figure in the play, and our attention is fixed on him throughout. He is the first character as he is also the last to be referred to in the play. At the very beginning of the play, Macbeth and Banquo are returning to Scotland after winning the battle between the Norwegians and the Scottish. This signifies that Macbeth is a great warrior. The king calls him a peerless kinsman, and other characters in the play call him 'noble' and 'honourable'.

On their way, three witches appear and make prophecies about Macbeth and Banquo. They say:

> *'All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Glamis! All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Cawdor! All hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!'*
>
> (A 1, S 3, 48).

But Lady Macbeth speaks of him as 'too full of the milk of human kindness'. She refers to him in the following words in Act I scene v:

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> Glamis thou art, and C awdor; and shalt be
> What thou art promis 'd—Yet do I fear thy nature:
> It is too full of 'the milk of human kindness.
> To catch the nearest way Thou wouldnt be great;
> Art not without ambition, but without
> *The illness should attend it.....*

This introduces an element of dishonesty, hypocrisy and evil into his character. As A.D.F. Macrae rightly points out, 'She recognizes his ambition to be 'great' but feels that he would prefer to be given the throne by someone else whatever methods were used, rather than grab it himself. His qualms and repulsions before and after Duncan's murder are denounced as cowardice and foolishness by his wife and later in Act lll, she feels he has not improved. That there is evil within him is underlined by the fact that on his first appearance on the stage he closely echoes the words of the witches when he says, 'so fair and foul a day, I have never seen.' No doubt, he has great courage as a warrior, but even as a soldier he is frenzied, and there is something ferocious even in his fighting. After getting the title Thane of Cawdor from King Duncan, his ambition gets inflamed though he still knows the line between right and wrong. At the very first thought of removing King Duncan from throne, he feels terrified.

Shakespeare drew his material for the play from Holinshed's Chronicles, but he has skillfully reorganized it for his purposes. It is more tightly organized than the collection of incidents in Holinshed.' The Characters are differentiated and developed in a manner completely unlike the original; Duncan is made into a good king and Macbeth into an almost totally brutal king; Banquo, the ancestor of King James, becomes an honest man whereas in Holinshed he helps Macbeth to murder Duncan; greater prominence is given to the witches; the sense of time and location is altered to suggest a concentration of action.

The result is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, 'a play which leaves the impression of tremendous vehement speed'. A number of battles involving various people over a considerable period of time are concentrated in Act I of the play into the sustained heroism of Macbeth. Always throughout the play, the focus of our attention is fixed firmly on Macbeth. In Act l, Scene M it is Macbeth's character that Lady Macbeth analyses. In Act IV, Scene III, set in the English Court, where we have a long discussion between Macduff and Malcolm on the subjects of loyalty and good kings, Macbeth is never out of our minds. We know what he has done to Macduff's family, we can see that the invented portrait Malcolm offers of 'himself is really a description of Macbeth, we have the contrast between the 'good king' (Edward) and the evil Macbeth. However distant from each they may be, in actual geographical terms.

In the final Act, the stretch of time from Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking to Macbeth's death seems to last only as long as it takes us to read the pages, According to Holinshed Macbeth ruled Scotland for over ten years but in the play the impression created is that his reign lasted only a few weeks. This telescoping and compression of time heightens our excitement and creates suspense.

The concentration of attention is throughout on Macbeth and his spiritual disintegration, yet we leave the play with the impression that it is crowded with incident and character. This has been achieved by the dramatist's use of close-up shots and long-range shots in the manner of the director of a modern cinema-film. For, example, he uses, minor characters to comment on the central action, to give a wider context, to

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Macbeth's behaviour. Each Act, with the exception of Act I, ends with such a scene where we are helped to take stock of the situation. In Act III, Scene vi, Lennox and the unnamed Lord 'are not in themselves important but they act as a measure of the tyranny of Macbeth and to register the wider significance of Macbeth's evil. The scenes with Duncan and later with Malcolm are presented as examples of decent kingly order against which Macbeth is to be judged. Equally, the scenes with the witches show an abyss of anti-human evil on the edge of which mankind stumbles and into which Macbeth enters.

The dramatist has made skilful use of parallelism and contrast to impart unity and coherence to his material. The play is organized symmetrically about the Banquet Scene. The first half of the play shows Macbeth's rise to power, the second his fall, the two movements being interrelated by the murder of Banquo. This murder that was intended to ensure Macbeth's safety actually leads to his exposure and his overthrow. Shakespeare's tragedies often begin with a scene that presents, not the major characters but the underlying forces that will determine the action. In Macbeth, the parallelism of the two halves is emphasized by prefacing both with the witches, who prompt the action that is to follow and give outward expression to the evil already working in Macbeth's mind; and their two prophetic scenes are also parallel to each other; in each three statements about Macbeth are followed by the prediction of Banquo's royal line. The formality of the structure is increased by the complementary development of the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth: while he becomes more hardened in evil she weakens, until in the end she finds his earlier fears being realized in her dreams while he is priding himself on the callousness that she exulted in at the beginning.

Dramatic irony has also been used with telling effect, as in the pioneer scene which is placed just alter the murder of Duncan, The Porter imagines himself as the gate-keeper of Hell and we see the ironic truth of such a claim because Macbeth has indeed made his castle a hell. The central word of the Porter's rambling talk is 'equivocator'. He welcomes to Hell various deceivers, people who have played with the truth to suit their own purposes, and we recognize Macbeth as the absolute equivocator of the play, particularly in this very scene where his elaborate words seem horribly deceitful. The porter acts as the oblique commentator on the murder and Macbeth's descent into Hell, and thus the scene becomes an integral part of the play.

The action has been speeded up from the very beginning. The chief action of the play—the murder of Duncan—comes in Act II, and the crisis, the turning in Macbeth's career, is reached in the beginning of Act III with the murder of Banquo. The result is that the last two Acts of the play have a tendency to drag. There is fall in tension and consequent dullness, the dramatist has tried in various ways to overcome this slackening of interest, and to enliven the action.

Action in the first part of the tragedy followed directly upon the prediction of the witches who promised him the throne. The witches appear again after the banquet-scene, make fresh promises, and thus again drive Macbeth forward. This repetition, this second appearance of the witches, produces a feeling of Fate. It also arouses expectation as to the way in which the action would develop. The readers are curious to know how Macbeth would react this time to the prediction of the witches. From the theatrical point of view also the scene is very effective. Secondly, the dramatist depicts the inner change that has taken place in the hero, and in this way the interest is sustained. Thus in the witch-scene and in the Fourth Act throughout we are shown 'Macbeth's furious irritability and purposeless savagery, the internal reaction which accompanies the outward decline of his fortune? In other words, the conflict is internalized and a peep is given into the anguished soul of the hero.

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Thirdly, an appeal is made to an emotion different from any of those excited in the first half of the play, and in this way novelty and variety is added to it. The short scene in which the light, innocent chat of Lady Macduff and her child is interrupted by the entrance of the murderers has rare tenderness, beauty and pathos of its own. It imparts novelty and variety, and its tenderness and sweetness touch the heart and provide relief. Fourthly, the introduction of humour affords variety and relief and also heightens by contrast the tragic feeling. There is a touch of delightful humour in the conversation of Lady Macduff with her little boy. Their innocent jokes provide relief as well as heighten the effect of the tragedy which follows immediately. Fifthly, in Act V Shakespeare has introduced scenes of battle which had a powerful appeal for the Elizabethan audiences. Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane, Macbeth fights with the courage of desperation, and his severed head is displayed on the dagger of his mortal foe, Macduff All these devices help to keep up the flagging interest.

Check Your Progress

1. Identify the action around which the play unfolds.
2. What is the essence of a tragic play? How is Macbeth different?
3. Comment of the illusion of time and action.
4. Discuss the importance of the appearance of the witches.

2.5 BANQUO AS FOIL TO MACBETH

It was Shakespeare's usual practice to bring together contrasted characters, so that one served as a foil to the other. In the present play, Macbeth and Banquo are such characters and Banquo, an essentially honest man, serves to throw into sharp relief the evil that is there in Macbeth. Banquo like Macbeth is a brave General and heroic warrior. Both Ross and the wounded soldier praise his courage and heroism, as they do that of Macbeth himself Duncan refers to them both as our captains and considers both of them equally worthy of his love and regard. But here the similarity between the two ceases. Banquo is honest, while there is an element of evil in Macbeth. This is clearly highlighted by their different reactions to the prophecy of the witches. Macbeth gives a start when it is prophesied that he would be the future King of Scotland, while Banquo is not at all startled when it is predicted that his sons would be the fixture kings of Scotland. He questions them about his own future but the witches 'replies are particularly ambiguous. He will be 'lesser than Macbeth, and greater', and 'not so happy, yet much happier'. He is also told: 'Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.' As is always the case with the witches' prophecies, these predictions come true. Banquo will not achieve Macbeth's position of the king, but by preserving his integrity he will be the greater man.

The third prophecy, that he will be father to a line of kings, is vital in explaining Macbeth's subsequent fear of Banquo and the reason why he has to have him killed. He is far more suspicious of the witches than Macbeth is, and he gives Macbeth a warning. Banquo is essentially an honest and noble man. He is certainly ambitious but he does not adopt crooked means to realize his ambition. Macbeth pays a high tribute to his nobility. When Macbeth tells him that, if he will cleave to his consent, 'it shall make honour for you', he replies,

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So I lose none .
In seeking to augment it, but still keep
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear
I shall be counseled.

Banquo is an essentially nobleman, but that does not mean that he remains honest and noble throughout. The prophecy of the witches works on him, and corrupts his essentially noble nature. Banquo alone knows of the prophecy, he alone suspects Macbeth, but still he does nothing to bring him to book. Rather, he accepts Macbeth's accession, goes to Sconce for his coronation, and accepts the theory that Duncan's sons had bribed the grooms to murder him. This is so because he has yielded to evil; the witches and his own ambition have conquered him. In one of his famous soliloquies he reveals that he fears that Macbeth has 'played most foully' for the throne, but still he does not speak a word against him.

Banquo is a brave and shrewd man, practical and self-controlled. He is loyal and a good subject. It is he who, when the murder has been made public, suggests that all concerned, should meet to discuss the consequences. He also guesses, quite rightly, that Macbeth has murdered his way to the throne. He realizes the wickedness of what Macbeth has done and how the prophecy has been fulfilled. Banquo does not lack worldly ambition; he merely disdains evil methods to achieve it. At the beginning of the Act III, we see Macbeth questioning him and finding out the time and place he can have Banquo killed, the murder taking place in Act III, Scene iii.

Banquo and Macduff are the only characters in the play that are suspicious of Macbeth. Macbeth knows this so he decides that they need to be killed. Macbeth also wants Banquo and his son dead because of the witches' prophecy that Banquo's sons will become Kings. He hires three murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. They kill Banquo but Fleance escapes. The fact that it happens as Banquo is returning to Macbeth's castle for the feast only underlines the depths of deceit of which Macbeth is capable. The escape of Fleance, Banquo's son, confirms that the witches' prophecy will be fulfilled. Banquo's last and most dramatic role is his ghostly appearance at the feast. The good and loyal man returns to haunt the private world of Macbeth's guilt. His closest friend becomes one of his cruelest tormentors, the instrument of bringing him to book.

2.6 MACDUFF: THE MAN NOT BORN OF WOMAN

Macduff is the man not born of woman, is as brave and heroic as Banquo and Macbeth, and he remains honest throughout. He suspects Macbeth from the very beginning, and so does not go to his coronation at Sconce, nor does he come to the banquet given by Macbeth to celebrate the occasion. His behaviour is in sharp contrast with that of Banquo. The result is that Macbeth is against him and his doubts and fears are confirmed when the witches tell him to beware.

According to their advice, he decides to be bloody and bold, and as Macduff flies to England to meet Malcolm, Macbeth has his wife and children brutally murdered. Fault has been found with Macduff for flying from Scotland and leaving his wife and child at the mercy of the tyrant. However, it must be recognized that he could not have imagined that Macbeth would be cruel enough to butcher even women and innocent children. And the dire calamity that befalls him, together with his patriotism, fires him with a desire for revenge. Says Gervnius: 'So noble, so blameless, so mild, Macduff lacks the goad of

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sharp ambition necessary to make him a victorious opponent of Macbeth. Macduff goes to England not out of fear, but to help the rightful King of Scotland to free his country from the tyranny of Macbeth. He sacrifices his wife and children for the sake of his country. Malcolm tests his loyalty by pretending to be wicked in every way. He passes the test successfully and is affectionately accepted by Malcolm. No sooner has this brave and straightforward man passed these tests than he is told of the slaughter of his wife and children. Their death is the price he has paid for flying to England to seek Malcolm's return and his country's safety. At first, the news of this mass murder seems to crush Macduff and we feel for him deeply. He has suffered a hideous injustice. Simultaneously we see the full measure of Macbeth's evil and, as Macduff painfully turns his anguish into thoughts of revenge.

Macduff is fighting both for his country and his own revenge, who gives the order for battle. Now, as the English forces start to win, Macduff resolves either to fight Macbeth or no one. We watch his meeting with Macbeth and watch the light between the two men. Macduff is Macbeth's last and most telling cause for despair, he understands the hatred Macduff has for him and he has purposely sought to avoid fighting him. Now he is challenged by him and he tells Macduff of one of the last of the witches' prophecies that he would be killed by only a woman born child. At this, Macduff explains the nature of his birth: a Caesarean operation. He was not born by the efforts of a woman but was from his 'mother's womb untimely ripped. This destroys Macbeth's last hope. It is this truth that forces him to acknowledge that the witches flatter with us in a double sense and so have led him to his damnation. Macduff is the good, the brave man of action. He takes over the role played by Macbeth at the start of the play, when he cut off Macdonwald's head. Macduff is the trusted and loyal man of action in the service of his king. It is through him that poetic justice has been meted out to the hero-turned villain.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. Comment on Banquo as a foil to Macbeth.
6. Give a brief character sketch of Macdouff.

2.7 A STUDY OF EVIL IN THE PLAY

We cannot say for certain whether Shakespeare believed in the supernatural or not, but he has certainly introduced it in a number of his plays to cater to the public taste. In Macbeth as in some other plays, he has introduced the ghost, of Banquo as well as unnatural, ominous events like those which take place on the night after the murder of Duncan. But, Macbeth is the only play of our dramatist in which he has introduced the witches. There are three witches in the play. They have their Queen Hecate as well as their familiars (attendant spirits) a toad, a cat, etc. They appear and disappear like bubbles of water. They have their cauldron which they use to cast their spells. They are unnatural creatures-neither men nor women and they symbolize all that is evil in Nature. Indeed, they provide the antithesis to the divinely ordained order of the universe. They meet in storms and can raise tempests; they are unnatural themselves—women with beards—and they work their spells with fragments torn from organic creatures.

In Holinshed the three women who accost Macbeth and Banquo are described as 'the weird sisters' and identified with the goddesses of destiny. Shakespeare retains

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the name but transforms them into the familiar witches of the English, or Scottish, countryside, to whose malice any unexplained disease in their neighbours, or their neighbours` livestock was often attributed.

Two different attitude or approaches to the witches are possible, the superstitious and the skeptical. In Macbeth the Witches owe their fascination and effectiveness to a skilful combination of both these attitudes. They have all the reality and vividness of actual belief but there are also suggestions that they are the products of the excited imagination, and so hallucinatory in nature. They have been brought into close connection with both character and action.

The very first words uttered by the witches, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair', strike the key-note of the play, in which the values are all topsy-turvy, and in which the two chief protagonists, like Milton's Satan, make evil their goal. This perversion of values and ideals is evident in their own appearance as they should be women but their beards deny it. This doctrine reverses the natural order of things:

'Fair is foul and foul is fair' is the Satanic principle of 'Evil be thou my good'. The confusion of 'fair' and 'foul' is the play's constant theme. It is enhanced by the irony of Duncan's misjudgment of the two Thanes of Cawdor and in contrast, by his son's elaborate testing of Macduff. The play is full of false appearances. Even the witches' warnings turn against Macbeth. So Foul is not fair as it seems to be in the play. They tempt and misguide furious Macbeth. Banquo does not believe in them and he seems not to care for their prophecy at the time, but their poison works on him also and there are suggestions that he too is lured by their prophecy that he would be the founder of a dynasty of kings.

In the case of Macbeth the influence of these instruments of malevolent forces is much more profound, this is seen in the fact that on his very first appearance on the stage, he closely echoes them when he says, 'So foul and fair a day, I have not seen.' They tempt him and lead him away from goodness. Macbeth is peculiarly vulnerable to their influence because he hears them voice the desires of his heart and alter his initial fear at being caught out (Act I, Scene iii, lines 50—51). Nature is continually invoked in speeches by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and their very sexlessness (Act I, Scene iii, lines 44-46) seems to correspond with Lady Macbeth's prayer against her own nature:

Come, you Spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top full
Of diresr cruelty; make thick my blood
Stop up th ' access and passage to remorse;
That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th ' effect and it.

Macbeth is able to find them when he chooses later on, but he wants to hear only what favours himself. Too late he comes to realize that the witches have their own purposes into which men tit and which men can serve. The equivocation theme which is central to the play operates most obviously through the witches and they are the most striking voices of naturalness and disorder. Lady Macbeth offers no comment on the witches. the 'metaphysical aid`. It is Macbeth who needs the witches to tell him what is in his own mind but is afraid to acknowledge it as his own. The witches utter riddles, which Macbeth in his weakness interprets in his own apparent interest. He is, therefore, deceived not by the witches but by his ill-founded reliance on his own interpretations.

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Unlike the witches, the ghost of Banquo which appears in the 'Banquet scene' is entirely hallucinatory in character. It is purely a subjective phenomenon. It is an objectification or externalization of the subjective state of Macbeth. It is a creation of his guilt-obsessed imagination and as Lady Macbeth reminds him very much like the dagger he sees just before the murder of Duncan. That is why none else of the characters sees him. It does not speak and it vanishes as soon as Macbeth takes heart and exclaims:

Hence, horrible shadow
Unreal mockery hence.

Thus Macbeth himself regards it as an 'unreal mockery', a shadow, a mere creation of his heated imagination, Shakespeare thus clearly intends the judicious among the audience to take it to be an illusion, a mental hallucination of Macbeth. Macbeth sees the ghost just after the murder of Banquo. It is a product of his guilt-obsessed imagination, an instrument of divine punishment and justice. The ghost is externalized form of Macbeth's guilt and fear of discovery, invisible to the others but a terrifying reality to Macbeth himself.

In short, the supernatural in the play has been closely integrated both with character and action; it is not merely a horrible, crude bloodcurdling phenomenon which it is in the works of his lesser contemporaries. Shakespeare has given to his audiences what they wanted, but in a more purified and exalted form.

2.8 A CONFLICT OF GOOD AND EVIL IN MACBETH

The world of a Shakespearean tragedy is essentially a moral world. The ruling power is a moral one, but along with the good it also gives birth to Evil.

Hence there is always a conflict between the forces of evil and the forces of good, or the forces of life and the forces of death. In the end evil is destroyed and good prevails. Life forces assert themselves, are victorious and the forces of Death, disorder and chaos are defeated. This conflict of good and evil assume many forms. In Macbeth it assumes the form of (a) warrior-honour as opposed by its negation fear, cowardice and brutality; (b) Imperial magnificence which is not real, but only an illusion, which is so to say merely a cloak thrown over meanness and wickedness; (c) Sleep and feasting which are Life-forces and their negation, i.e., inability to sleep and violation of the laws of hospitality; and (d) forces of creation and Nature's innocence as opposed by the forces of destruction and of Chaos. The Conflict of Good and Evil in Macbeth may be studied under these four heads.

(1) Warrior-honour and Fear

According to G. Wilson Knight the opposition of life and death forces, the conflict of good and Evil is strongly marked in the play. Life-forces are vividly and clearly contrasted with evil, with forces of death, darkness and disorder, and creation is opposed by destruction. Fear, a death-force, is at the very heart of the play and it is represented as a negation of warrior-honour which can be won only through courage resulting in heroic action. There is a clear well-marked rhythm of courage-fear-courage. Macbeth is from the first a courageous soldier. His warrior-honour is emphasized. He is 'brave Macbeth', 'noble Macbeth'. He is 'a peerless kinsman', courage in war is a thing of 'honour'. The value of warrior ship may not be dissociated from allegiance: it is one with the ideal of

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kingship and imperial power. But Macbeth is against this bond. The evil in him hates to bear it. . But Macbeth strikes next at the very roots of his own new bright honour. He murders Duncan, but by such a deed of dishonour no substantial honour may be won, the valour of such an act is itself shameful.

And Macbeth really gives way all along from fear: from fear of fear. He has fought for the King, exulting wildly in absolute courage. Next there is an extreme reaction to absolute fear. Thus the evil finds the only thing he fears is dishonour. He suffers at his first temptation from abstract fear, which fixes itself to a ghastly act so that it may form some contact with the real. That act is one of essential dishonour. He lacks spiritual courage to meet it, and hence projects his disordered soul into action and murders Duncan. Undue horror and fear of the deed drives him to it: in the same way his fearful conscience will not let him rest there, and he commits more murders, He is all the time flying from evil instead of facing it. But at the end he emerges fearless. And this is not only a warrior's valour when opposed by Malcolm's army, but by his murderous acts he has at last actually conquered his fear of evil, that is, his fear of fear. He sees himself a criminal: sees the evil in himself. These constant oppositions of 'grace' and thoughts of divinity in Macbeth are set against the things of dark and evil. Macbeth at the last, by self-knowledge, attains grace. He says in the end that he must forfeit 'honour' and all things of concord and life. Even social relationships suffer due to his wickedness.

(2) Imperial Magnificence and its Illusion

Closely allied to the theme of warrior-honour and its negation is the theme of imperial magnificence and the illusion of it. Macbeth attains to kingship, yet he never really possesses it. He is never properly a king; his kingship is a mockery. He has the scepter, the crown, the dress, in short all the outward paraphernalia of kingship, but it is undone and negative by the dark evil within him, by the forces of death and disorder. He fails to attain solid magnificence which should accompany kingship; what he gets is illusory and deceptive, a mere mark or cloak thrown over his actual pettiness and meanness. Outward royalty is, by itself a nothing in comparison with nature's kingliness. So he fears, envies, hates Banquo who has the reality of honour whereas he has but a mockery of it. He envies Banquo's posterity, their royal destiny won in terms of nature, not in terms of crime; and is maddened at the insecure mockery of his own kingship.

Macbeth's agony is not properly understood till we realize his utter failure to receive any positive joy from the imperial magnificence to which he aspired. Hence his violent jealousy when he sees Banquo's crowned and sceptred posterity. He lives a life of death, in darkness bereft of all, real grandeur and solid joy. He cannot conquer the evil in his soul and rest in the acclamations and honour of his land: rather he spreads his own spiritual darkness over Scotland. He becomes a 'tyrant bloody-sceptr'd'. His life reads as an absurd lust for the impossible. There is evil within him and these forces of evil are inimical to all that is good and noble. Imperial magnificence is thus blurred and defiled by the dark and the evil.

(3) Sleep and Feasting

Sleep and feasting are forces of good and they are closely associated with each other. Both are creative, restorative, forces of nature. So Macbeth and his Queen are deprived of both during the play's action. Feasting and sleep are twin life-givers. Macbeth's sleeplessness is retributive. Macbeth murdered Duncan in sleep, after feasting him. It was a blow delivered at 'innocent sleep; sleep, the gentle nurse of life. Macbeth does

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more than murder a living being: he murders life itself because he murdered hospitality and sleep; therefore his punishment is a living death, without peaceful sleep. Macbeth's crime is a kind of parricide—hence the suggestions of parricide throughout. Also there is the porter whose drunken festivities are used to heighten our awareness that hellish evil is stalking the earth: here again evil conquers the innocent festivity. Macbeth finds he has, 'put rancours in the vessel of his 'peace'. He does not feast with his lords in peace and harmony. Banquo's ghost breaks into the attempted festivity, disperses it, and throws into disorder. At the start, hospitality, welcome and degree are emphasized: the very things that Macbeth has so brutally discreated. 'Digestion', 'health', 'sauce', 'meat', are life forces.

Against this life-force of feasting, social friendliness and order, comes a death, a ghost, smashing life-forms with phantasms of evil and guilt. After the ghost's disappearance Macbeth recovers, again speaks words of 'love', 'health' and friendly communion. So the evil makes of unity, love, feasting and social order a chaos. Order is the natural grouping of life forms, disorder is evil—Macbeth's crime was essentially an act of disorder, a desecration of the ties of hospitality, and relationship and allegiance. Death, destruction, chaos—these are the forms of evil opposed to the life-joys of feast and friendship amid social concord.

The witch scene in the cavern which follows is strongly and vividly contrasted with the banquet scene. The former stands for evil, for the forces of death and disorder and the later, a life-force, for order and harmony. The banquet idea is inverted in the witch-scene: fair becomes foul, and foul becomes fair. Instead of suggesting life and health it suggests, 'toil and trouble'. The ingredients of the Cauldron suggest absolute indigestibility.

The witch-scene is a parody of banqueting, a death-banquet, a hell-broth. It is all quite meaningless, nameless, negative, utterly black, formerly an 'unreal mockery, a death-phantom, shattered a life-giving banquet. Here, by inversion a death banquet produces from its hideous gruel not bodily sustenance, but mere phantoms. This hell-broth is a death food, though it is not meant to be eaten; eating is good, in the cause of life. It brings forth spirits that is evil, not earthly things.

Macbeth is readily convinced by the Apparitions' assurances. He fails to understand the real significance of these Apparitions. His spiritual sustenance feeds him with hope—not, as it pretends and he thinks, in terms of natural law, but only in terms of itself, that is unreality, meaningless essences abstracted from the future: things which do not exist, and, when they do, will be different from their present blurred appearance as received by him. It is all a death- banquet and its spiritual food, to him, a poison. Hence it at once leads Macbeth to a deed of family destruction. He murders Lady Macduff her children, Macduff's household, all that 'trace him in his line', again a chaotic blow against a life-force, a family unit.

(4) Creation and Order: Destruction and Disorder

The evil in Macbeth also attacks the forces of life represented by creation and the innocence of nature. The evil in Macbeth is hostile to all that is creative, natural and innocent, and to birth and childhood which are life- forces and so also forces of good. There are suggestions in the early part of the play of Nature's innocence and she is presented in all her native integrity and peace and charm, and creative beauty. There is strong emphasis on 'senses', 'wooing' and 'delicate' air, and the procreant cradle, the

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thought of 'breeding'. Macbeth's crime is a blow against nature's unity and peace, a hideous dissertation of all creative, family, and social duties, all union and concord: this is the bond he breaks, 'the great bond` that keeps him 'pale`. Lady Macduff urges that Macduff's flight was dictated by 'fear', not 'love' or 'wisdom'. It is partly true: fear grips every one whilst evil rages in Scotland, Macduff is forced to sacrifice the bond of family love—'those precious motives, those strong knots of love'. He leaves them to their death.

The very trees rise against Macbeth, in league with his enemies. That is creative nature accusing, asserting her strength after her long torment of destruction. So Birnam Wood marches against Macbeth. The Macbeth-evil is so clearly opposed to nature that Lady Macbeth, who fears her own as well as Macbeth's nature, prays to be unsexed.

Death and Life

In the play 'evil is opposed to all natural processes; that is, it represented as a force which is opposed to life. . As Macbeth's course becomes more reckless, the evil forces him to wreak havoc, destruction and disorder on the universe. He would have the winds united, fighting against churches, swallowing up navigation, blowing down com and trees, castles, palaces, pyramids, he would let the treasure of nature tumble all together till destruction is sick. So the torment goes on: essential disorder, essential destruction. Lady Macbeth's sleep- walking is a great perturbation in nature for, unnatural deeds. It is a fitting culmination to this theme of dark and nightmare, evil which is set beyond any natural law of sense-contact. 'The play's action has been all along a waking nightmare: here nightmare usurps the powers allowed to waking life, it is Death's supreme conquest over nature.'

Birth opposes death, Youth and babyhood oppose evil. Macbeth murdered aged innocence and purity linked to the great office or kingship. Child innocence with all heaven, all imperial sovereignty, and all nature on its side, tree-sceptred, confronts the murderer.

To conclude with the words of Wilson Knight, 'In a final judgment the whole play may be writ down as a wrestling of destruction with creation: with sickening shock the phantasmagoria of death and evil is violently loosed on earth, and for a while the agony endures, destructive; there is a wrenching of new birth, itself disorderly and unnatural in this disordered world, and then creation's more firm-set sequent concord replaces chaos. The baby-peace is crowned. Order had given place to disorder, but now a new order represented by the new king is imposed on that disorder. Evil is thus conquered by Good, and disorder by order.

2.9 THEMES IN MACBETH

Appearance and Reality

One of the major themes of the play is the contrast between appearance and reality, again and again it is stressed that 'things are not what they appear to be.' There is complete deterioration of values and as the witches put it in the play, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair.' On his first appearance on the stage these words are closely echoed by Macbeth when he says. 'So fair and foul a day, I have never seen.' Thus the contrast between appearance and reality, which is one of the dominant themes of the play, has been stressed from the very beginning. This theme is first suggested when Duncan remarks that the Thane of Cawdor appeared to be so honest and loyal, but he was a traitor in reality. As if to emphasize the deceptive nature of appearances this remark of the king is

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followed immediately by the stage-direction 'Enter Macbeth etc.' The poor, trusting Duncan does not realize that the new thane of Cawdor is as treacherous as the previous one and that even at the moment, he is planning to murder him.

In scene VI when Duncan reaches Macbeth's castle in Inverness, he is all praises for its paradisal peace and calm, and remarks, 'This castle hath a pleasant seat.' He does not realize that it is mere appearance, the reality is entirely different. It is not a paradise, but a Hell, where he would be brutally murdered that very night. Macbeth's castle is Hell, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are veritable devils who have murdered their king, their benefactor and their guest for the night.

The Theme of Equivocation

It is in the Porter's speech that the theme of equivocation is first brought in through his reference to the equivocator, 'that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: 'O Come in equivocator, (knocking) Knock, knock, knock.'

The witches are equivocating ends who use words which appear to have one particular meaning at the time they are spoken but later on it is realized that the real meanings of their words are entirely different. Thus they tell Macbeth that he need have no fear till 'the Birnam wood moves to Dunsinare,' and that 'no man born of woman can harm Macbeth. The result is that Macbeth is deceived, has a wrong sense of security, and embarks on his bloody career. However, later on, when it is too late, he realizes that these words were deceptive that the witches are 'equivocating fiends'. Appearances are deceptive. Birnam wood does appear to be on the move, but in reality they are the branches of trees which Malcolm's army uses to camouflage their real numbers. Macduff who ultimately kills Macbeth, is the man not born of woman, for he was taken out of his mother's womb through an operation.

Macbeth now realizes the true nature of the witches. Their words which deceived him had in reality entirely different significance. Their words lead him to hope that he was invincible, but the hope was deceptive, for their words were mere equivocations. They deceived him and made a fool of him. The hospitality which Lady Macbeth shows to Duncan is yet another example of equivocation. Outwardly Lady Macbeth appears to be an ideal hostess. Everything that she and her husband call theirs, she says, actually belongs to Duncan. Indeed, Lady Macbeth professes the greatest possible loyalty to Duncan. But the reality is that she has already made up her mind to murder him. On hearing that the king is arriving to pass the night in their castle she refers to 'the fatal entrance of Duncan under my battlements.' When her husband arrives, she wastes no words but at once urges him to deceive others by putting on a false appearance.

It is noteworthy that much later in the play; Macbeth himself gives similar advice to Lady Macbeth. A little before the banquet to which Banquo has also been invited, Macbeth urges his wife to flatter Banquo because that is the need of the hour; inwardly, of course, Macbeth is full of resentment and hatred against Banquo. Macbeth thus speaks to his wife on this occasion. The portrayal of the character of Macbeth is marked by kind of duality or by a tendency on his part to equivocate. Not only does he expresses loyalty to Duncan and afterwards murders him with his own hands, he speaks of friendship and flattery to Banquo and afterwards has him murdered.

We can easily cite countless other examples of the contrast between appearance and reality that runs through the play. False face does again and again hide the truth that lies in the heart. This theme is constantly suggested by the cloaking and masking images

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which occur in such abundance and frequency. Macbeth appears to have imperial magnificence but in reality he is a 'dwarfish thief in a giant's robe.'

Check Your Progress

7. Comment on the element of the supernatural in the play.
8. Discuss the illusion of imperial magnificence in Macbeth.
9. Comment on the theme of appearance and reality.

2.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PORTER SCENE

Act II Scene III of the play begins with the incoherent ramblings of a drunken porter who has been awakened by a loud knocking at the gate of Macbeth's castle. He imagines that he is the porter of Hell gate, and that so many come to Hell that he has been constantly turning the key to open the gate he has therefore got tired of the job and would 'Devil-porter' 'it no longer, He then proceeds to enumerate the various persons for whom he opened the gates and who entered in. One of them was an equivocator, 'that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O Come in equivocator.' Another was an English tailor who stole from the cloth given to him to make a French hose. Another one was a farmer who hanged himself 'on the expectation of plenty'.

The scene has been criticized on a number of counts and has been regarded as an interpolation not written by Shakespeare but by some other lesser dramatist. No less a critic than Coleridge regards it as an interpolation, unworthy of Shakespeare. He writes, 'This low soliloquy of the porter and his few speeches afterwards I believe to have been written for the mob by some other hand.

This criticism of Coleridge has been generally rejected and rightly so. Mr Hales, who has discussed the question in a very convincing and scholarly manner, proves conclusively that the scene is Shakespeare's. He brings in five points in support of the genuineness of the scene:

1. The Porter's speech is an integral part of the play. It goes along with the knocking at the gate which no one will deny to be genuine.
2. It is necessary as a relief to the surrounding horror. The emotional contrast is deliberate, necessary, and quite in Shakespeare's manner.
3. It is necessary according to the law of contrast elsewhere observed by Shakespeare. It reminds us that in the midst of life, there is death, amidst tears, merriment.
4. The speech of the porter is dramatically relevant. It is a powerful piece of irony, especially his fancy that he is the porter of Hell.
5. Its style and language are Shakespearean. The passage is written in rhythmic prose, so usual with Shakespeare.
6. The scene provides the much needed dramatic relief, it serves to lessen the stress and strain caused by the murder of Duncan as also to heighten the horror of the scene which follows.

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This principle of contrast Shakespeare has used in this play as well as in other plays. Just as sickness heightens the blessing of health or night heightens the brightness of day, so also a scene in the comic vein relieves tragic tensions and also heightens the tragic-effect of the following scene or scenes. The dramatist has used this very principle of contrast in the scene in which Duncan, standing outside the castle of Macbeth, praises its pleasant calm and quite atmosphere, or in the scene in which Lady Macduff and her teen-aged son talk innocently, and with their prattle heighten the horror of the tragedy which is soon to overtake them. In both these cases an appeal is made to emotions entirely different from the tragic one, and in this way dramatic relief is provided and the ensuing tragedy is heightened. Therefore, we cannot agree with the critics who say that the porter-scene weakens the tragic- tensions.

Dramatic Irony

Besides the scene is a fine instance of dramatic irony. The Porter imagines himself as the gate-keeper of Hell and we see the ironic truth of such a claim because Macbeth has indeed made his castle a hell. The central word of the Porter's rambling talk is 'equivocator'. He welcomes to Hell various deceivers, people who have played with the truth to suit their own purposes, and we recognize Macbeth as the absolute equivocator of the play, particularly in this very scene where his elaborate words seem horribly deceitful. The Porter acts as an oblique commentator on the murder and Macbeth's descent into Hell. The very roughness and comedy of his act increases the gruesomeness of the murder.

It is also a dramatic necessity, for it gives Macbeth time enough to change his dress, and get ready to receive his visitors. Therefore, we cannot agree with the view that it is an interpolation. Such a scene alone would have served the purpose, and Shakespeare with the foresight of genius provided it.

Use of dramatic irony is much more frequent and intensive in Macbeth than in the other tragedies.'

Dramatic irony may be defined as the introduction of actions and situations or the use of words, the real significance of which is not realized by the other characters on the stage, or by the speaker himself but it is realized by the audience or the readers. Sometimes the real significance of words, actions and situations is realized only at a later stage in the play, and hence what happens later on becomes an ironic comment on the earlier words and actions. It is also called Sophoclean irony, for Sophocles, the Greek dramatist, had made more intensive and frequent use of it in his plays than any other dramatist.

Shakespeare has used this type of irony more frequently and abundantly in Macbeth than in his other plays. From the beginning to the end, the play is steeped in irony. The real significance of words, actions, situations, etc., is not realized by the actors on the stage at the time they are spoken or done, but becomes clear only at a much later point in the action. The contrast between appearance and reality is thus stressed and the impression of 'mysterious fatal forces hovering round man and driving him to his doom is thus heightened. The extensive use of this kind of irony in the play serves to intensify its atmosphere of supernatural dread and horror.

He does not know that the new Thane of Cawdor will deceive his 'bosom interest` more grievously than the first. Duncan thinks that it is the old Thane of Cawdor who had betrayed his absolute trust, hardly realizing that his treachery would pale into nothingness before that of the new Thane. He does not realize that Macbeth's castle is hell, where he would be brutally murdered by the new Thane of Cawdor and his wife, whom the

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gentle, unsuspecting king calls, 'most kind hostess', and sends to her costly presents. Later in the play, 'The Porter imagines himself to be the gate-keeper of Hell and we see the ironic truth of such a claim because Macbeth has indeed made his castle a hell. The central word of the Porter's rambling talk is 'equivocator'. He welcomes to Hell various deceivers, people who have played with the truth to suit their own purposes, and we recognize that Macbeth is the absolute equivocator of the play, particularly in this very scene where his elaborate words seem horribly deceitful.

She does not realize then, that, in spite of herself she would be driven to think of them after these ways, and that she will become mad. Her off-hand dismissal of Macbeth's perception that his hand cannot be cleansed even by all the water of great Neptune's ocean, with the words, 'A little water clears us of this deed,' acquires an ironic significance in her cry 'What will these hands n'er be clean ?' 'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.' Further Macbeth had asked Banquo, to fail not to come to his feast and Banquo had answered that he will not. He keeps his word and comes at the feast but in what an unexpected manner. The ghost enters just when Macbeth has finished his hypocritical words that the one thing lacking to complete his happiness is the presence of 'the graced person of Banquo', It enters a second time when he expresses the hypocritical wish, 'would he were here.'

The prophecies of the weird sisters and the way in which they are fulfilled are ironical. Macbeth had never expected that they will be fulfilled in such a way. By his action he brings about results contrary to his expectations, He murders Banquo to make his throne secure, but this very murder creates suspicion in the minds of the assembled guests, and makes his position insecure. He shuts himself in Dunsinane, thereby drawing the English army towards it. He had felt himself safe there, for he had never dreamed that the Birnam Wood would move, but it does move, and so in a strange, never dreamed of way, the prophecy of the witches comes true. He feels secure because no man of women born can harm him, and he grows ruthless, bloody, and bold. The irony here lies in the fact that promises made to the ear are being broken to the hope.

Thus Macbeth is steeped in dramatic irony from the beginning to the end.

2.11 SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF SOLILOQUY

Macbeth is the only tragedy of Shakespeare in which the tragic hero turns a villain and yet he retains our sympathy up to the very end. Even when Macbeth makes Scotland bleed, he does not entirely lose our sympathy. This feat of dramatic art has been achieved by giving us a peep into his soul and thus showing to us his inner agony and spiritual torture. This insight into his soul is given to us through his various soliloquies at different stages of his career of murder and bloodshed. Thus his soliloquies are the windows through which we get a glimpse of his inner suffering and realize that, though a villain he may be, he has also much good in him which fails to assert itself owing to circumstances beyond his control.

The first real soliloquy of Macbeth comes in Act l, scene vii. It reveals, on the one hand, Macbeth's desire to be a king and also a desire to achieve the crown by murder, but also that he is afraid of the pricks of his conscience, and not so much of the penalties of law or the punishment in the other world. It reveals Macbeth's sensitive conscience. He cannot murder his own king—a king who is good, virtuous and generous, a king who

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is his guest; moreover a king who has done no harm to him but has rewarded him with honour and respect. It shows that Macbeth is gifted with poetic imagination and his imagination works through pictures. His imagination is the handmaid of his conscience. This soliloquy places Macbeth on a much higher level than Lady Macbeth, who is more ambitious than her husband, more cruel and more monstrous, and she has no sense of decency or justice or pity.

The next soliloquy of Macbeth, comes in scene I of Act II, just before the murder. Macbeth suffers from hallucination. The thought of the crime he is about to commit has driven him almost to the verge of lunacy. He sees that dagger with which he is going to murder King Duncan. Such hallucinations come to the conscientious souls that are about to commit a great crime for the first time in their life. This soliloquy reveals the struggle which is still going on in the mind of Macbeth: and it, therefore, gives a further glimpse into the character of Macbeth.

In his Soliloquy which occurs in scene i of Act III of the play, Macbeth prepares himself for the murder of Banquo because he cannot bear the idea that Banquo's sons should be kings. Besides, Macbeth feels insecure so long as Banquo and his son are alive; and; therefore, he decides to get both the father and son murdered as soon as possible. The soliloquy reveals Macbeth's fear and insecurity which prevents sleep and tortures his soul, as well as his degradation.

In his soliloquy, at the end of Act IV, Scene ii, Macbeth expresses his determination not to lose a single moment in putting his thought to action- that is, to order at once for the massacre of the family of Macduff to have his revenge upon Macduff This soliloquy reveals his motif for the commission of further crimes.

Macbeth's last two soliloquies beginning: 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow', and 'I have lived long enough' reveal Macbeth's frustration and disillusionment. He realizes that his life has fallen into the scar, and that he has lost all the good things of life.

Though most of the soliloquies in the play belong to Macbeth, Lady Macbeth too utters one important soliloquy, just after receiving the news that Duncan is to be her guest that night. She calls upon the murdering ministers, the powers of darkness, to unsex her, and the very violence of this invocation is a measure of the womanly instincts that have to be suppressed. The violence done to nature in such suppression results in complete nervous break-down and we witness the terrible spectacle of the sleep-walking scene.

Thus the combined effect of the soliloquies of Macbeth is that we acquire a better knowledge of what is happening to his soul. It is through the use of the soliloquy that his inner struggles and frustrations have been revealed. We realize his essential nobility and also that he has been pushed into his career of crime by his vaulting ambition, his poetic imagination, and the combined solicitations and exhortations of these equivocating trends the witches and his 'Fiend-like Queen'. For this Lady Macbeth also is referred to as 'the fourth witch' of the play.

In short, the soliloquy is a potent means of self-revelation and the dramatist has made good use of it in the present play. It is largely through the use of the soliloquy that what is essentially a melodramatic story of crime and bloodshed has been raised to the level of one of the greatest tragedies of the world.

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2.12 A STUDY OF FEAR RATHER THAN AMBITION

The hero of a Shakespearean tragedy is always an exceptional individual both, socially and personally, and Macbeth is no exception in this respect. He is a brave, heroic warrior and the king refers to him as his 'peerless kinsmen'. But like the other tragic heroes, he also has his own 'tragic flaw', a dominant trait of character which compels him to act in some particular way. This 'tragic flaw' proves fatal for him in the circumstances in which he is placed. In the case of Macbeth, the 'tragic flaw` is his 'vaulting ambition'. He yearns for the crown of Scotland; it seems that he has often discussed the matter with his wife, who is equally ambitious, if not for herself at least for her husband. It is this evil within him which makes him start at the prophecy of the witches, and also to think of murdering Duncan, his relative, his king, as well as his guest for the night. Not only has Macbeth vaulting ambition for himself he is also ambitious to found a dynasty of kings. This makes him war with the future. His war with the future is symbolized by the child or baby, and baby—images recur with great frequency and the witches show him apparitions of two children, and a number of kings, who are the descendants of Banquo. Therefore, he decides to wage a war against the future and defeat the prophecy of the witches. Banquo is brutally murdered but his son Fleance escapes, thus symbolizing the truth that the future would always elude him and so to war with the future is futile. However, he fails to realize this truth and the murder of Macduff's wife and children soon follows. He rushes on his bloody career till the very end. He and his Queen both die childless, defeated by the future.

Besides his 'vaulting ambition', which makes him a ruthless murderer and a thorough villain, he also has weakness of will. That is why he yields to the suggestion of the witches, and Lady Macbeth called, 'the fourth witch', is able to overcome his resistance by 'the valour of her tongue'. She taunts him and thus succeeds in persuading him to act against his better judgment and commit the murder. He understands clearly the full enormity of the crime, yet because of his lack of will-power, he yields to his wife and commits the murder.

Besides his 'vaulting ambition' and weakness of will, Macbeth also has the imagination of a born poet. Macbeth is essentially a melodramatic tale of murder, but it is raised to the level of pure tragedy by the poetic imagination of its central figure, His poetic imagination makes him see visions of the terrible consequences of his crime and it intensities its horrors. In the words of A.C. Bradley, 'This bold ambitious man of action has, within certain limits, the imagination of a poet—an imagination, on the one hand, extremely sensitive to impressions of certain kind, and, on the other, productive of violent disturbance both of mind and body'. Thus he is imaginative, he is inclined to be superstitious and, therefore, profoundly influenced by the predictions of the witches. Criminal thoughts are at once aroused. Secondly, because he is imaginative, he is deterred and horrified at the thought of crime. His imagination is the handmaid of his conscience and honour; it conjures up images which alarm and horrify.

Macbeth's imagination is pictorial and it is in conflict with his ambition. As he hurries from crime to crime his soul never ceases to bar his advance with shapes of terror or to clamour in his ears that he is murdering his peace and casting away his eternal jewel. 'Palpable dangers leave him unmoved, what terrifies him is always the image of his guilty heart or bloody deed, or some other image which drives from them its terror or gloom. It is this imagination which makes him see the blood-stained dagger just before the murder, which makes him hear cherub in voices crying out against the murder or conjure up visions of naked new—born babes blowing the 'horrid deed in every eye'. It is this poetic imagination which makes him hear voices pronouncing upon him the doom of sleeplessness. It is this imagination which makes him see the ghost of Banquo with twenty gashes on his head, and the blood—stained dagger.

This conflict between his imagination and his ambition results in heart- rending spiritual anguish: his soul gradually falls to pieces and that is the real tragedy. Whenever, his imagination is stirring, we feel suspense, horror, and pity, but as soon it is dormant, these feelings vanish and he becomes a brutal, pitiless murderer. This is so because the will to live is mighty in him. He is not prepared to lose the glittering prize, the worldly power despite his sleepless torture, and the scorpions in his mind. He fails to understand his own true nature, and interprets his sleepless torture as resulting from a sense of insecurity and the fear of retaliation. Hence his ruthless career of crime despite inner remorse, and, hence his gradual descent into Hell. It is an engrossing spectacle, and psychologically it is perhaps the most remarkable exhibition of the development of a character to be found in Shakespeare's tragedies (Bradley). We admire and pity the man, while we condemn and abhor the murderer. Macbeth is never completely de-humanized despite his manifold crimes, and despite his crimes he never loses our sympathy.

Macbeth is a complex work of art and tragedy in it results, not from any single cause, but from a number of causes acting and enacting on each other.

2.13 POETIC JUSTICE IN MACBETH

Poetic justice may be defined as the distribution of rewards and punishment strictly in accordance with the merits of the person concerned. The virtuous are rewarded and the wicked punished proportionately to the wickedness or goodness of their actions. It is called poetic justice because poets and dramatists introduced it in their works in the interest of morality. Virtue was rewarded and wickedness was always punished so that the audience and readers may imitate the virtuous and avoid the wicked. However, such poetic justice may be possible in the ordered world of art but it is not a fact of nature. In life, virtue is not always rewarded and then the wicked prosper. Therefore, Shakespeare who was a greater artist does not introduce such perfect justice in his tragedies. As Dr. Johnson points out, he holds a mirror to nature, and is more true to life than the ancient masters. Hence it is that in his plays, as in real life, the good and the virtuous are often crushed, and they do not get the prosperity which they deserve. But this does not mean that the ultimate power in Shakespeare's tragic world is not moral. It is certainly moral, it is inimical to evil, it reacts against evil and ultimately evil is expelled and destroyed. But along with evil much that is good is also destroyed. There is only partial justice in a Shakespearean tragedy: evil is suitably punished but virtue, instead of being rewarded is crushed Macbeth is an exception in this respect, for in it he comes very close to the observation of poetic justice.

Macbeth is the only tragedy of Shakespeare 'which has a villain or a criminal as its hero'. In all other tragedies the hero is on the side of the moral order, but in this tragedy the hero turns a villain and violates the moral order. Othello and Lear, despite their trivial faults, are still, on the side of good. They are not wicked and hence when they suffer, we feel that their suffering is wholly disproportionate to their minor shortcomings. We feel justice has not been done to them. Macbeth, on the other hand, turns a villain early in the play. He violates most flagrantly all laws of morality and decency, hence when he and Lady Macbeth are punished the feeling is that they have been justly punished for the crimes they had committed. The canons of poetic justice are fully satisfied.

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Macbeth is guilty of committing the most heinous crimes. He murders his king who is old, benevolent and generous, who has suitably rewarded him and reposed full confidence in him, and who is, moreover, his guest in double trust at the time. Lady Macbeth as if she were a fourth witch, chastises him with valour of her tongue, and the crime, which might otherwise have remained undone, is committed. Macbeth murders Duncan in sleep, and swiftly follows his punishment that henceforth 'he would sleep no more.' His mind is full of scorpions and henceforth he knows no rest or peace of mind either by day or by night. Lady Macbeth, too, soon realizes the futility of the crown that they have obtained through crime and soliloquies, 'Naught is bad, all is spent.' She suffers, like her husband, the tortures of Hell, a glimpse of which we get in the sleep-walking scene. Poetic justice is done to her; and her punishment is so terrible that we almost forget her pride and feel pity for her. Macbeth descends deeper and deeper into hell. He is haunted by a feeling of insecurity and fear. He gets Banquo murdered, for he feared him, but it is the ghost of the murdered Banquo which becomes the means of first arousing the suspicions of the guests assembled at the Banquet. Banquo's son Fleance escapes to be the father of 'the future kings of Scotland. Macduff denies his person at Macbeth's biding and flees to Scotland. In wrath, the tyrant has his revenge upon his family, and has his wife and child brutally murdered. However, the sin committed comes back to him. The people are horrified and dissatisfaction against him increases; Macduff becomes the means through which nemesis overtakes him. It is he who kills the usurper in single combat, and restores the throne to its lawful heir.

Check Your Progress

10. What is Macbeth's 'tragic flaw'?
11. Discuss the element of poetic justice in Macbeth.

ACTIVITY 5

Read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and write an essay comparing the two tragic heroes.

Did You Know

Macbeth was thought to be written just after the Gunpowder Plot (which was a failed assassination attempt against King James I of England and VI of Scotland by a group of provincial English Catholics led by Robert Catesby) and the central theme was that of regicide (murdering a King). Many actors superstitiously refused to mention the name of Macbeth unless in performance as it was seen as bad luck (regicide was considered to be a demonic act). This was because of a number of coincidental tragic accidents that were associated with the performance of the play, starting with the apparent fact that Macbeth was the play being performed on the night that the original Globe theatre burned down.

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2.14 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is one of the greatest tragic plays ever written.
- It is set in Scotland and narrates the life and times of a Scottish lord named Macbeth.
- Essentially, the play dramatizes the corroding psychological and political effects produced when Macbeth decides on the path of evil as the way to fulfill his ambition for power.
- Macbeth has all the salient features of a Shakespearean tragedy.
- It is the only tragedy in which Shakespeare has introduced the witches. The witches impart the touch of mystery, awe and supernatural dread to it. It is a tale of murder but the dramatist has made out of it a great dramatic poem.
- It was Shakespeare's usual practice to bring together contrasted characters, so that one served as a foil to the other. In the present play, Macbeth and Banquo are such characters and Banquo, an essentially honest man, serves to throw into sharp relief the evil that is there in Macbeth.
- Macduff is the man not born of woman, is as brave and heroic as Banquo and Macbeth, but he remains honest throughout.
- He suspects Macbeth from the very beginning, and so does not go to his coronation at Sconce, nor does he come to the banquet given by Macbeth to celebrate the occasion.
- His behaviour is in sharp contrast with that of Banquo. The result is that Macbeth is against him and his doubts and fears are confirmed when the witches tell him to beware.
- The world of a Shakespearean tragedy is essentially a moral world. The ruling power is a moral one, but along with the good it also gives birth to Evil.
- There is always a conflict between the forces of evil and the forces of good, or the forces of life and the forces of death. In the end evil is destroyed and good prevails.
- Life-forces are vividly and clearly contrasted with evil, with forces of death, darkness and disorder, and creation is opposed by destruction.
- Fear, a death-force, is at the very heart of the play and it is represented as a negation of warrior-honour which can be won only through courage resulting in heroic action.
- There is a clear well-marked rhythm of courage-fear-courage.
- Closely allied to the theme of warrior-honour and its negation is the theme of imperial magnificence and the illusion of it.
- Macbeth attains to kingship, yet he never really possesses it. He is never properly a king; his kingship is a mockery.
- He has the scepter, the crown, the dress, in short all the outward paraphernalia of kingship, but it is undone and negative by the dark evil within him, by the forces of death and disorder.

NOTES

- Sleep and feasting are forces of good and they are closely associated with each other. Both are creative, restorative, forces of nature.
- Macbeth and his Queen are deprived of both during the play's action. Feasting and sleep are twin life-givers.
- Macbeth's sleeplessness is retributive. Macbeth murdered Duncan in sleep, after feasting him. It was a blow delivered at 'innocent sleep; sleep, the gentle nurse of life.
- Macbeth does more than murder a living being: he murders life itself because he murdered hospitality and sleep; therefore his punishment is a living death, without peaceful sleep.
- The evil in Macbeth also attacks the forces of life represented by creation and the innocence of nature; it is hostile to all that is creative, natural and innocent, and to birth and childhood which are life- forces and so also forces of good.
- There are suggestions in the early part of the play of Nature's innocence and she is presented in all her native integrity and peace and charm, and creative beauty.
- There is strong emphasis on 'senses', 'wooing' and 'delicate' air, and the procreant cradle, the thought of 'breeding'.
- One of the major themes of the play is the contrast between appearance and reality, again and again it is stressed that 'things are not what they appear to be.'
- There is complete deterioration of values and as the witches put it in the play, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair.'
- Macbeth is the only tragedy of Shakespeare in which the tragic hero turns a villain and yet he retains our sympathy up to the very end. Even when Macbeth makes Scotland bleed, he does not entirely lose our sympathy.

2.15 KEY TERMS

- **Regicide:** Refers to the act of killing a king
- **Supernatural:** A vision or even which is beyond the explanation of science, in Shakespeare's Macbeth, the three witches are the manifestation of the supernatural
- **Prophecy:** Prediction of the future
- **The myth of the three daughters of Zeus:** In Greek mythology, the white-robed Moirae (The Fates) were the personifications of destiny. The Greek word *moira* literally means a part or portion, and by extension one's portion in life or destiny. They controlled the metaphorical thread of life of every mortal and immortal from birth to death (and beyond). Even the gods feared the Moirae. Zeus also was subject to their power

  The three Moirae were:

  1. Clotho "spinner" - spun the thread of life from her distaff onto her spindle.
  2. Lachesis "drawer of lots" - measured the thread of life with her rod.
  3. Atropos "inevitable" - was the cutter of the thread of life. She chose the manner of a person's death. When she cut the thread with "her abhorred shears", someone on Earth died.

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- **Dramatic irony:** A literary technique used in Greek theatre through which the audience gets to know the full intensity of the character's thoughts and actions even though the character remains unaware
- **Soliloquy:** The act of vocalizing one's thoughts regardless of any one else's presence

2.16 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The theme of regicide precipitates the narrative of the play Macbeth.
2. Typically, tragedy depicts the downfall of a hero or a noble man through a combination of fate, hubris (pride) and hamartia (a tragic flaw inherent in the character). The tragic hero's powerful wish to achieve some goal inevitably encounters limits, usually those of human frailty and engenders destruction. Macbeth is different as he sustains our sympathy despite his actions. Macbeth turns a villain soon after the play opens; this is not the case with Hamlet, Lear or Othello. The Fate which overtakes him is not undeserved; Macbeth is the only tragedy in which the suffering of the hero is proportionate to his wickedness. It is the only tragedy in which poetic justice is meted out to the hero.
3. Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, 'a play which leaves the impression of tremendous vehement speed'. A number of battles involving various people over a considerable period of time are concentrated in Act I of the play into the sustained heroism of Macbeth. Always throughout the play, the focus of our attention is fixed firmly on Macbeth. In Act I, Scene M it is Macbeth's character that Lady Macbeth analyses. In Act IV, Scene III, set in the English Court, where we have a long discussion between Macduff and Malcolm on the subjects of loyalty and good kings, Macbeth is never out of our minds.
4. Action in the first part of the tragedy followed directly upon the prediction of the witches who promised him the throne. The witches appear again after the banquet-scene, make fresh promises, and thus again drive Macbeth forward. This repetition, this second appearance of the witches, produces a feeling of Fate. It also arouses expectation as to the way in which the action would develop. The readers are curious to know how Macbeth would react this time to the prediction of the witches.
5. It was Shakespeare's usual practice to bring together contrasted characters, so that one served as a foil to the other. In the present play, Macbeth and Banquo are such characters and Banquo, an essentially honest man, serves to throw into sharp relief the evil that is there in Macbeth. Banquo like Macbeth is a brave General and heroic warrior. Both Ross and the wounded soldier praise his courage and heroism, as they do that of Macbeth himself Duncan refers to them both as our captains and considers both of them equally worthy of his love and regard. But here the similarity between the two ceases. Banquo is honest, while there is an element of evil in Macbeth. This is clearly highlighted by their different reactions to the prophecy of the witches.
6. Macduff is the man not born of woman, is as brave and heroic as Banquo and Macbeth, and he remains honest throughout. He suspects Macbeth from the very beginning, and so does not go to his coronation at Sconce, nor does he come to the banquet given by Macbeth to celebrate the occasion. His behaviour is in sharp

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contrast with that of Banquo. The result is that Macbeth is against him and his doubts and fears are confirmed when the witches tell him to beware.

7. The supernatural in the play has been closely integrated both with character and action; it is not merely a horrible, crude bloodcurdling phenomenon which it is in the works of his lesser contemporaries. Shakespeare has given to his audiences what they wanted, but in a more purified and exalted form.
8. Closely allied to the theme of warrior-honour and its negation is the theme of imperial magnificence and the illusion of it. Macbeth attains to kingship, yet he never really possesses it. He is never properly a king; his kingship is a mockery. He has the scepter, the crown, the dress, in short all the outward paraphernalia of kingship, but it is undone and negative by the dark evil within him, by the forces of death and disordèr. He fails to attain solid magnificence which should accompany kingship; what he gets is illusory and deceptive, a mere mark or cloak thrown over his actual pettiness and meanness. Outward royalty is, by itself a nothing in comparison with nature's kingliness. So he fears, envies, hates Banquo who has the reality of honour whereas he has but a mockery of it. He envies Banquo's posterity, their royal destiny won in terms of nature, not in terms of crime; and is maddened at the insecure mockery of his own kingship.
9. One of the major themes of the play is the contrast between appearance and reality, again and again it is stressed that 'things are not what they appear to be.' There is complete deterioration of values and as the witches put it in the play, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair.' On his first appearance on the stage these words are closely echoed by Macbeth when he says. 'So fair and foul a day, I have never seen.' Thus the contrast between appearance and reality, which is one of the dominant themes of the play, has been stressed from the very beginning. This theme is first suggested when Duncan remarks that the Thane of Cawdor appeared to be so honest and loyal, but he was a traitor in reality. As if to emphasize the deceptive nature of appearances this remark of the king is followed immediately by the stage-direction 'Enter Macbeth etc.' The poor, trusting Duncan does not realize that the new thane of Cawdor is as treacherous as the previous one and that even at the moment, he is planning to murder him.
10. Macbeth's tragic flaw is his 'vaulting ambition' which makes him a ruthless murderer and a thorough villain. Besides this he also has weakness of will.
11. Poetic justice may be defined as the distribution of rewards and punishment strictly in accordance with the merits of the person concerned. The virtuous are rewarded and the wicked punished proportionately to the wickedness or goodness of their actions. It is called poetic justice because poets and dramatists introduced it in their works in the interest of morality.

    Macbeth is the only tragedy of Shakespeare 'which has a villain or a criminal as its hero'. In all other tragedies the hero is on the side of the moral order, but in this tragedy the hero turns a villain and violates the moral order. Macbeth is guilty of committing the most heinous crimes. He murders his king who is old, benevolent and generous, who has suitably rewarded him and reposed full confidence in him, and who is, moreover, his guest in double trust at the time. However, the sin committed comes back to him. The people are horrified and dissatisfaction against him increases; Macduff becomes the means through which nemesis overtakes him. It is he who kills the usurper in single combat, and restores the throne to its lawful heir.

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2.17 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Comment on Macbeth as a typical Shakespearean tragedy.
2. Give a brief outline of the plot of the play.
3. Discuss Banquo as a foil to Macbeth.
4. What is the relevance of the conflict between good and evil in the play.
5. 'The opposition of life and death forces is strongly marked in the play' G. Wilson Knight. Comment.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Comment on the relevance of sleep and feasting.
2. Macbeth is a play which juxtaposes the dual concerns of creation and destruction.
3. Discuss the notion of valour with reference to Macbeth and Banquo.
4. Discus the theme of equivocation in the Porter's speech.
5. Comment on the symbolic relevance of Lady Macbeth's speech.

2.18 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 DOCTOR FAUSTUS BY CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Structure

3.0 Introduction
3.1 Unit Objectives
3.2 An Introduction to the Play
3.3 A Scene-By-Scene Interpretation
3.4 Chief Character Sketches
  3.4.1 Faustus
  3.4.2 Mephistopheles
3.5 The Element of Autobiography in Doctor Faustus
3.6 Doctor Faustus as Morality Play
3.7 Allegorical Symbolism in Doctor Faustus
3.8 Summary
3.9 Key Terms
3.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
3.11 Questions and Exercises
3.12 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Born in the same year as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe was a well known actor, poet and playwright. Marlowe's education was such that people thought he would enter into the service of the ministry but Marlowe chose to pursue his literary ambitions. After leaving Cambridge, Marlowe migrated to London where he realized his ambition of becoming a playwright. In his short life and career, Marlowe produced seven plays which gained immediate popularity. His extensive use of the blank verse (non-rhyming lines of iambic pentameter) was a fresh contribution to the stage which later even Shakespeare incorporated in his writings. Embroiled in several skirmishes, Marlowe's life and career was brutally cut short on 30 May 1593. After being released from prison for heresy, Marlowe got killed in a tavern accident leaving many scholars to speculate the possibility of murder endorsed by the government. However, there is little evidence to support these arguments.

In all probability, *Doctor Faustus* was written in 1592. The central theme of the play—of selling one's soul to the devil was considered to be an old Christian folktale; one that had become associated with an astrologer of ill repute who lived in Germany in the 1500s. The immediate source of Marlowe's play seems to be the anonymous German work *Historia von D. Iohan Fausten* of 1587, which was translated into English in 1592, and from which Marlowe lifted the bulk of the plot for his drama. There have been several literary representations of Faust prior to Marlowe's play; *Doctor Faustus* is the first famous version of the story. Subsequent versions include the long and famous poem *Faust* by the nineteenth-century Romantic writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, as well as operas by Charles Gounod and Arrigo Boito and a symphony by Hector Berlioz. Meanwhile, the English lexicon recognizes the phrase 'Faustian bargain' as a reference to any deal made for a short-term gain with great costs in the long run.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Summarize the acts of the play
- Critically analyze all the major characters
- Discuss the element of autobiography
- Support the argument of Doctor Faustus being a Morality play
- Identify the allegorical symbolism in Doctor Faustus

3.2 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

Christopher Marlowe was born at Canterbury, England, in February 1564 to John Marlowe, a shoemaker and his wife, Catherine. Writing plays and poems was the favourite leisure occupation of the young boy, who grew up to be a great scholar, dramatist and poet. Ben Jonson praised his blank verse, calling it 'Marlowe's mighty line.' Marlowe died an unnatural death on 30 May 1593.

Like Sanskrit drama, early English drama too had its source in religion. The earliest English plays were generally of two types – 'The Mysteries' and 'The Miracles'. The first one was based on the anecdotes of the Bible, while the second type dealt with the lives of saints. These plays were acted chiefly in twelfth-century England. In the beginning, these plays were acted in the church, then in the churchyards and later, on the stages erected in the open air. The church had clear control over early English drama.

With the passage of time, plays became secular by abandoning scriptural and legendary characters. Drama now started using symbolic characters with a view to amuse and instruct the audience. 'Miracle plays' took a new shape, and came to be known as 'Morality plays'. Latin was replaced by English and the common man was allowed to take part in plays, in place of the clergy. Morality plays were also didactic in nature like the 'mysteries' as the characters represented vice and virtue. 'Everyman' is the best example of a 'Morality play'.

'Masque' was another form of drama. In the beginning, these were dumb shows and gradually music and dances were added to them, which made them very popular. After the Reformation, the public rejected the Mystery and Morality plays. They wanted plays to depict human life as it was. A new form therefore entered the dramatic world, and this was the Interlude. It was a sort of diversion from the seriousness of Miracle and Morality plays. John Heywood was the father of Interludes. His characters were real men and women as opposed to abstractions and allegorical figures.

The Renaissance and the subsequent renewed interest in classical drama of Greece opened a new chapter in English drama. First there was Comedy and then Tragedy and after that a period of conflict between Classicism and Romanticism. Authors such as Sir Philip Sydney stood for classicism, advocating the imitation of ancient models of Greece. On the other hand, there were people who did not like to follow the old classical traditions. They wanted to amuse the common man with plots and styles of their own. These were the Romantics. While Ben Jonson followed Classicism, Shakespeare preferred Romanticism. By the end of the Elizabethan age, Romantic drama had taken a firm root.

This happened due to the efforts of a handful of young playwrights, just preceding Shakespeare, called the University Wits – Greene, Peele, Lodge, Nash and Kyd. They were called so as they were a group of University men who had been trained in the Classics and had learned much there about dramatic workmanship. Christopher Marlowe was the last of these Wits. Till the time of Marlowe, English stage was enchained by Medievalism. Marlowe revolted against the conventions of Medievalism and paved the way for Shakespeare.

Thus, the English drama began its journey as a Miracle play, which depicted the legends of saints. After the Miracle plays, the Mystery plays became popular which represented a theme from the Bible. After that came Morality plays, with an Interlude. At the beginning of the Renaissance, Comedies and Tragedies were written, and then came the University Wits and Marlowe.

3.3 A SCENE-BY-SCENE INTERPRETATION

CHORUS. Not marching in the fields of Thrasymene,
Where Mars did mate the warlike Carthagens;
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, gentles,—we must now perform
The form of Faustus' fortunes, 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 call'd Rhodes:
At riper years, to Wittenberg he went,
Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up.
So much he profits in divinity,
That shortly he was grac'd with doctor's name,
Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute
In th' heavenly matters of theology;
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.
[Exit.]

NOTES

The Prologue

The poet does not intend to sing of love affairs nor of great heroes. According to the chorus the play is about the ups and down of Doctor Faustus. Having been born of humble parents in Germany, he went to Wittenberg for higher studies. Very soon he became well-versed in Theology and was awarded the Doctor's degree. In many other subjects too Faustus became a scholar. He now wanted to attain superhuman knowledge for which he started studying back magic. His condition became like that of Icarus (a legendary Greek character) who wished to fly to the sun with the help of wings that were stuck to his body with wax. When he came too close to the sun, the wax melted, the wings fell off and Icarus fell into the sea and was drowned.

Act I, Scene I

FAUSTUS discovered in his study.:

FAUSTUS. Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin
To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess:
Having commenc'd, be a divine in show,
Yet level at the end of every art,
And live and die in Aristotle's works.
Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravish'd me!
Bene disserere est finis logices.
Is, to dispute well, logic's chiefest end?
Affords this art no greater miracle?
Then read no more; thou hast attain'd that end:
A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit:
Bid Economy farewell, and Galen come:
Be a physician, Faustus; heap up gold,
And be eterniz'd for some wondrous cure:
Summum bonum medicinoe sanitas,
The end of physic is our body's health.
Why, Faustus, hast thou not attain'd that end?
Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,
Whereby whole cities have escap'd the plague,
And thousand desperate maladies been cur'd?
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.
Couldst thou make men to live eternally,
Or, being dead, raise them to life again,
Then this profession were to be esteem'd.
Physic, farewell! Where is Justinian?

ACT I Scene I

Sitting in his study, Faustus is talking to himself. He has mastered many subjects and now he is assessing the comparative value of Philosophy, Logic, Theology, Law and Medicine. Logic attracts him but it is just to argue well and nothing else. The aim of medicine is only to keep health in good condition. Law is nothing but to settle disputes.

Theology is not unambiguous. If one masters all these subjects, thinks Faustus, he is still a common man. So after prolonged rumination Faustus makes up his mind to study the black art of magic, as that will bring him both honour and power. Then he asks his servant, Wagner, to request his friends Valdes and Cornelius to come to him. They are well-versed in magic. So their advice will be of immense value to Faustus.

When he is alone, the Good Angel and the Evil Angel come before him. The Good Angel advises Faustus to put the book of magic aside and study The Bible, as the book of magic will bring the anger of God upon his soul. The Evil Angel, on the contrary, tempts Faustus to study black magic so that he may become as powerful as God. The Angels depart and Faustus decides to study black magic so that he achieves supernatural powers. He dreams of having the wealth of India, pearls of the ocean, delicacies from the four corners of the world, answers to every question and much more.

Meanwhile, his friends Valdes and Cornelius arrive. Faustus tells them that he has decided to study black magic. He requests them for their guidance, to which they gladly agree, adding that the spirits will be at his beck and call. He asks his friends to demonstrate to him how to conjure up the spirits of the dead. Valdes advises him to go to some lonely grove with some books of magic. Faustus is determined to call up the spirits that very night even if it costs him his life.

Act I, Scene II

Enter two SCHOLARS.:

FIRST SCHOLAR. I wonder what's become of Faustus, that was wont to make ur schools ring with sic probo.

SECOND SCHOLAR. That shall we presently know; here comes his boy.

Enter WAGNER.:

FIRST SCHOLAR. How now, sirrah! where's thy master?

WAGNER. God in heaven knows.

SECOND SCHOLAR. Why, dost not thou know, then?

WAGNER. Yes, I know; but that follows not.

FIRST SCHOLAR. Go to, sirrah! leave your jesting, and tell us where he is.

WAGNER. That follows not by force of argument, which you, being licentiates, should stand upon: therefore acknowledge your error, and be attentive.

SECOND SCHOLAR. Then you will not tell us?

WAGNER. You are deceived, for I will tell you: yet, if you were not dunces, you would never ask me such a question; for is he not corpus naturale? and is not that mobile? then wherefore should you ask me such a question? But that I am by nature phlegmatic, slow to wrath, and prone to lechery (to love, I would say), it were not for you to come within forty foot of the place of execution, although I do not doubt but to see you both hanged the next sessions. Thus having triumphed over you, I will set my countenance like a precisian, and begin to speak thus:—

Truly, my dear brethren, my master is within at dinner, with Valdes and Cornelius, as this wine, if it could speak, would inform your worships: and so, the Lord bless you, preserve you, and keep you, my dear brethren!

[Exit.]

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[Exit.]

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FIRST SCHOLAR. O Faustus!
Then I fear that which I have long suspected,
That thou art fall'n into that damned art
For which they two are infamous through the world.
SECOND SCHOLAR. Were he a stranger, not allied to me,
The danger of his soul would make me mourn.
But, come, let us go and inform the Rector:
It may be his grave counsel may reclaim him.
FIRST SCHOLAR. I fear me nothing will reclaim him now.
SECOND SCHOLAR. Yet let us see what we can do.
[Exeunt.]

ACT I Scene II

Two scholars, friends to Faustus, are lost in conversation near Faustus' house. They feel that there is surely something wrong with Faustus as he is not seen in the University. They ask Wagner the whereabouts of his master and his reply is, 'God in Heaven knows.' Seeing them perplexed the servant tells them that his master is dining with his friends and that they should not disturb him. Feeling that Faustus has fallen into bad company, they decide to approach the Rector and request him to discourage Faustus from the evil path of magic.

Act I, Scene III

Enter FAUSTUS.
FAUSTUS. Now that the gloomy shadow of the night,
Longing to view Orion's drizzling look,
Leaps from th' antartic world unto the sky,
And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath,
Faustus, begin thine incantations,
And try if devils will obey thy hest,
Seeing thou hast pray'd and sacrific'd to them.
Within this circle is Jehovah's name,
Forward and backward anagrammatiz'd,
Th' abbreviated names of holy saints,
Figures of every adjunct to the heavens,
And characters of signs and erring stars,
By which the spirits are enforc'd to rise:
Then fear not, Faustus, to be resolute,
And try the utmost magic can perform.
[Thunder.]

Enter MEPHISTOPHILIS.:
I charge thee to return, and change thy shape;
Thou art too ugly to attend on me:
Go, and return an old Franciscan friar;
That holy shape becomes a devil best.
[Exit MEPHISTOPHILIS.]
Re-enter MEPHISTOPHILIS like a Franciscan friar.:
MEPHIST. Now, Faustus, what wouldst thou have me do?
FAUSTUS. I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live,
To do whatever Faustus shall command,
Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere,
Or the ocean to overwhelm the world.
MEPHIST. I am a servant to great Lucifer,
And may not follow thee without his leave:
No more than he commands must we perform.
FAUSTUS. Did not he charge thee to appear to me?
MEPHIST. No, I came hither of mine own accord.
FAUSTUS. Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee? speak!
MEPHIST. That was the cause, but yet per accidens;
For, when we hear one rack the name of God,
Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,
We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;
Nor will we come, unless he use such means
Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd.
Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring
Is stoutly to abjure all godliness,
And pray devoutly to the prince of hell.
FAUSTUS. So Faustus hath
Already done; and holds this principle,
There is no chief but only Belzebub;
To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself.
This word "damnation" terrifies not me,
For I confound hell in Elysium:
My ghost be with the old philosophers!
But, leaving these vain trifles of men's souls,
Tell me what is that Lucifer thy lord?
MEPHIST. Arch-regent and commander of all spirits.

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FAUSTUS. Was not that Lucifer an angel once?
MEPHIST. Yes, Faustus, and most dearly lov'd of God.
FAUSTUS. How comes it, then, that he is prince of devils?
MEPHIST. O, by aspiring pride and insolence;
For which God threw him from the face of heaven.
FAUSTUS. And what are you that live with Lucifer?
MEPHIST. Unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer,
Conspir'd against our God with Lucifer,
And are for ever damn'd with Lucifer.
FAUSTUS. Where are you damn'd?
MEPHIST. In hell.
FAUSTUS. How comes it, then, that thou art out of hell?
MEPHIST. Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it:
Think'st thou that I, that saw the face of God,
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?
O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul!
FAUSTUS. What, is great Mephistophilis so passionate
For being deprived of the joys of heaven?
Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.
Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer:
Seeing Faustus hath incurr'd eternal death
By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity,
Say, he surrenders up to him his soul,
So he will spare him four and twenty years,
Letting him live in all voluptuousness;
Having thee ever to attend on me,
To give me whatsoever I shall ask,
To tell me whatsoever I demand,
To slay mine enemies, and to aid my friends,
And always be obedient to my will.
Go, and return to mighty Lucifer,
And meet me in my study at midnight,
And then resolve me of thy master's mind.

MEPHIST. I will, Faustus.
[Exit.]
FAUSTUS. Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.
By him I'll be great emperor of the world,
And make a bridge thorough the moving air,
To pass the ocean with a band of men;
I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore,
And make that country continent to Spain,
And both contributary to my crown:
The Emperor shall not live but by my leave,
Nor any potentate of Germany.
Now that I have obtain'd what I desir'd,
I'll live in speculation of this art,
Till Mephistophilis return again.
[Exit.]

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ACT I Scene III

Late in the night Faustus is talking to himself. He has come to a lonely place to experiment with magic formulae. He is drawing lines and circles to raise the spirits. At once there appears Mephistopheles. Faustus sends him back ordering him to come back in the form of a friar. Mephistopheles, obeying him, goes back. Faustus is glad to see his commands being obeyed. He is sure he will soon be the greatest magician on earth.

After a while Mephistopheles comes back and informs Faustus that he cannot obey him without the permission of Lucifer as he is the servant of Lucifer, not of Faustus. He has come only of his own and if he (Faustus) wishes to see the underworld spirits at his command he must forthwith renounce faith in God and the Bible and must pray only to Lucifer. Faustus then wants to know something more about Lucifer. Mephistopheles tells him that Lucifer was also an Angel once. But he rebelled against God and was hence thrown into Hell. His companions also met the same fate. Mephistopheles warns Faustus against black magic, but Faustus is adamant. He asks Mephistopheles to go to Lucifer and inform him of his decision to surrender himself to Lucifer completely in return for leading a life of unbridled sensuousness for twenty-four years. Mephistopheles goes away and Faustus starts thinking of the powers of magic he will one day possess, performing even the impossible with Mephistopheles at his command.

Act I, Scene IV

Enter WAGNER and CLOWN.:
WAGNER. Come hither, sirrah boy.
CLOWN. Boy! O, disgrace to my person! zounds, boy in your face!
You have seen many boys with beards, I am sure.
WAGNER. Sirrah, hast thou no comings in?

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CLOWN. Yes, and goings out too, you may see, sir.

WAGNER. Alas, poor slave! see how poverty jests in his nakedness!

I know the villain's out of service, and so hungry, that I know he would give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though it were blood-raw.

CLOWN. Not so neither: I had need to have it well roasted, and good sauce to it, if I pay so dear, I can tell you.

WAGNER. Sirrah, wilt thou be my man, and wait on me, and I will make thee go like Qui mihi discipulus?

CLOWN. What, in verse?

WAGNER. No, slave; in beaten silk and staves-acre.

CLOWN. Staves-acre! that's good to kill vermin: then, belike, if I serve you, I shall be lousy.

WAGNER. Why, so thou shalt be, whether thou dost it or no; for, sirrah, if thou dost not presently bind thyself to me for seven years, I'll turn all the lice about thee into familiars, and make them tear thee in pieces.

CLOWN. Nay, sir, you may save yourself a labour, for they are as familiar with me as if they paid for their meat and drink, I can tell you.

WAGNER. Well, sirrah, leave your jesting, and take these guilders.

[Gives money.]

CLOWN. Yes, marry, sir; and I thank you too.

WAGNER. So, now thou art to be at an hour's warning, whensoever and wheresoever the devil shall fetch thee.

CLOWN. Here, take your guilders again; I'll none of 'em.

WAGNER. Not I; thou art pressed: prepare thyself, or I will presently raise up two devils to carry thee away.—Banio! Belcher!

CLOWN. Belcher! an Belcher come here, I'll belch him: I am not afraid of a devil.

Enter two DEVILS.:

WAGNER. How now, sir! will you serve me now?

CLOWN. Ay, good Wagner; take away the devil[s], then.

WAGNER. Spirits, away!

[Exeunt DEVILS.]

Now, sirrah, follow me.

CLOWN. I will, sir: but hark you, master; will you teach me this conjuring occupation?

WAGNER. Ay, sirrah, I'll teach thee to turn thyself to a dog, or a cat, or a mouse, or a rat, or anything.

CLOWN. A dog, or a cat, or a mouse, or a rat!

O, brave, Wagner!

WAGNER. Villain, call me Master Wagner, and see that you walk attentively, and let your right eye be always diametrally fixed upon my left heel, that thou mayst quasi vestigiis nostris insistere.

CLOWN. Well, sir, I warrant you.

[Exeunt.]

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ACT I Scene IV

Wagner, the servant of Faustus is seen meeting a villager in the street. Wagner promises to give him some coins if he becomes his servant. When the man refuses to become his servant, Wagner conjures up two evil spirits to frighten him. The poor man is frightened and promises to serve Wagner if he teaches him the art of calling up the spirits of the dead.

Act II, Scene I

FAUSTUS discovered in his study.:

FAUSTUS. Now, Faustus,

Must thou needs be damn'd, canst thou not be sav'd.

What boots it, then, to think on God or heaven?

Away with such vain fancies, and despair;

Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub:

Now, go not backward, Faustus; be resolute:

Why waver'st thou? O, something soundeth in mine ear,

"Abjure this magic, turn to God again!"

Why, he loves thee not;

The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite,

Wherein is fix'd the love of Belzebub:

To him I'll build an altar and a church,

And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes.

Enter GOOD ANGEL and EVIL ANGEL.:

EVIL ANGEL. Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art.

GOOD ANGEL. Sweet Faustus, leave that execrable art.

FAUSTUS. Contrition, prayer, repentance—what of these?

GOOD ANGEL. O, they are means to bring thee unto heaven!

EVIL ANGEL. Rather illusions, fruits of lunacy,

That make men foolish that do use them most.

GOOD ANGEL. Sweet Faustus, think of heaven and heavenly things.

EVIL ANGEL. No, Faustus; think of honour and of wealth.

[Exeunt ANGELS.]

MEPHIST. As great as have the human souls of men.

But, tell me, Faustus, shall I have thy soul?

And I will be thy slave, and wait on thee,

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And give thee more than thou hast wit to ask.
FAUSTUS. Ay, Mephistophilis, I'll give it thee.
MEPHIST. Then, Faustus, stab thine arm courageously,
And bind thy soul, that at some certain day
Great Lucifer may claim it as his own;
And then be thou as great as Lucifer.
FAUSTUS.[Stabbing his arm]Lo, Mephistophilis, for love of thee,
Faustus hath cut his arm, and with his proper blood
Assures his soul to be great Lucifer's,
Chief lord and regent of perpetual night!
View here this blood that trickles from mine arm,
And let it be propitious for my wish.
MEPHIST. But, Faustus,
Write it in manner of a deed of gift.
FAUSTUS.[Writing]Ay, so I do. But, Mephistophilis,
My blood congeals, and I can write no more.
MEPHIST. I'll fetch thee fire to dissolve it straight.
[Exit.]
FAUSTUS. What might the staying of my blood portend?
Is it unwilling I should write this bill?
Why streams it not, that I may write afresh?
FAUSTUS GIVES TO THEE HIS SOUL: O, there it stay'd!
Why shouldst thou not? is not thy soul thine own?
Then write again, FAUSTUS GIVES TO THEE HIS SOUL.
Re-enter MEPHISTOPHILIS with the chafer of fire.:
MEPHIST. See, Faustus, here is fire; set it on.
FAUSTUS. So, now the blood begins to clear again;
Now will I make an end immediately.
[Writes.]
MEPHIST. What will not I do to obtain his soul?
[Aside.]
FAUSTUS. Consummatum est; this bill is ended,
And Faustus hath bequeath'd his soul to Lucifer.
But what is this inscription on mine arm?
Homo, fuge: whither should I fly?
If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell.
My senses are deceiv'd; here's nothing writ:—

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O, yes, I see it plain; even here is writ,
Homo, fuge: yet shall not Faustus fly.
MEPHIST. I'll fetch him somewhat to delight his mind.
[Aside, and then exit.]
Enter DEVILS, giving crowns and rich apparel to FAUSTUS.
They dance, and then depart.

ACT II Scene I

Faustus is sitting in his study at midnight. He is wavering between accepting God or the devil. Then he feels there is no use thinking of God and Heaven as his damnation is certain. Just then the Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear before him. The Good Angel once again advises him to beg for God's mercy while the Evil Angel asks him to seek only wealth and power. The mention of wealth fires the heart of Faustus to try to get power and wealth.

After the departure of the two Angels, Mephistopheles comes again. He informs Faustus that Lucifer has agreed to let Mephistopheles be in constant company of Faustus, provided Faustus pledges his soul to the devil through a deed written in his own blood. Faustus agrees to the condition and writes the deed in his own blood. Mephistopheles is now to remain at Faustus' beck and call for twenty-four years after which Faustus' soul will be carried to Hell for eternal damnation. After the deed is written, Mephistopheles calls in some spirits to provide entertainment.

Then Faustus wishes to know the exact location of Hell. Mephistopheles informs him that Hell is not limited to a single place. It is there where sinners are. Every place which is not Heaven is Hell. Faustus then asks him for a very beautiful woman to become his wife. Mephistopheles does not like the idea of marriage but brings in a devil in the form of a lady. Faustus does not like her at all. Then Mephistopheles gives him some books which contain formulae through which he can have gold, cause rain and tempests and have mastery over astrology, botany and other sciences.

Act II, Scene II

Enter FAUSTUS, in his study, and MEPHISTOPHILIS.
FAUSTUS. When I behold the heavens, then I repent,
And curse thee, wicked Mephistophilis,
Because thou hast depriv'd me of those joys.
MEPHIST. 'Twas thine own seeking, Faustus; thank thyself.
But, think'st thou heaven is such a glorious thing?
I tell thee, Faustus, it is not half so fair
As thou, or any man that breathes on earth.
FAUSTUS. How prov'st thou that?
MEPHIST. 'Twas made for man; then he's more excellent.
FAUSTUS. If heaven was made for man, 'twas made for me:
I will renounce this magic and repent.

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Enter GOOD ANGEL and EVIL ANGEL.:

GOOD ANGEL. Faustus, repent; yet God will pity thee.

EVIL ANGEL. Thou art a spirit; God cannot pity thee.

FAUSTUS. Who buzzeth in mine ears I am a spirit?
Be I a devil, yet God may pity me;
Yea, God will pity me, if I repent.

EVIL ANGEL. Ay, but Faustus never shall repent.

[Exeunt ANGELS.]

FAUSTUS. My heart is harden'd, I cannot repent;
Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven:
Swords, poisons, halters, and envenom'd steel
Are laid before me to despatch myself;
And long ere this I should have done the deed,
Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?
And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephistophilis?
Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
I am resolv'd; Faustus shall not repent.—
Come, Mephistophilis, let us dispute again,
And reason of divine astrology.
Speak, are there many spheres above the moon?
Are all celestial bodies but one globe,
As is the substance of this centric earth?

MEPHIST. As are the elements, such are the heavens,
Even from the moon unto th' empyreal orb,
Mutually folded in each other's spheres,
And jointly move upon one axletree,
Whose termine is term'd the world's wide pole;
Nor are the names of Saturn, Mars, or Jupiter
Feign'd, but are erring stars.

FAUSTUS. But have they all one motion, both situ et tempore?

MEPHIST. All move from east to west in four-and-twenty hours upon the poles of the world; but differ in their motions upon the poles of the zodiac.

FAUSTUS. These slender questions Wagner can decide:

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Hath Mephistophilis no greater skill?
Who knows not the double motion of the planets?
That the first is finish'd in a natural day;
The second thus; Saturn in thirty years; Jupiter in twelve;
Mars in four; the Sun, Venus, and Mercury in a year; the Moon in twenty-eight days. These are freshmen's questions. But tell me, hath every sphere a dominion or intelligentia?

MEPHIST. Ay.

FAUSTUS. How many heavens or spheres are there?

MEPHIST. Nine; the seven planets, the firmament, and the empyreal heaven.

FAUSTUS. But is there not coelum igneum et crystallinum?

MEPHIST. No, Faustus, they be but fables.

FAUSTUS. Resolve me, then, in this one question; why are not conjunctions, oppositions, aspects, eclipses, all at one time, but in some years we have more, in some less?

MEPHIST. Per inoequalem motum respectu totius.

FAUSTUS. Well, I am answered. Now tell me who made the world?

MEPHIST. I will not.

FAUSTUS. Sweet Mephistophilis, tell me.

MEPHIST. Move me not, Faustus.

FAUSTUS. Villain, have I not bound thee to tell me any thing?

MEPHIST. Ay, that is not against our kingdom; this is.
Thou art damned; think thou of hell.

FAUSTUS. Think, Faustus, upon God that made the world.

MEPHIST. Remember this.

[Exit.]

FAUSTUS. Ay, go, accursed spirit, to ugly hell!
'Tis thou hast damn'd distressed Faustus' soul.
Is't not too late?

ACT II Scene II

Again, Faustus is sitting in his study with Mephistopheles. He chides Mephistopheles for having deprived him of the joys of Heaven. He wishes to repent of the sins he has committed. The two Angels appear again. The Good Angel asks him to repent, as God will pardon him. The Evil Angel, on the contrary, says God can never feel pity on him as he is a black magician now. The Angels then go away. Faustus wishes to repent but he is unable to speak. He sees images of daggers, hanging ropes and poison, thinking that perhaps he should kill himself, but worldly allurements prevent him from taking the last step. He is reminded of the magic powers he has gained and says, "Faustus shall never repent."

Then he is shown having a discussion with Mephistopheles on astronomy and the positions and movements of various planets. Now he demands to know who the Creatoris. Mephistopheles tells him that it is against their law to answer this question as that will

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make him think of God. Mephistopheles departs and the Angels come again. The Evil Angel warns him against repentance, as the devils will tear him to pieces. The Good Angel encourages him to repent as, then, the evil power will become quite incapable of harming him.

Now Mephistopheles comes to Faustus again, with Lucifer and Beelzebub. Lucifer says that as he has signed the contract, Faustus now has no right to his soul. It is unjust of him to think of God now. Christ cannot save him as he (Lucifer) is the master of Faustus' soul. Faustus is frightened and promises never to take the name of God again. Lucifer is highly pleased and entertains him with a show of Seven Deadly Sins. In response to his queries, every Sin tells Faustus of its parentage and characteristics. Lucifer departs with a promise to show Faustus Hell that very night.

ACT III

Chorus

The Chorus informs us what Faustus has been doing after surrendering his soul to the Devil. During his period Faustus has been traveling round the world. For eight days he moved from the East to the West. His friends welcomed him when he came back home. He narrated the accounts of his exploits and his friends wondered at his knowledge of astronomy. His fame spreads far and wide and even Charles V invites him to his court to perform some magic feats there. Faustus plans to visit Rome to see the Pope and his court and to participate in St. Peter's feast.

Act III, Scene I

Enter FAUSTUS and MEPHISTOPHILIS.:

FAUSTUS. Having now, my good Mephistophilis,
Pass'd with delight the stately town of Trier,
Environ'd round with airy mountain-tops,
With walls of flint, and deep-entrenched lakes,
Not to be won by any conquering prince;
From Paris next, coasting the realm of France,
We saw the river Maine fall into Rhine,
Whose banks are set with groves of fruitful vines;
Then up to Naples, rich Campania,
Whose buildings fair and gorgeous to the eye,
The streets straight forth, and pav'd with finest brick,
Quarter the town in four equivalents:
There saw we learned Maro's golden tomb;
The way he cut, an English mile in length,
Thorough a rock of stone, in one night's space;
From thence to Venice, Padua, and the rest,
In one of which a sumptuous temple stands,
That threats the stars with her aspiring top,

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Whose frame is pav'd with sundry-colour'd stones,
And roof'd aloft with curious work in gold.
Thus hitherto hath Faustus spent his time:
But tell me now, what resting-place is this?
Hast thou, as erst I did command
Conducted me within the walls of Rome?
MEPHIST. I have, my Faustus; and, for proof thereof,
This is the goodly palace of the Pope;
And, 'cause we are no common guests,
I choose his privy-chamber for our use.
FAUSTUS. I hope his Holiness will bid us welcome.
MEPHIST. All's one, for we'll be bold with his venison.
But now, my Faustus, that thou mayst perceive
What Rome contains for to delight thine eyes,
Know that this city stands upon seven hills
That underprop the groundwork of the same:
Just through the midst runs flowing Tiber's stream,
With winding banks that cut it in two parts;
Over the which two stately bridges lean,
That make safe passage to each part of Rome:
Upon the bridge call'd Ponte Angelo
Erected is a castle passing strong,
Where thou shalt see such store of ordnance,
As that the double cannons, forg'd of brass,
Do match the number of the days contain'd
Within the compass of one complete year;
Beside the gates, and high pyramides,
That Julius Caesar brought from Africa.
FAUSTUS. Now, by the kingdoms of infernal rule,
Of Styx, of Acheron, and the fiery lake
Of ever-burning Phlegethon, I swear
That I do long to see the monuments
And situation of bright-splendent Rome:
Come, therefore, let's away.
MEPHIST. Nay, stay, my Faustus: I know you'd see the Pope,
And take some part of holy Peter's feast,
The which, in state and high solemnity,

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This day, is held through Rome and Italy,
In honour of the Pope's triumphant victory.
FAUSTUS. Sweet Mephistophilis, thou pleasest me.
Whilst I am here on earth, let me be cloy'd
With all things that delight the heart of man:
My four-and-twenty years of liberty
I'll spend in pleasure and in dalliance,
That Faustus' name, whilst this bright frame doth stand,
May be admir'd thorough the furthest land.
MEPHIST. 'Tis well said, Faustus. Come, then, stand by me,
And thou shalt see them come immediately.
FAUSTUS. Nay, stay, my gentle Mephistophilis,
And grant me my request, and then I go.
Thou know'st, within the compass of eight days
We view'd the face of heaven, of earth, and hell;
So high our dragons soar'd into the air,
That, looking down, the earth appear'd to me
No bigger than my hand in quantity;
There did we view the kingdoms of the world,
And what might please mine eye I there beheld.
Then in this show let me an actor be,
That this proud Pope may Faustus' cunning see.
MEPHIST. Let it be so, my Faustus. But, first, stay,
And view their triumphs as they pass this way;
And then devise what best contents thy mind,
By cunning in thine art to cross the Pope,
Or dash the pride of this solemnity;
To make his monks and abbots stand like apes,
And point like antics at his triple crown;
To beat the beads about the friars' pates,
Or clap huge horns upon the Cardinals' heads;
Or any villany thou canst devise;
And I'll perform it, Faustus. Hark! they come:
This day shall make thee be admir'd in Rome.

ACT III Scene I

Faustus tells Mephistopheles that they have already visited France and Italy. Now he wants to play tricks on the Pope, and hence asks Mephistopheles to make him invisible. Mephistopheles does so.

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The scene is now the chamber of the Pope. Many Cardinals and monks arrive along with the Pope for the feast on St. Peter's Day. As the Pope gives a dish to the Cardinal, Faustus takes it away. This trick is repeated several times. The guests are confused, as Faustus is not visible to anybody. They take it to be the act of some ghost, having come out of Purgatory. Then the friars start a funeral service to frighten away the ghost. As soon as the Pope crosses himself, Faustus boxes him on the ear. The Pope and the guests run away. Soon they return to sing a dirge to drive away the ghost, but Faustus and Mephistopheles beat up the friars and throw fireworks among them. They all run away frightened.

ACT IV

Chorus

This chorus, between Act III and IV, tells us that Faustus is back in his home after a tour of many cities, courts and countries. He has narrated his experiences to his friends, who are wonder-struck by his knowledge. Faustus has become famous far and wide. Even Charles V, the Emperor, invites him to dinner. His performances please the Emperor very much.

Act IV, Scene I

Enter MARTINO and FREDERICK at several doors.:
MARTINO. What, ho, officers, gentlemen!
Hie to the presence to attend the Emperor.—
Good Frederick, see the rooms be voided straight:
His majesty is coming to the hall;
Go back, and see the state in readiness.
FREDERICK. But where is Bruno, our elected Pope,
That on a Fury's back came post from Rome?
Will not his grace consort the Emperor?
MARTINO. O, yes; and with him comes the German conjurer,
The learned Faustus, fame of Wittenberg,
The wonder of the world for magic art;
And he intends to shew great Carolus
The race of all his stout progenitors,
And bring in presence of his majesty
The royal shapes and perfect semblances
Of Alexander and his beauteous paramour.
FREDERICK. Where is Benvolio?
MARTINO. Fast asleep, I warrant you;
He took his rouse with stoops of Rhenish wine
So kindly yesternight to Bruno's health,
That all this day the sluggard keeps his bed.

FREDERICK. See, see, his window's ope! we'll call to him.

MARTINO. What, ho! Benvolio!

Enter BENVOLIO above, at a window, in his nightcap, buttoning.

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BENVOLIO. What a devil ail you two?

MARTINO. Speak softly, sir, lest the devil hear you;
For Faustus at the court is late arriv'd,
And at his heels a thousand Furies wait,
To accomplish whatsoe'er the doctor please.

BENVOLIO. What of this?

MARTINO. Come, leave thy chamber first, and thou shalt see
This conjurer perform such rare exploits,
Before the Pope and royal Emperor,
As never yet was seen in Germany.

BENVOLIO. Has not the Pope enough of conjuring yet?
He was upon the devil's back late enough:
An if he be so far in love with him,
I would he would post with him to Rome again!

FREDERICK. Speak, wilt thou come and see this sport?

BENVOLIO. Not I.

MARTINO. Wilt thou stand in thy window, and see it, then?

BENVOLIO. Ay, an I fall not asleep i' the mean time.

MARTINO. The Emperor is at hand, who comes to see
What wonders by black spells may compass'd be.

BENVOLIO. Well, go you attend the Emperor. I am content, for this once, to thrust my head out at a window; for they say, if a man be drunk over night, the devil cannot hurt him in the morning: if that be true, I have a charm in my head, shall control him as well as the conjurer, I warrant you.

[Exeunt FREDERICK and MARTINO.]

ACT IV Scene I

Robin, a stableman, has stolen Faustus book of magic with a view to conjuring up spirits with it. He asks Robin to do some cleaning. Robin tells him that with the help of the magic books he can perform great feats. He can even call up the spirits from the underworld. In the beginning Ralph shows no interest in it. But when Robin says that he can even bring Nan, the kitchen maid, for him if he so likes, Ralph shows interest. They decide to do their cleaning job first and then to start practising conjuring.

Act IV, Scene II

A Sennet. Enter CHARLES the German Emperor, BRUNO,
DUKE OF SAXONY, FAUSTUS, MEPHISTOPHILIS, FREDERICK,
MARTINO, and Attendants.

EMPEROR. Wonder of men, renowm'd magician,
Thrice-learned Faustus, welcome to our court.
This deed of thine, in setting Bruno free
From his and our professed enemy,
Shall add more excellence unto thine art
Than if by powerful necromantic spells
Thou couldst command the world's obedience:
For ever be belov'd of Carolus!
And if this Bruno, thou hast late redeem'd,
In peace possess the triple diadem,
And sit in Peter's chair, despite of chance,
Thou shalt be famous through all Italy,
And honour'd of the German Emperor.

FAUSTUS. These gracious words, most royal Carolus,
Shall make poor Faustus, to his utmost power,
Both love and serve the German Emperor,
And lay his life at holy Bruno's feet:
For proof whereof, if so your grace be pleas'd,
The doctor stands prepar'd by power of art
To cast his magic charms, that shall pierce through
The ebon gates of ever-burning hell,
And hale the stubborn Furies from their caves,
To compass whatsoe'er your grace commands.

BENVOLIO. Blood, he speaks terribly! but, for all that, I do not greatly believe him: he looks as like a conjurer as the Pope to a costermonger.[Aside.]

EMPEROR. Then, Faustus, as thou late didst promise us,
We would behold that famous conqueror,
Great Alexander, and his paramour,
In their true shapes and state majestical,
That we may wonder at their excellence.

FAUSTUS. Your majesty shall see them presently.—
Mephistophilis, away,
And, with a solemn noise of trumpets' sound,
Present before this royal Emperor
Great Alexander and his beauteous paramour.

MEPHIST. Faustus, I will.

[Exit.]

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ACT IV Scene II

This scene is in continuation of the previous one. Robin and Ralph have stolen a silver goblet from a wine-seller, who now comes in search of it. The two deny having any knowledge of the wine cup. Even then the wine-seller searches their pockets. Robin wants to teach him a lesson for suspecting their honesty. With the help of the magic books he calls up Mephistopheles who appears at once to them. He throws some fire-works at them and frightened, they give back the cup to the wine-seller. Mephistopheles is very angry as he has to come from far away. In his anger, he transforms Robin and Ralph into an ape and a dog when they offer him six pence for his supper.

Act IV. Scene III

Enter BENVOLIO, MARTINO, FREDERICK, and SOLDIERS.

MARTINO. Nay, sweet Benvolio, let us sway thy thoughts
From this attempt against the conjurer.
BENVOLIO. Away! you love me not, to urge me thus:
Shall I let slip so great an injury,
When every servile groom jests at my wrongs,
And in their rustic gambols proudly say,
"Benvolio's head was grac'd with horns today?"
O, may these eyelids never close again,
Till with my sword I have that conjurer slain!
If you will aid me in this enterprise,
Then draw your weapons and be resolute;
If not, depart: here will Benvolio die,
But Faustus' death shall quit my infamy.
FREDERICK. Nay, we will stay with thee, betide what may,
And kill that doctor, if he come this way.
BENVOLIO. Then, gentle Frederick, hie thee to the grove,
And place our servants and our followers
Close in an ambush there behind the trees.
By this, I know the conjurer is near:
I saw him kneel, and kiss the Emperor's hand,
And take his leave, laden with rich rewards.
Then, soldiers, boldly fight: if Faustus die,
Take you the wealth, leave us the victory.
FREDERICK. Come, soldiers, follow me unto the grove:
Who kills him shall have gold and endless love.
[Exit FREDERICK with SOLDIERS.]
BENVOLIO. My head is lighter, than it was, by the horns;

NOTES

But yet my heart's more ponderous than my head,
And pants until I see that conjurer dead.
MARTINO. Where shall we place ourselves, Benvolio?
BENVOLIO. Here will we stay to bide the first assault:
O, were that damned hell-hound but in place,
Thou soon shouldst see me quit my foul disgrace!

Re-enter FREDERICK.:

FREDERICK. Close, close! the conjurer is at hand,
And all alone comes walking in his gown;
Be ready, then, and strike the peasant down.
BENVOLIO. Mine be that honour, then. Now, sword, strike home!
For horns he gave I'll have his head anon.
MARTINO. See, see, he comes!

Enter FAUSTUS with a false head.:

BENVOLIO. No words. This blow ends all:
Hell take his soul! his body thus must fall.
[Stabs FAUSTUS.]
FAUSTUS.[falling.]O!
FREDERICK. Groan you, Master Doctor?
BENVOLIO. Break may his heart with groans!—Dear Frederick, see,
Thus will I end his griefs immediately.
MARTINO. Strike with a willing hand.
[BENVOLIO strikes off FAUSTUS' head.]
His head is off.
BENVOLIO. The devil's dead; the Furies now may laugh.
FREDERICK. Was this that stern aspect, that awful frown,
Made the grim monarch of infernal spirits
Tremble and quake at his commanding charms?
MARTINO. Was this that damned head, whose art conspir'd
Benvolio's shame before the Emperor?
BENVOLIO. Ay, that's the head, and there the body lies,
Justly rewarded for his villanies.
FREDERICK. Come, let's devise how we may add more shame
To the black scandal of his hated name.
BENVOLIO. First, on his head, in quittance of my wrongs,
I'll nail huge forked horns, and let them hang
Within the window where he yok'd me first,

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That all the world may see my just revenge.

MARTINO. What use shall we put his beard to?

BENVOLIO. We'll sell it to a chimney-sweeper: it will wear out ten birchen brooms, I warrant you.

FREDERICK. What shall his eyes do?

BENVOLIO. We'll pull out his eyes; and they shall serve for buttons to his lips, to keep his tongue from catching cold.

MARTINO. An excellent policy! and now, sirs, having divided him, what shall the body do?

[FAUSTUS rises.]

BENVOLIO. Zounds, the devil's alive again!

FREDERICK. Give him his head, for God's sake.

FAUSTUS. Nay, keep it: Faustus will have heads and hands,

Ay, all your hearts to recompense this deed.

Knew you not, traitors, I was limited

For four-and-twenty years to breathe on earth?

And, had you cut my body with your swords,

Or hew'd this flesh and bones as small as sand,

Yet in a minute had my spirit return'd,

And I had breath'd a man, made free from harm.

But wherefore do I dally my revenge?—

Asteroth, Belimoth, Mephistophilis?

ACTI V Scene III

At the invitation of Emperor Charles V, Faustus goes to his court. The emperor asks him to please his courtiers by exhibiting some magic feats. The Emperor says that for long he has been longing to see his ancestor, Alexander the Great, and his Queen in the dress which they actually wore in their lives. At once Alexander the Great and the Queen appear on the stage. The Emperor is very impressed. Then a knight speaks very low of Faustus and goes away showing disrespect to him and his knowledge of magic. Faustus determines to teach him a lasting lesson. So when the knight comes back, he has a pair of horns on his head. It is only at the request of the Emperor that Faustus removes his horns. The emperor is satisfied and promises Faustus a good reward. Faustus bids farewell to the Emperor.

Act IV, Scene VI

Enter ROBIN, DICK, the HORSE-COURSER, and a CARTER.

CARTER. Come, my masters, I'll bring you to the best beer in Europe.—What, ho, hostess! where be these whores?

Enter HOSTESS.:

HOSTESS. How now! what lack you? What, my old guess! welcome.

ROBIN. Sirrah Dick, dost thou know why I stand so mute?

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DICK. No, Robin: why is't?

ROBIN. I am eighteen-pence on the score. but say nothing; see if she have forgotten me.

HOSTESS. Who's this that stands so solemnly by himself? What, my old guest!

ROBIN. O, hostess, how do you? I hope my score stands still.

HOSTESS. Ay, there's no doubt of that; for methinks you make no haste to wipe it out.

DICK. Why, hostess, I say, fetch us some beer.

HOSTESS. You shall presently.—Look up into the hall there, ho!

[Exit.—Drink is presently brought in.]

DICK. Come, sirs, what shall we do now till mine hostess comes?

CARTER. Marry, sir, I'll tell you the bravest tale how a conjurer served me. You know Doctor Faustus?

HORSE-COURSER. Ay, a plague take him! here's some on's have cause to know him. Did he conjure thee too?

CARTER. I'll tell you how he served me. As I was going to

Wittenberg, t'other day, with a load of hay, he met me, and asked me what he should give me for as much hay as he could eat.

Now, sir, I thinking that a little would serve his turn, bad him take as much as he would for three farthings: so he presently gave me my money and fell to eating; and, as I am a cursen man, he never left eating till he had eat up all my load of hay.

ALL. O, monstrous! eat a whole load of hay!

ROBIN. Yes, yes, that may be; for I have heard of one that has eat a load of logs.

HORSE-COURSER. Now, sirs, you shall hear how villanously he served me. I went to him yesterday to buy a horse of him, and he would by no means sell him under forty dollars. So, sir, because I knew him to be such a horse as would run over hedge and ditch and never tire, I gave him his money. So, when I had my horse, Doctor Faustus bad me ride him night and day, and spare him no time; but, quoth he, in any case, ride him not into the water. Now, sir, I thinking the horse had had some quality that he would not have me know of, what did I but rid him into a great river? and when I came just in the midst, my horse vanished away, and I sate straddling upon a bottle of hay.

ALL. O, brave doctor!

HORSE-COURSER. But you shall hear how bravely I served him for it. I went me home to his house, and there I found him asleep.

I kept a hallooing and whooping in his ears; but all could not wake him. I, seeing that, took him by the leg, and never rested pulling till I had pulled me his leg quite off; and now 'tis at home in mine hostry.

ROBIN. And has the doctor but one leg, then? that's excellent; for one of his devils turned me into the likeness of an ape's face.

CARTER. Some more drink, hostess!

ROBIN. Hark you, we'll into another room and drink a while, and then we'll go seek out the doctor.

[Exeunt.]

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ACT IV Scene IV

Faustus and Mephistopheles are resting on a grassy spot. Faustus feels that now his days on earth are numbered. According to the contract he has to give his soul to the Devil. He, therefore, wants to reach Wittenberg as soon as possible by walking through that lovely green spot. Meanwhile a horse-dealer arrives. He wants to purchase Faustus's horse for forty dollars. After some haggling Faustus sells his horse with a clear warning that in no situation should he take the horse to water. Again Faustus starts thinking over his condemned soul. Soon the horse-dealer comes back all wet and crying. Not following the warning of Faustus he rode the horse through water and when he was in the middle of it the horse turned into a bundle of hay. He thinks that he has been cheated. So he wants to settle the dispute with Faustus then and there. The dealer finds Faustus sleeping. Mephistopheles refuses to awaken him. In order to wake up Faustus the man shouts and then pulls him by the leg. To his horror, Faustus' leg comes off his body. Mephistopheles threatens to give him to the Police. The horse-trader is frightened and promises to pay forty dollars more. Faustus, who is awake by now, lets him go.

Just then Wagner arrives and informs Faustus that the Duke of Vanholt is eager to see the magic of Faustus, at which Faustus agrees to go to the Duke's court.

Act IV, Scene V

Enter FAUSTUS, a HORSE-COURSER, and MEPHISTOPHILIS.

HORSE-COURSER. I beseech your worship, accept of these forty dollars.

FAUSTUS. Friend, thou canst not buy so good a horse for so small a price. I have no great need to sell him: but, if thou likest him for ten dollars more, take him, because I see thou hast a good mind to him.

HORSE-COURSER. I beseech you, sir, accept of this: I am a very poor man, and have lost very much of late by horse-flesh, and this bargain will set me up again.

FAUSTUS. Well, I will not stand with thee: give me the money

[HORSE-COURSER gives FAUSTUS the money]. Now, sirrah, I must tell you that you may ride him o'er hedge and ditch, and spare him not; but, do you hear? in any case, ride him not into the water.

HORSE-COURSER. How, sir! not into the water! why, will he not drink of all waters?

FAUSTUS. Yes, he will drink of all waters; but ride him not into the water: o'er hedge and ditch, or where thou wilt, but not into the water. Go, bid the hostler deliver him unto you, and remember what I say.

HORSE-COURSER. I warrant you, sir!—O, joyful day! now am I a made man for ever.

[Exit.]

FAUSTUS. What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemn'd to die?

Thy fatal time draws to a final end;

Despair doth drive distrust into my thoughts:

Confound these passions with a quiet sleep:

Tush, Christ did call the thief upon the Cross;

Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit.

[He sits to sleep.]

Re-enter the HORSE-COURSER, wet.

HORSE-COURSER. 0, what a cozening doctor was this! I, riding my horse into the water, thinking some hidden mystery had been in the horse, I had nothing under me but a little straw, and had much ado to escape drowning. Well, I'll go rouse him, and make him give me my forty dollars again.—Ho, sirrah Doctor, you cozening scab! Master Doctor, awake, and rise, and give me my money again, for your horse is turned to a bottle of hay, Master Doctor![He pulls off FAUSTUS' leg]. Alas, I am undone! what shall I do? I have pulled off his leg.

FAUSTUS. O, help, help! the villain hath murdered me.

HORSE-COURSER. Murder or not murder, now he has but one leg,

I'll outrun him, and cast this leg into some ditch or other.

[Aside, and then runs out.]

FAUSTUS. Stop him, stop him, stop him!—Ha, ha, ha! Faustus hath his leg again, and the Horse-courser a bundle of hay for his forty dollars.

Enter WAGNER.:

How now, Wagner! what news with thee?

WAGNER. If it please you, the Duke of Vanholt doth earnestly entreat your company, and hath sent some of his men to attend you, with provision fit for your journey.

FAUSTUS. The Duke of Vanholt's an honourable gentleman, and one to whom I must be no niggard of my cunning. Come, away!

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV Scene V

Faustus arrives in the court of the Duke of Vanholt. The Duke is pleased with his magic feats. Faustus now asks the Duchess if she wishes to have any special dish of her liking. She demands grapes. With the help of Mephistopheles, a dish of the best grapes is brought instantly. All present are astonished as it is not the season for grapes. Faustus then reveals that there are two atmospheres. While there is winter in one half, there is summer in the other. The Duke suitably rewards the Master Doctor.

Act V, Scene I

Thunder and lightning. Enter DEVILS with covered dishes;

MEPHISTOPHILIS leads them into FAUSTUS'S study; then enter

WAGNER.

WAGNER. I think my master means to die shortly; he has made his will, and given me his wealth, his house, his goods, and store of golden plate, besides two thousand ducats ready-coined.

I wonder what he means: if death were nigh, he would not frolic thus. He's now at supper with the scholars, where there's such belly-cheer as Wagner in his life ne'er saw the like: and, see where they come! belike the feast is ended.

[Exit.]

Enter FAUSTUS, MEPHISTOPHILIS, and two or three SCHOLARS.

FIRST SCHOLAR. Master Doctor Faustus, since our conference about fair ladies, which was the beautifulest in all the world, we have determined with ourselves that

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Helen of Greece was the admirablest lady that ever lived: therefore, Master Doctor, if you will do us so much favour as to let us see that peerless dame of Greece, whom all the world admires for majesty, we should think ourselves much beholding unto you.

FAUSTUS. Gentlemen,
For that I know your friendship is unfeign'd,
It is not Faustus' custom to deny
The just request of those that wish him well:
You shall behold that peerless dame of Greece,
No otherwise for pomp or majesty
Than when Sir Paris cross'd the seas with her,
And brought the spoils to rich Dardania.
Be silent, then, for danger is in words.

Music sounds. MEPHISTOPHILIS brings in HELEN; she passeth over the stage.

SECOND SCHOLAR. Was this fair Helen, whose admired worth
Made Greece with ten years' war afflict poor Troy?
THIRD SCHOLAR. Too simple is my wit to tell her worth,
Whom all the world admires for majesty.
FIRST SCHOLAR. Now we have seen the pride of Nature's work,
We'll take our leaves: and, for this blessed sight,
Happy and blest be Faustus evermore!
FAUSTUS. Gentlemen, farewell: the same wish I to you.

[Exeunt SCHOLARS.]

Enter an OLD MAN.:

OLD MAN. O gentle Faustus, leave this damned art,
This magic, that will charm thy soul to hell,
And quite bereave thee of salvation!
Though thou hast now offended like a man,
Do not persever in it like a devil:
Yet, yet thou hast an amiable soul,
If sin by custom grow not into nature;
Then, Faustus, will repentance come too late;
Then thou art banish'd from the sight of heaven:
No mortal can express the pains of hell.
It may be, this my exhortation
Seems harsh and all unpleasant: let it not;
For, gentle son, I speak it not in wrath,
Or envy of thee, but in tender love,
And pity of thy future misery;

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And so have hope that this my kind rebuke,
Checking thy body, may amend thy soul.

FAUSTUS. Where art thou, Faustus? wretch, what hast thou done?
Hell claims his right, and with a roaring voice
Says, "Faustus, come; thine hour is almost come;"
And Faustus now will come to do thee right.

[MEPHISTOPHILIS gives him a dagger.]

OLD MAN. O, stay, good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps!
I see an angel hover o'er thy head,
And, with a vial full of precious grace,
Offers to pour the same into thy soul:
Then call for mercy, and avoid despair.

FAUSTUS. O friend, I feel
Thy words to comfort my distressed soul!
Leave me a while to ponder on my sins.

OLD MAN. Faustus, I leave thee; but with grief of heart,
Fearing the enemy of thy hapless soul.

[Exit.]

FAUSTUS. Accursed Faustus, wretch, what hast thou done?
I do repent; and yet I do despair:
Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast:
What shall I do to shun the snares of death?

MEPHIST. Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul
For disobedience to my sovereign lord:
Revolt, or I'll in piece-meal tear thy flesh.

FAUSTUS. I do repent I e'er offended him.
Sweet Mephistophilis, entreat thy lord
To pardon my unjust presumption,
And with my blood again I will confirm
The former vow I made to Lucifer.

MEPHIST. Do it, then, Faustus, with unfeigned heart,
Lest greater dangers do attend thy drift.

FAUSTUS. Torment, sweet friend, that base and aged man,
That durst dissuade me from thy Lucifer,
With greatest torments that our hell affords.

MEPHIST. His faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;
But what I may afflict his body with

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I will attempt, which is but little worth.
FAUSTUS. One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,
To glut the longing of my heart's desire,—
That I may have unto my paramour
That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,
Whose sweet embraces may extinguish clean
Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow,
And keep my oath I made to Lucifer.
MEPHIST. This, or what else my Faustus shall desire,
Shall be perform'd in twinkling of an eye.
Re-enter HELEN, passing over the stage between two CUPIDS.
FAUSTUS. Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?—
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—
[Kisses her.]
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sack'd;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
O, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!
[Exeunt.]

ACT V Scene I

Wagner is talking to himself. He fears that his master is going to die. Faustus, on the contrary, is enjoying the company of his friends and Mephistopheles. They argue about who is the most beautiful woman and conclude that it is Helen. At the request of one of his friends, Faustus calls up the spirit of Helen in her worldly form. They are wonderstruck to see her beauty, thank Faustus, and depart. Helen also disappears.

Then an Old Man, none other than the Good Angel, arrives and urges Faustus to repent. Then comes Mephistopheles and threatens to tear Faustus to pieces if he breaks his word. Faustus is frightened and submits meekly. He even asks Mephistopheles to punish the Old Man. Mephistopheles says he is unable to do so. Then Helen is called up again. Faustus kisses her and desires to have her as his mistress.

Act V, Scene II

Thunder. Enter LUCIFER, BELZEBUB, and MEPHISTOPHILIS.
FAUSTUS. O 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 heaven!—Who pulls me down?—
See, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop of blood will save me: O my Christ!—
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, a threatening arm, an angry brow!
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of heaven!
No!
Then will I headlong run into the earth:
Gape, earth! O, no, it will not harbour me!
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,

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My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths;
But let my soul mount and ascend to heaven!
[The clock strikes the half-hour.]
O, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon.
O, if my soul must suffer for my sin,
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!
No end is limited to damned souls.
Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
O, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
Into 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.
[The clock strikes twelve.]
It strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!
O soul, be chang'd into small water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!
Thunder. Enter DEVILS.
O, mercy, heaven! 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!—O Mephistophilis!
[Exeunt DEVILS with FAUSTUS.]

ACT V Scene II

This short scene is laid in Faustus house. The Old Man comes again and tries for the last time to save Faustus. But nothing helps as the Devils enter at the same time and begin to torture Faustus. The Old Man flies unto his God; the Devils also depart.

Act V, Scene III

Enter SCHOLARS.

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FIRST SCHOLAR. Come, gentlemen, let us go visit Faustus,
For such a dreadful night was never seen;
Since first the world's creation did begin,
Such fearful shrieks and cries were never heard:
Pray heaven the doctor have escap'd the danger.

SECOND SCHOLAR:

O, help us, heaven! see, here are Faustus' limbs,
All torn asunder by the hand of death!

THIRD SCHOLAR:

The devils whom Faustus serv'd have torn him thus;
For, twixt the hours of twelve and one, methought,
I heard him shriek and call aloud for help;
At which self time the house seem'd all on fire
With dreadful horror of these damned fiends.
SECOND SCHOLAR. Well, gentlemen, though Faustus' end be such
As every Christian heart laments to think on,
Yet, for he was a scholar once admir'd
For wondrous knowledge in our German schools,
We'll give his mangled limbs due burial;
And all the students, cloth'd in mourning black,
Shall wait upon his heavy funeral.
[Exeunt.]

ACT V Scene III

It is the last scene, where Faustus is to be taken away. It is the last day of the period of twenty-four years, which was allowed to Faustus to enjoy worldly pleasures. Faustus takes his friends into confidence and tells them the secret of his contract with Lucifer. They are terrified and advise him to pray to God. Faustus does try but cannot do so. He cannot even weep. It is beyond his power to raise his hands to pray to God. He fears that the Devil will tear him to pieces. His friends are helpless. They retire to the adjoining room to pray for his soul.

The clock strikes eleven. He has but one hour on earth. He wishes the clock would stop and the hour would stretch to a year, month, week or even a day so that he could find time to repent. He appeals to the spheres of the Heaven to stop their movement so that the appointed time of midnight never comes. He seems to have a vision of Christ's blood trickling in the sky. He knows even one drop of the Saviour's blood can save him but at the very mention of Christ he feels that the Devil is tearing his heart out. Then he sees God stretching out his arms and looking out angrily at him. Faustus appeals to mountains to fall down and cover him and to the earth to open wide and swallow him, and to the stars to raise him up like a mass of vapour into the clouds to save him from the clutches of the Devil. But all these appeals are fruitless.

The clock strikes half past eleven. Now only half an hour is left to Faustus on the earth. He wishes that if he cannot be saved from damnation, there should be at least some limit to his damnation. Faustus is ready to live in Hell for a thousand years or a hundred thousand years. But his damnation should not be forever. He says that it would have been far better if he had been born as a beast without a soul, but nobody hears him. The clock, at last, strikes twelve. There is lightning and thunder. The devils enter, strangle him and tear his body to pieces and carry away his soul to Hell for eternal damnation.

Chorus

The Chorus comes on the stage for the last time. They moralize upon the great rise and tragic end of Doctor Faustus. Faustus was a learned man and could have achieved great success. But his vicious way of gaining power and pelf brought about his eternal damnation. The tragic end teaches a lesson to all—never seeks things unwarranted by God; scholars should not 'practise more than Heavenly power permits.'

Check Your Progress

1. Comment on the early source of English drama.
2. Define 'masques' and 'Interludes'.
3. State the central theme of the play.

3.4 CHIEF CHARACTER SKETCHES

3.4.1 Faustus

According to the Chorus, Doctor Faustus' parents are 'base of stock.' He was born in a German town called Rhodes. When he grew up, he was sent to Wittenberg for higher studies. There he was brought up by his relatives. At Wittenberg he studied theology deeply and soon he came to be known as a great scholar of Divinity. He was also awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Then he started taking part in debates and discussions, and defeated all his opponents 'in Heavenly matters of theology.'

A Great Intellect

The first discernable quality of Faustus's character is his ability to reason. In other words, he was a man of good understanding, sharp memory, and sound reasoning power. It was his great intellect which kept him in good stead as a student of divinity. It also helped him earn the Doctorate degree and gave him victory over his opponents in theological debates. In the Epilogue the chorus also calls him a 'forward word.'

His Self-Conceit

In the Prologue, the chorus says that after getting victory over other scholars, Faustus becomes swollen with 'self-conceit.' It means that he begins to hold a high opinion of himself and his own abilities. This fact is established by his own statements in Act I, Scene I, when he examines one profession after another for himself. He rejects Analytics, saying: 'A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit.' He rejects law, saying (Act I, Scene II):

His study fits a mercenary drudge
Who aims at nothing but external trash;
Too servile and illiberal for me.

Further, in Act II, Scene II, he asks Mephistopheles whether all the Heavenly bodies have only one motion with regard to direction and time. Mephistopheles replies that they move east to west in twenty-four hours but their orbits are different. Thereupon Faustus replies that such petty answers even his own servant Wagner can make. These speeches prove that he holds a very high opinion of his intellectual prowess.

His Insatiable Thirst for Knowledge

The most outstanding quality of his character is his insatiable thirst for knowledge. By this time he has already taken a Doctorate degree in Divinity. Yet he is never at rest. He advises himself 'to level at the end of every art.' He also has a great love for the classics. He wants to 'live and die in Aristotle's works', he chooses to study necromancy chiefly because the spirits can give him great knowledge and make him 'as cunning as Agrippa was.' When he has sold his soul to Lucifer he asks Mephistopheles questions about the universe, Heaven, Hell, etc. in order to satisfy his hunger for knowledge. Then seated in a chariot drawn by dragons he watches the whole universe as if to know everything about it. He also watches the sky in order to discover the secrets of astronomy. In this respect, Faustus is a man of the Renaissance. To him knowledge is God, and source of power and wealth.

His Thirst for Beauty

Faustus is also thirsty for beauty of every kind. He asks Mephistopheles for a wife, the fairest maid in Germany. He causes Mephistopheles to raise the spirit of blind Homer and sing him the story of Alexander and Oenan. He also raises the spirit of Amphion and listens to his music which in ancient Greece had raised a wall of fortification around Thebes. He also asks Mephistopheles to call up the spirit of Helen. He even kisses her and declares that he will act as Paris for her. In short, he is charmed by the beauty of classical poetry, classical mythology, music, etc. In this respect, too, Faustus is a man of the Renaissance.

His Surging Individualism

Faustus is an embodiment of individualism. He is in revolt against the dogmatism of the middle Ages, and tries to free himself from the meshes of religious myths, concepts of sin, Heaven, Hell, etc. If the principles of medieval religion had prevailed, there would have been no discoveries and inventions of science. But Faustus tried his best to free his will and intellect from the iron frame of the Middle Ages. According to George Santayana, 'Marlowe's Faustus is a martyr to everything that the Renaissance valued – power, curious knowledge, enterprise; wealth and beauty.'

His Skepticism and Mental Conflict

Faustus is a skeptic, not a confirmed atheist. He has a fair sense of good and evil. Yet he believes that necromancy is a science of Nature. When he decides to study necromancy, the Good Angel and Evil Angel appear before him. They may be taken to represent two sides of his mind. The Good Angel tells him that black magic is a damned thing, but the Evil Angel tells him that 'all Nature's treasure is contained' in the study of necromancy. He believes the latter. Thereafter he experiences mental conflict till the last hour of his death. But he is never fully sure of being damned except in the last hour. His skepticism and the force of voluptuous pleasures push him to the point of no-return.

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Highly Imaginative and Sentimental

Faustus is also highly imaginative. Even when he decides to become a magician, he begins to imagine the spirits running at his command to this or that place. He perceives them 'fly to India for gold' and 'ransack the ocean for Orient pearl.' Under the heat of an intensely painful sentiment, he begins to have hallucinations of swords, knives, halters, etc. to commit suicide with. In the last scene, he perceives first a stream of Christ's blood flowing in the sky and then Christ's angry face. In a fit of grief, he begins to repent of his sins. Soon he begins to have hallucinations. When the clock strikes twelve, he meets his tragic end in a most pathetic manner.

Faustus as a Tragic Hero

As tragic hero, Faustus is possessed by a number of qualities in the extreme. He is possessed by a superhuman ambition for ruling the world. He has an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He utilizes most of his magic power to satisfy this thirst. He is possessed by a great thirst for beauty of every kind. He is also possessed by surging individualism that incites him to rebel against everything that is oppressive. Because of his individualism he often curses Mephistopheles. Over and above, he is a skeptic, and also highly self-possessed.

Man of the Renaissance

Faustus's inexhaustible thirst for knowledge, his worship of beauty, his passion for the classics, his skepticism, his interest in sorcery and magic, and his superhuman pursuit of ideals of beauty and power prove Faustus (and Marlowe) to be a man of the Renaissance.

3.4.2 Mephistopheles

In the plot of *Doctor Faustus*, Mephistopheles is 'a servant to great Lucifer', as he himself tells Faustus. Lucifer is the Arch-Regent and commander of all spirits. Mephistopheles is one of those unhappy spirits who were thrown, along with Lucifer, into Hell when they rose against God. And now he (Mephistopheles) lives in Hell, being damned with Lucifer to live there forever. He is gifted with a number of magic powers, but nothing seems to make him happy.

Gloomy and Unhappy

Although he has many powers, he is most unhappy as he is bound to live in Hell forever. The memory of his Heavenly bliss makes him miserable. So he says to Faustus (Act I, Scene II):

Thinkest thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven.
Am not tormented with her thousand Hells
In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?

He is not happy even when a damned person summons him. So when Faustus summons him, he bluntly asks him what he wants him to do. When Robin and Ralph summon him up in Act IV, Scene II, he curses them angrily and changes them into an ape and a dog respectively. After Faustus's agreement with Lucifer, Mephistopheles lives with Faustus till the last hour of Faustus's life. Yet he is always gloomy and serious.

His Hatred of Christian Values

He has a hatred of Christian values. When Faustus asks him for a wife through 'marriage', he says to Faustus (Act II, Scene II):

Tut, Faustus,
Marriage is but a ceremonial toy.

A Believer but a Follower of Lucifer

Mephistopheles is a believer in the existence of God, Heaven and Hell. He has seen the face of God and has enjoyed the bliss of Heaven. Yet he is not ready to repent and turn to God. When he meets Faustus for the first time, he utters the word 'God' two times. But afterwards he is not ready to tell Faustus who made the universe. It means that he has a bitter hatred of God in his heart. He admits that God is more powerful than Lucifer. Yet he is not ready to give up Lucifer and to go to God for his own well-being.

Conversely, he is a most faithful servant of Lucifer. Under Lucifer's command, he accepts Faustus as his master for twenty-four years. He obeys every one of his commands to establish Faustus as the greatest magician in the world. Yet, whenever Faustus waivers or tries to go back to the fold of Christianity, Mephistopheles calls him a traitor. He also curses him and even gives him a dagger to commit suicide with. In Act V, scene I, he even forces Faustus to write in his blood another deed of gift bequeathing his soul to Lucifer a second time. During the last hour of Faustus's life, he even tears Faustus's heart, when the latter remembers God and Christ.

Omniscient Devil

Mephistopheles is an omniscient devil. He answers all the questions of Faustus about the universe, Heaven, Hell, Heavenly bodies, their movements, etc. For example, Faustus asks him as to how many Heavens and spheres are there in the universe. Like a professor of astronomy, Mephistopheles replies (Act II, Scene II):

Nine; the seven planets, the firmament, and the empyreal Heaven.

And Faustus is satisfied. Today this answer may be questioned, but in Marlowe's day, it was supposed to be correct.

Function of Mephistopheles

Doctor Faustus is an Elizabethan drama, in which the character of Mephistopheles discharges the following functions. First, he creates the atmosphere of Christian beliefs in the existence of God, His son Christ, Heaven, Hell, Lucifer and his followers, the damned spirits, good, evil, damnation, salvation, etc. Second, he establishes belief in magic, sorcery, necromancy, and supernatural powers of all kinds. Third, he confirms the belief that a life of sensual pleasures is a life of devil's rule over man. Thus, even an intellectual curiosity to know the nature of objects is a sin, since the mind itself is a sense organ.

Fourth, his answers about Heavenly bodies, their motions, etc. educated the Elizabethans in ideas and beliefs of scholastic philosophies of the Renaissance period. Fifth, his entering the Pope's chamber and beating the Friars shows Marlowe's disrespect to Roman Catholic Church and its rituals. Sixth, his presence with Faustus impels Faustus to get out of the devil's domination every now and then, since Faustus hates oppression of every kind. Seventh, taken as the symbol of Faustus's evil self, or as the spirit of his

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imagination, Mephistopheles is the cause of the great drama and the great poetry that have made Doctor Faustus a classic of English drama.

Conclusion

Evidently Mephistopheles is a conventional character of religious drama, but it is possible to look upon him as Faustus devilish ambition for unlimited knowledge and also the unfettered power of his poetic imagination. It is he who takes Faustus all over the world, and produces whatever Faustus likes. It is he who produces Helen before him as if he were Faustus's power of hallucination.

Check Your Progress

4. Comment on Faustus' display of self-conceit.
5. 'Faustus is a man of the Renaissance.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Discuss Faustus as a tragic hero.
7. Who is Mephistopheles?

3.5 THE ELEMENT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Of all the Arts, drama is the most objective. In other arts, chiefly in poetry, the poet projects his personality fearlessly. The dramatist on the contrary has to hide himself behind the curtain. If he has anything to say, he may do so only through a character, that too, very carefully.

In Doctor Faustus Marlowe has projected his own self. According to one critic, 'Marlowe seems to have been a young man of bold self-assurance, of passionate and fiery temper …and of a biting and sarcastic tongue. He was apt to speak irreverently and flippantly upon religious matters. (He) had for six years been subjected to the arid routine of scholastic philosophy....' It seems as if we are shedding light on the life of Faustus. Marlowe died prematurely at the young age of twenty-nine and Faustus is taken to Hell after a life of twenty-four years of pleasure in this world. Both met with miserable deaths. The chorus is correct in saying and moralizing (Act V, Scene III):

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight
And burned is Appolo's laurel-bough,
That sometimes grew writh in 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 practise more than Heavenly power permits

Undoubtedly the life of Faustus and also of Marlowe was abruptly cut short. Marlowe was an atheist who hated Papal authority. Faustus, likewise, asks Mephistopheles to go to Rome, where the Pope would be having a grand feast on St. Peter's Day. Faustus is made invisible and has fun at the cost of the Pope and the Cardinals. He snatches the dish from the hands of the Cardinal several times. This is the crudest sort of fun.

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Doctor Faustus is Marlowe's greatest tragedy, worked out in terms of Marlowe's mind and imagination. The tragedy turns upon his intellectual rejection of Christianity and also his emotional attachment to it. The following lines spoken by Mephistopheles signify this state of absence from God, which was also Marlowe's own private Hell (Act I, Scene II):

Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand Hells
In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?

3.6 DOCTOR FAUSTUS: A MORALITY PALY

A Morality play shows a conflict between good and evil, and uses a didactic tone. *Doctor Faustus* represents this conflict, and so is said to be in the English morality tradition.

Conflict between Good and Evil

The conflict between good and evil is an essential characteristic of the Morality play. The Good and Evil angels, the Seven Deadly Sins and the Old Man are all characters in traditional Morality plays. From the very beginning there is a conflict- the hero is tempted towards evil, he struggles against this temptation and in this process he undergoes spiritual anguish. Both good and evil angels appear before him several times and let him know the pros and cons of black magic and repentance. He is told that if he controls his desire for acquiring magic power and turns to God, he will be pardoned and will enjoy the fruits of Heaven. Faustus is given a clear choice between damnation and salvation of his soul. The option remains open to him till his last day on Earth. His soul is the battleground of the forces of good and evil. He prefers the life of worldly pleasures for twenty-four years and writes a bond to pay the penalty—eternal damnation of his soul. A medieval morality play often shows this sort of conflict.

Didactic Tone

Every Morality play was didactic in its aim and Doctor Faustus is a great sermon against temptation and excessive curiosity. The last chorus – speaking of the miserable damnation of Faustus- sums up the moral of the play. It gives a clear warning that by going into the black arts; even the most learned are ruined.

Abstract Characters

The characters in Morality plays used to be abstractions which were personified as characters on the stage. Doctor Faustus contains not only the Good and Bad Angels but the Old Man, the Devil, Helen, and the Seven Deadly Sins (Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth and Lechery) etc. as personified characters. Mephistopheles too, is none other than the devil in person.

One Central Figure

One of the chief characteristics of Morality plays was that there was but one great figure around which the story unfolded. Other characters were nominal, only in name. In Doctor Faustus, Faustus is the main figure, around whom other characters revolve.

Marlowe's other plays too unfold around a central character. Throughout *Doctor Faustus* the attention is focused on the hero, while other characters are mere sketches. Mephistopheles may be an exception, but he is always at the beck and call of the hero.

Comic Element

Marlowe did try to bring an element of comic relief in *Doctor Faustus*. Many critics are of the opinion that the comic scenes in the play are not the creation of the playwright but an insertion by others when Marlowe was no more. The comic scenes in this play, howsoever crude they may seem, do provide relief in tense situations. A famous comic scene is that of the horse-trader. He does not remember the warning of Faustus and carries the horse through the water as a result of which the horse is turned into a bundle of hay. Then the horse dealer comes back and pulls Faustus by the leg which, to his utter horror, comes off. Another comic scene is where Faustus plants horns on the head of the knight who insults him.

3.7 ALLEGORICAL SYMBOLISM IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

An allegory is a literary work with a dual meaning, in which the author narrates a seemingly simple story while he wishes to say something else. The author does not directly teach a lesson, but conveys the meaning indirectly through symbols. Therefore, in order to fully understand the author's intention, the symbols must be understood as allegory.

Doctor Faustus may be taken as an allegory as it tells the story of a medieval magician who surrendered his soul eternally to the Devil for worldly pleasures; beneath it there is a drama of a Christian defying God's doctrine. The hidden moral of the story is that any man, who violates the moral law, must suffer eternal damnation. Almost all the characters in the play-Mephistopheles, the Old man, Good angel, Evil angel, Helen, Seven Deadly Sins - are symbolic and allegorical in their meanings. They connote something more beyond their literal meanings.

Mephistopheles

Mephistopheles is the most important character after Faustus himself. He is drawn as a reliable assistant of Lucifer, the greatest power of Hell. Mephistopheles is responsible for everything- rise and fall of Faustus, his inner conflict and his final damnation. Mephistopheles is a symbol of the unbridled power of Hell.

The Old Man

The Old Man appears in Act V, Scene I of the play. He comes after the hero has just praised Helen, to his scholar friends. He symbolizes the voice of Christianity, the force of morality. Seeing that Faustus has completely surrendered himself to the devil, the Old Man says that he has come with a purpose:

That I might prevail

To guide thy steps upto the way of life

By which sweet path thou may'st attain the goal

That shall conduct thee to celestial rest!

Mephistopheles, in the meantime, shows Dr. Faustus the path to commit suicide. In this situation, the Old Man is a symbol of the last ray of hope by which Faustus may come out of the clutches of Mephistopheles.

The Angels

As the very names suggest, these two Angels are the personified abstractions of good and evil, which are diametrically opposite. They first appear in the beginning of the Second Act when Faustus, in his study, is soliloquizing whether to turn to God or to remain with the devil. The Good Angel asks Faustus to leave the art of magic and take to prayer and repentance. The Evil Angel immediately opposes the good one by saying (Act II, Scene I):

Rather illusions, fruits of lunacy.

He knows the weakest point of Faustus; hence he exhorts him only to think of power and wealth. Whenever Faustus thinks of the devil the good angel comes and gives Faustus a timely warning. The evil angel, on the contrary, always tries to pull Faustus towards the path of evil, sin and damnation.

Helen

Helen is simply an apparition, he is told. Helen's beauty and charm are so fascinating that Faustus is unable to control himself and wishes to be immortalized with a kiss of hers. It is obvious that Helen is an embodiment of matchless beauty and charm that fired the Renaissance imagination. She also symbolizes lust and immoral attraction.

Seven Deadly Sins

Lucifer comes from Hell to show Faustus the seven deadly sins. These are Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth and Lechery. They are the most dangerous sins as they are the cause of man's downfall. They are the personified representations of their abstract names. Such symbolism was common in Medieval English drama. These sins are the symbols of the negative qualities of Faustus himself. Thus, most of the characters and incidents in *Doctor Faustus* are more than what they seem at first sight.

Check Your Progress

8. Discuss *Doctor Faustus* as a morality play vis-à-vis the conflict between good and evil.
9. Comment on the relevance of comic scenes in the play.
10. What is the chief allegory that runs parallel with the play?

ACTIVITY

Read John Milton's Paradise Lost, Book I, II and III and write an essay on Satan.

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DID YOU KNOW

Many scholars consider Doctor Faustus to be a quintessential Renaissance figure. His ability to reason and interest in astronomy all compound to this assessment.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The play Doctor Faustus can be classified as a morality play, as it depicts the conflict between good and evil.
- The play opens with the chorus, which informs us of the birth and parentage of Faustus, his going to Wittenberg, obtaining the Doctor's degree, pondering over many subjects, brushing them away, taking to black magic, his pursuit of power, bringing upon himself, the eternal damnation of Hell.
- The chief characters are Faustus and Mephistopheles.
- All the major and minor characters are allegorical.
- This play has an autobiographical element.

3.9 KEY TERMS

- **Mystery play:** A popular medieval play based on biblical stories or the lives of the saints
- **Morality play:** Is an allegorical drama in which the central figure has certain abstract qualities through which the story unfolds.
- **Mephistopheles:** One of Lucifer's minions, personifies wickedness
- **Beelzebub:** Another of Lucifer's devils, sometimes refers to Lucifer himself
- **Lucifer:** Arch angel who rebelled against God and was banished from Heaven
- **Jehovah:** Is the oppressive God of the Old Testament
- **Wrath:** Anger
- **Sloth:** Laziness
- **Damnation:** A condition of being eternally punished in Hell

3.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Early English drama too had its source in religion. The earliest English plays were generally of two types – 'The Mysteries' and 'The Miracles'. The first one was based on the anecdotes of the Bible, while the second type dealt with the lives of saints. These plays were acted chiefly in twelfth-century England. In the beginning, these plays were acted in the church, then in the churchyards and later, on the stages erected in the open air. The church had clear control over early English drama.
2. 'Masque' was another form of drama. In the beginning, these were dumb shows and gradually music and dances were added to them, which made them very popular. After the Reformation, the public rejected the Mystery and Morality plays. They wanted plays to depict human life as it was. A new form therefore entered the dramatic world, and this was the Interlude. It was a sort of diversion from the seriousness of Miracle and Morality plays.
3. The central theme of the play Doctor Faustus is the event of the scholar selling his soul to the devil in exchange of knowledge.
4. In the Prologue, the chorus says that after getting victory over other scholars, Faustus becomes swollen with 'self-conceit.' It means that he begins to hold a high opinion of himself and his own abilities. This fact is established by his own statements in Act I, Scene I, when he examines one profession after another for himself. He rejects Analytics, saying: 'A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit.' Further, in Act II, Scene II, he asks Mephistopheles whether all the Heavenly bodies have only one motion with regard to direction and time. Mephistopheles replies that they move east to west in twenty-four hours but their orbits are different. Thereupon Faustus replies that such petty answers even his own servant Wagner can make. These speeches prove that he holds a very high opinion of his intellectual prowess.
5. Faustus's inexhaustible thirst for knowledge, his worship of beauty, his passion for the classics, his skepticism, his interest in sorcery and magic, and his superhuman pursuit of ideals of beauty and power prove Faustus (and Marlowe) to be a man of the Renaissance.
6. As a tragic hero Faustus is rather intriguing. He is possessed by a number of qualities in the extreme. He is possessed by a superhuman ambition for ruling the world. He has an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He utilizes most of his magic power to satisfy this thirst. He is possessed by a great thirst for beauty of every kind. He is also possessed by surging individualism that incites him to rebel against everything that is oppressive. Because of his individualism he often curses Mephistopheles. Over and above, he is a skeptic, and also highly self-possessed. In other words, it can be said that Faustus' tragic flaw is his self-indulgence.
7. In the plot of *Doctor Faustus*, Mephistopheles is 'a servant to great Lucifer', as he himself tells Faustus. Lucifer is the Arch-Regent and commander of all spirits. Mephistopheles is one of those unhappy spirits who were thrown, along with Lucifer, into Hell when they rose against God. And now he (Mephistopheles) lives in Hell, being damned with Lucifer to live there forever. He is gifted with a number of magic powers, but nothing seems to make him happy.

   Mephistopheles is the most important character after Faustus himself. He is drawn as a reliable assistant of Lucifer, the greatest power of Hell. Mephistopheles is responsible for everything- rise and fall of Faustus, his inner conflict and his final damnation. Mephistopheles is a symbol of the unbridled power of Hell.
8. A morality play shows a conflict between good and evil, and uses a didactic tone. *Doctor Faustus* represents this conflict, and so is said to be in the English morality tradition.

   The conflict between good and evil is an essential characteristic of the Morality play. The Good and Evil angels, the Seven Deadly Sins and the Old Man are all characters in traditional Morality plays. From the very beginning there is a conflict: The hero is tempted towards evil, he struggles against this temptation and in this process he undergoes spiritual anguish. Both good and evil angels appear before him several times and let him know the pros and cons of black magic and

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repentance. He is told that if he controls his desire for acquiring magic power and (re)turns to God, he will be pardoned and will enjoy the fruits of Heaven. Faustus is given a clear choice between damnation and salvation of his soul. The option remains open to him till his last day on Earth. His soul is the battleground of the forces of good and evil. He prefers the life of worldly pleasures for twenty-four years and writes a bond to pay the penalty—eternal damnation of his soul. A medieval morality play often shows this sort of conflict.

9. Marlowe did try to bring an element of comic relief in *Doctor Faustus*. Many critics are of the opinion that the comic scenes in the play are not the creation of the playwright but an insertion by others when Marlowe was no more. The comic scenes in this play, howsoever crude they may seem, do provide relief in tense situations. A famous comic scene is that of the horse-trader. He does not remember the warning of Faustus and carries the horse through the water as a result of which the horse is turned into a bundle of hay. Then the horse dealer comes back and pulls Faustus by the leg which, to his utter horror, comes off. Another comic scene is where Faustus plants horns on the head of the knight who insults him.
10. An allegory is a literary work with a dual meaning, in which the author narrates a seemingly simple story while he wishes to say something else. The author does Therefore, in order to fully understand the author's intention, the symbols must be understood as allegory.

    Doctor Faustus may be taken as an allegory as it tells the story of a medieval magician who surrendered his soul eternally to the Devil for worldly pleasures; beneath it there is a drama of a Christian defying God's doctrine. The hidden moral of the story is that any man, who violates the moral law, must suffer eternal damnation. Almost all the characters in the play-Mephistopheles, the Old man, Good angel, Evil angel, Helen, Seven Deadly Sins - are symbolic and allegorical in their meanings. They connote something more beyond their literal meanings.

3.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Discuss *Doctor Faustus* as a morality play.
2. State any two of Faustus' exploits after his negotiation with Mephistopheles.
3. Discuss the importance of the Old Man and the Good Angel.
4. Why is Mephistopheles an important character in the play?
5. Describe the last scene where Faustus is to be taken away.

Long-Answer Questions

1. The first discernable quality of Faustus's character is his ability to reason. Comment.
2. Give a brief overview of the journey of English Drama.
3. Discuss the importance of Faustus as a university wit. You may refer to the opening scene in his study for exact textual analysis.
4. Through Mephistopheles what is it that we learn of Hell?

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5. State the Seven Deadly Sins and comment on the way in which Marlowe uses it as a device to bring out Faustus' tragic flaw.
6. Faustus' desecration is caused by the oppressive powers of God (Jehovah) and Lucifer. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

3.12 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 *EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR* BY BEN JONSON

Structure

4.0 Introduction
4.1 Unit Objectives
4.2 Ben Jonson: A Biographical Note
4.3 Historical Background
4.4 Jonsonian Comedy
4.5 Significance of the Prologue
4.6 Plot Summary
4.7 Critical Comments
4.8 Summary
4.9 Key Terms
4.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
4.11 Questions and Exercises
4.12 Further Reading

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Ben Jonson is an Elizabethan dramatist, poet and critic who is well known for his comedies and for developing a theory of Comedy of Humours. It is said that if William Shakespeare would not have happened to the English stage, then probably Ben Jonson would have been the greatest of the English dramatists. His comedies are usually satiric in tone and they critique the follies and foibles of the people of that time. In that sense, Jonson's comedies are a great social study of his times. Ben Jonson is classical in his outlook and he tried to follow the classical model of drama to write his plays. *Every Man in his Humour* was Jonson's first successful comic play which established him in the English stage. It was staged for the first time in 1598 by the Lord Chamberlain's men at the Curtain theatre. It is interesting to note here that William Shakespeare was in the cast of the play *Every Man in His Humour.* With this play, Jonson established himself in the theatrical world of the Elizabethan England and then went on to write many comedies and two tragedies. His plays *Every Man in his Humour* and *Every Man Out of his Humour* are not only humorous satirical comedies by their own right, but at the same time, the prologues of these comedies brought forth the notion of Comedy of Humours.

While William Shakespeare's comedies were primarily romantic in nature and dealt with themes of love; Ben Jonson was primarily interested in pointing out the follies and foibles of the people of that time. It is for this reason that his plays are satiric and have a corrective purpose. Jonson is probably the first British dramatist to popularize the satiric comedies on English stage. John Dryden makes an interesting comment on Jonson by comparing him with William Shakespeare – 'I admire Jonson, but I love Shakespeare.' These two stalwarts of English drama were writing at the same time and there is no way but to compare these two. Whereas Shakespeare busied himself in writing Romantic Comedies apart from other things, Ben Jonson wrote satiric comedies. Hence from Dryden onwards till today whenever there is a discussion on Jonsonian comedies, it is often in comparison with Shakespearean romantic comedies.

There are two versions of the play *Every Man in His Humour*. The original version which was staged in 1598 and the 1601 Quarto published version had Italian

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names of characters and was set in Florence, Italy; whereas the Folio version which was published in 1616 was set in London and had English characters. Apart from characters' names and setting, there are other significant changes that Ben Jonson made to the play. We will be referring to the Folio version in this study material.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVE

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Ben Johnson as an Elizabethan dramatist
- Interpret the play *Every Man in His Humour*
- Critically assess Johnson's contribution to the English Theatre — The Comedy of Humours

4.2 BEN JONSON: A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ben Jonson (11 June 1572 – 6 August 1637), a Jacobean (or Elizabethan) playwright, poet and critic is best known for the satirical plays *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), *Volpone, or The Foxe* (1605), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair: A Comedy* (1614) and also for his poems and masques. Jonson is considered to be the next best English dramatist, after William Shakespeare, of the Elizabethan era.

Born in an Anglo-Scottish border country, Jonson's father was a clergyman who died two months before his birth. His mother remarried a master bricklayer. After finishing his early education, Jonson was an apprentice to bricklaying as his step-father wanted him to join his profession. Thereafter, Ben Jonson went to the Netherlands, and volunteered to soldier with the English regiments of Francis Vere (1560–1609), in Flanders. Next Jonson returned to England and worked as an actor and playwright. By 1598, with the production of *Every Man in His Humour* Ben Jonson established his reputation as a dramatist. In 1599, came the play *Every Man out of His Humour*.

His play *Cynthia's Revels* was produced by the Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars Theatre in 1600. It satirized both John Marston, who Jonson believed had accused him of lustfulness and Thomas Dekker. Jonson attacked the two poets again in 1601's *Poetaster*. Dekker responded with *Satiromastix*, subtitled 'the untrussing of the humorous poet'. This 'War of the Theatres' appears to have ended with reconciliation on all sides. Of the many poets and dramatist, he participated in welcoming James I to the throne. Next, Jonson pursued a more prestigious career, writing masques for James's court. *The Satyr* (1603) and *The Masque of Blackness* (1605).

The period between 1605 and 1620 may be viewed as Jonson's glory days. By 1616 he had produced all the plays on which his present reputation as a dramatist is based, including the tragedy *Catiline* (acted and printed 1611), which achieved limited success, and the comedies *Volpone*, (acted 1605 and printed in 1607), *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). *The Alchemist* and *Volpone* were immediately successful.

His works

Apart from two tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, which did not impress Renaissance audiences too much, Ben Jonson's dramatic works are primarily comedies. The plays of Ben Jonson are as follows:

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- *A Tale of a Tub*, comedy
- *The Isle of Dogs*, comedy (1597, with Thomas Nashe)
- *The Case is Altered*, comedy (1597–98; printed 1609),
- *Every Man in His Humour*, comedy (performed 1598; printed 1601)
- *Every Man out of His Humour*, comedy (performed 1599; printed 1600)
- *Cynthia's Revels* (performed 1600; printed 1601)
- *The Poetaster*, comedy (performed 1601; printed 1602)
- *Sejanus His Fall*, tragedy (performed 1603; printed 1605)
- *Eastward Ho*, comedy (performed and printed 1605), a collaboration with John Marston and George Chapman
- *Volpone*, comedy (c. 1605–06; printed 1607)
- *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*, comedy (performed 1609; printed 1616)
- *The Alchemist*, comedy (performed 1610; printed 1612)
- *Catiline His Conspiracy*, tragedy (performed and printed 1611)
- *Bartholomew Fair*, comedy (performed 31 October 1614; printed 1631)
- *The Devil is an Ass*, comedy (performed 1616; printed 1631)
- *The Staple of News*, comedy (performed Feb. 1626; printed 1631)
- *The New Inn, or The Light Heart*, comedy (licensed 19 January 1629; printed 1631)
- *The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*, comedy (licensed 12 October 1632; printed 1641)
- *The Sad Shepherd,* pastoral (c. 1637, printed 1641), unfinished
- *Mortimer his Fall,* history (printed 1641), a fragment

4.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Elizabethan era is the period associated with Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1558–1603) and is often considered to be the golden age in history of English Literature and art. It is considered to be the height of the English Renaissance. The Renaissance begun in fourteenth-century Italy and from there spread throughout Europe. Renaissance means rebirth. In the European context Renaissance was the rebirth of the classical (Greek and Roman) learning. Therefore, the age of renaissance saw new interest in ancient Greek and Roman classics which created a fresh vigour and vitality in the mindset of the people. The significant change that occurred during the Renaissance was that man began questioning things and tried to understand the scientific reason that culminated in events. The temper of scientific enquiry dominated the age.

The Elizabethan era is the greatest age of English literature as plays and poems reached a new height in this age like never before. The prominent writers of the age are William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Francis Bacon, and Walter Raleigh among others. They not only wrote plays, poems, essays but experimented with different genres and often tried intermingling genres. It was a time when theatre flourished. It was also a time when theatre severed its link from the churches and established itself as a secular institution. Moreover, The Elizabethan

era is also seen as an age of exploration and expansion. In England, the Protestant Reformation was going on which helped in creating a national mindset. This period witnessed a rapid growth in English Commerce and naval power.

Though Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, literary scholars include the literature written in sixteenth and seventeenth-century to be belonging to the Elizabethan era. Often John Milton is also considered to be an Elizabethan Poet. King James I ruled England from 1603 to 1625 which is termed by scholars as the Jacobean Age. Shakespeare's famous tragedies and tragicomedies, most of Ben Jonson's satiric comedies, John Donne's sermons and poetry, Webster and other dramatists' plays, Francis Bacon's didactic essays, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and many other famous writings were created during the era of James I's rule. Some scholars consider Ben Jonson to be a Jacobean playwright.

Elizabethan theatre derived from several medieval theatre traditions, such as the Mystery plays, based on biblical themes, that formed a part of religious festivals in England and other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages, the Morality plays that evolved out of the mysteries; and the plays by University Wits that attempted to recreate Greek tragedy. The Italian tradition of Commedia dell'arte as well as the elaborate masques frequently presented at court also helped in the shaping of public theatre. The City of London authorities, primarily Puritans, were generally hostile to public performances, but its hostility was overmatched by the Queen's taste for plays. Theatres sprang up in suburbs, accessible across the Thames River to city dwellers, but beyond the authority's control.

All the theatres of London during the Elizabethan era had individual differences; yet their common function necessitated a similar general plan. The public theatres were three stories high, and built around an open space at the centre. Usually polygonal in plan to give an overall rounded effect, the three levels of inward-facing galleries overlooked the open center, into which jutted the stage—essentially a platform surrounded on three sides by the audience, only the rear being restricted for the entrances and exits of the actors and seating for the musicians. The upper level behind the stage was used as a balcony.

Since Elizabethan theatre did not make use of lavish scenery, instead leaving the stage largely bare with a few key props, the main visual appeal on stage was costumes. Costumes were often bright in color and visually entrancing. Costumes were expensive; hence usually, players wore contemporary clothing regardless of the time period of the play. Occasionally, a lead character would wear a conventionalized version of a more historically accurate garb, but secondary characters would nonetheless remain in contemporary clothing.

Moreover, the Elizabethans did not have elaborate props for the stage. The stage was primarily bare and the backdrop of the play was left for the audience to imagine. Mostly a placard was hung upon the stage doors to suggest where the scene is set. The play used to start with a flag being unfurled to suggest that the play has started. After some music, the prologue was spoken by an actor where he would give a gist of the setting of the play to make the audience understand the backdrop in which the play is about to be performed. If the play lacked a prologue then in the opening scene(s) the backdrop of the play is referred to make the audience know where the play is set.

If the Royalists promoted literature and theatre, then there was a faction in England called the Puritans who had a strong disliking for theatre, as theatre was perceived by them as an immoral place. Though Queen Elizabeth herself was a great admirer and promoter of theatre, still women were not allowed to act in a play during her reign.

Mostly women characters were played by boys who used to cross-dress as women in the plays. The rising Puritan movement was hostile towards theatre, and when they gained control of the city early in the English Civil War, and on September 2, 1642; they ordered the London theatres to be closed. The theatres remained closed for most of the next eighteen years, and reopened after the Restoration of the monarch in 1660. It is a matter of discussion that theatre rose to its pinnacle in an age when the opposition against it was strongest.

4.4 JONSONIAN COMEDY

A comedy is generally defined as a play where the characters, their follies and discomfitures are mocked with an entertainment factor. In a comedy, no great catastrophe happens to any of the characters and the play ends on a happy note as the main characters achieve what they aspire for. The play is written and performed in such a way that the audience or readers pleasurably engage themselves while watching or reading it. Though a comedy's chief aim is to amuse the readers, there is another function associated with it, and that is – to correct the vices and follies of people, by mocking and criticizing those vices and follies on stage. In other words, the aesthetic purpose of a comedy was to reflect the vices and follies and make the audience understand its repercussions. The objective was to make the people rectify their mistakes by watching the ridiculous ramifications on stage and learning from it. In other words, comedies had a twin purpose which worked like a medicine without giving the impression of being overtly correctional, and it had its own unique appeal. However, to say that comedies must have the element of being correctional is not always true. Some comedies of this age were purely devoted to entertaining only.

Classical dramatists such as Plautus and Terence (Roman) and Aristophanes (Greek) wrote comedies which became a standard framework for writing comedies. Their comedies included certain features which can be enumerated as:

- Comedy is realistic, usually about people who are placed at a lower in rank in society. Aristotle, the Greek Classical scholar in his book *Poetics* says that tragedy is inclined to imitate people above the level of our world and comedy below it.
- The primary objective of a comedy is to satirize and to correct people's vices and follies through satire. The vices and follies are ridiculed and exposed so that the audience can laugh and learn while watching the play. Thus, the objective of comedy is not only to entertain by producing laughter in the audience but also to educate the audience, to make them learn about their mistakes.
- Usually the tragic and the comic elements are not intermingled in classical comedies, as that would mar the comic effect of the play. Before any disaster is about to fall on any character or characters, the disaster is averted as a Comedy must always end happily with wish-fulfillment.
- Classical comedies strictly observed the unities of time, place and action. According to the Classical norms, the time frame of a play should not be more than twenty four hours so that the audience does not have any problem in situating the play within the time frame. The setting of the play should be one throughout the play, that is, the play should be set in one place in order to avoid confusion as to where the actions are unfolding.

As per the norms established by the Greek dramatists, no more than one plot should be presented in the play. The plot should deal with a single action and not with many as that would lead to the dilution of the content of the play.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries went beyond the prescribed classical norms of comedy to reinvent a new genre which is usually termed as Romantic Comedy, where the romantic and the comic elements intermingle to delight the audience. The main motive is not to educate or point out the vice and corruptions in society, but to entertain the theatre-going mass. Romantic comedy developed, as said earlier, by the Elizabethan dramatists based on prose romances such as Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*, the source of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Romantic comedies usually have a love affair where the beautiful and wise heroine, often disguised as a man, usually overcomes all difficulties to get her lover and the play ends on a happy note (usually in marriage). Thus, in a romantic comedy the main theme is love, where love ends in fruition overcoming all difficulties.

As against the norms of the Romantic Comedy, Ben Jonson invented a new genre called the Comedy of Humours where the main objective along with evoking laughter was to also correct their vices. Ben Jonson specifically writes in the Prologue of *Every Man in His Humour* that his comedies deal with vices and not with crimes. Jonson was a strict follower of the classical norms primarily that of the three unities set by the Greek playwrights (as mentioned earlier in the features of Classical comedies). Moreover he was against the Romantic Comedies which provided a relief from everyday reality by situating the play in a dream like atmosphere as in Shakespeare's *Mid Summer Night's Dream*. Jonson based his comedies on actual conditions of life of the people of the age. Suppose if one makes a comparison between Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour,* one will be able to discern that while Shakespeare's play is set in the fanciful world of the forest of Arden, Jonson's play is set in the everyday reality of the then England. This aspect of Jonson's plays – the everyday reality – makes them more realistic and is a great way to understand the socio-political and cultural scenario of the age. Emile Legouis significantly makes a comparison between Jonson and Shakespeare and says that 'In one sense, he (Jonson) was more original than Shakespeare. Shakespeare accepts the conditions of the stage of his time; he was aware of its shortcomings, but he reconciles himself to them with a smile. His relation with the public remains sympathetic. Jonson, however, is angry and in an arrogant opposition to the Elizabethan stage, and sets up his own tastes, ideas and theories, all derived from the ancients, against the popular taste. He also makes sarcastic references to his public. Thus, while Shakespeare passively follows the course of the stream, Jonson throws his huge bulk against it.' This opinion of Emile Legouis is significant in undersanding Jonson's contribution to the English stage and theatre; though there are divided opinions about the comment as the light in which Shakespeare has been portrayed in the comment is not completely true. Shakespeare also stood against the prevailing conditions of theatre of the Elizabethan era, but reacted in a different way.

What is also significant in Jonson is not only the realistic element, but also the notion of *humour* which had a significant role to play in his comedies. What we figure out is that almost each of Jonson's characters is endowed with a whim or affectation – some ludicrous exaggeration in manner, speech or dress which becomes the subject of comedy. Jonson based his theory of Comedy of Humours on the physiology of the times when it was thought that a person is regulated by a harmonious blend of the humours engendered in the liver, heart and spleen. The various humours were blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. These four humours should be balanced in the case of a

normal person; but if any of these gets imbalanced then it may lead to a folly, or an affectation or an imbalance in the person's character. In Jonsonian comedies what we see, each of his characters suffers from a peculiar habit or tendency whether in their way of speaking or dressing or a singular trait which has grown to a point of abnormality. Let us think of some of the characters in *every Man in His Humour.*

- Old Knowell, father of Edward, reads a letter written to his son and therefore goes out of the way to spy on his son and subsequently realizes the error he has made by doing so.
- Bobadill is primarily a coward and therefore he needs to cover his cowardice by unnecessarily bragging about his heroic exploits in the war.
- Downright is a man who loses his temper at the slightest provocation.
- Kitely is a jealous husband who is always suspicious of his wife and thinks that his wife is susceptible to being seduced by some unscrupulous man.
- Dame Kitely, Kitely's wife, is also a suspicious wife who starts having suspicion against her husband at a slightest hint.
- Stephen is affected by melancholy.
- Matthew pretends to be a poet whereas he actually plagiarizes.
- Edward and Wellbred are wits who have much fun at the cost of Stephen and Mathew.
- Clement, the judge seems to be merry and betrays a weakness for wine.

All the characters in *Every Man in his Humour,* as the title suggests has a distinct humour of his own which makes their characters merely types and not characters who can be perceived as human souls (as in Shakespeare). There is a vast difference between Shakespeare and Jonson in their art of characterization which is very essential to comedy. Whereas in Shakespeare we see that his characters are complex beings, in Jonson however, the characters are more of caricatures of a certain type. In that sense, some may think that Jonson has a limited vision and was only concerned with the follies and flaws in characters to make fun of them on stage, to satirize them on stage so that the comic purpose is served. However, this cannot be said to be the complete truth as Jonson is deliberately trying to portray these peculiarities in his characters as his comedy is based on the principle of humours.

Check Your Progress

1. Identify the genre of Jonson's plays.
2. Discuss the main features of the Elizabethan stage.
3. Define comedy.
4. Explain Ben Jonson's comedy of humour.
5. In what ways are Jonson's comedies different from Shakespeare's comedies?
6. Contrast the aesthetic concerns of Shakespeare and Jonson vis-à-vis comedy.

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4.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROLOGUE

Prologue

Though need make many poets, and some such
As art and nature have not better'd much;
Yet ours for want hath not so loved the stage,
As he dare serve the ill customs of the age,
Or purchase your delight at such a rate,
As, for it, he himself must justly hate:
To make a child now swaddled, to proceed
Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
Past threescore years; or, with three rusty swords,
And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
Fight over York and Lancaster's king jars,
And in the tyring-house bring wounds to scars.
He rather prays you will be pleas'd to see
One such to-day, as other plays should be;
Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,
Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please;
Nor nimble squib is seen to make afeard
The gentlewomen; nor roll'd bullet heard
To say, it thunders; nor tempestuous drum
Rumbles, to tell you when the storm doth come;
But deeds, and language, such as men do use,
And persons, such as comedy would choose,
When she would shew an image of the times,
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.
Except we make them such, by loving still
Our popular errors, when we know they're ill.
I mean such errors as you'll all confess,
By laughing at them, they deserve no less:
Which when you heartily do, there's hope left then,
You, that have so grac'd monsters, may like men.

Ben Jonson's prologues to his plays are significant as they provide an insight into the meaning of his plays and his use of comedy. In a sense, his prologues are a kind of a glossary to his use of comedy and how he perceives Elizabethan society. All these aspects find an expression in his plays that are not only unique but also distinct in style and treatment. Therefore, it is important to read them in detail so that we understand Jonson's contribution to theatre.

In the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour,* Jonson propagates what he thinks is the role of comedy – it is not merely to provide pleasurable laughter as did the comedies of Shakespeare but it also has a corrective function. It is not an art which is merely for art's sake, but has a social role to perform by satirizing the follies and foibles of mankind. Whereas Shakespeare thought that his primary role in writing comedies is to provide a relief to his audience from the tensions of everyday life – to forget the world outside the theatre and to enjoy the dreamy supernatural nature of the world of theatre. But Jonson's comedies are an extension of the world outside the theatre in the sense that the characters with their vices, follies, exaggerations, fears, etc. are presented on stage so that the audience may look and laugh at them. It is while laughing at the characters that realization occurs to those watching the play. The sobering effect of identifying and acknowledging the possibility of being the characters on stage with their follies is the core essence of Jonsonian comedy.

Ben Jonson starts the prologue by saying that many people become poets under the compulsion of their poverty and many of them fail in their attempts. But the writer of this play, that is, Ben Jonson himself, despite his poverty, has dared to show a blind reverence for the evil conventions of playwriting of the times. Ben Jonson had no intention of pleasing his audience by following the customs of play-writing prevalent during the age. One element that is seen clearly is the deviation of the norm of following the three unities prescribed by the Greeks. Many a times in the duration of the plays it is shown that a play a child or an infant is shown to be growing to manhood, and then growing still older to become an old man (flouting Unity of Time), etc. Ben Jonson disliked such customs of the Elizabethan Drama. As opposed to this, he decided to write realistic plays such as *Every Man in His Humour.*

He also mentions that this play can serve as a model for other plays as in this play, there is no chorus to tell the audience to cross the ocean in your imagination in order to jump from England to France (flouting the Unity of Place) to watch the subsequent events of the play. Neither is the play produced in a way where smart fireworks are used on the stage to frighten the gentle ladies in the audience nor cannon balls were rolled behind the stage to produce an impression f thunder, etc.

On the other hand, the play tries to portray deeds which are actually performed by human beings in real life. In other words, the play tries to maintain close fidelity to reality. As a result, the language of characters in this play is also realistic. Jonson thinks that the characters in this play are appropriate to comic genre as the aim of comedy is to give to the audience a realistic picture of the life of the times, to mock at human follies and not depict serious crimes. H further states that the follies are not presented in such a fashion so as to make the audience fall in love with them. As the follies are exaggerated, Jonson has taken care to present them in a distasteful way leading the audience to laugh at them. Jonson says in the prologue that if the audience could heartily laugh at the follies depicted in this play, then it is better as it means that the audience are laughing at themselves and learning about their mistakes rather than encountering some monstrous or absurd character on stage.

Some Critical Comments by Eminent Critics on Ben Jonson and his Comedies

Michael Jamieson

Professor Nevill Coghill has usefully demonstrated that two traditions of comedy existed in Elizabethan times, with different antecedents, both stemming from theoretical reversals of Aristotle's notions of tragedy. 'Romantic Comedy begins with wretchedness and the threat of danger but ends happily. Satiric Comedy teaches by exposing the errors of folk. Shakespeare, and Jonson, Professor Coghill

argues exemplify the two comic forms: The quality of a Jonsonian Comedy, however, lies not only in its construction and in its presentation of character as obsession, but also in its language. The master-theme in Jonson's satirical comedies is human folly.'

M.C. Bradbrook

Sweet and bitter comedy, romantic and satiric comedy, or Shakespearean and Jonsonian comedy have all been used as terms of description for the two main divisions, of which the first may be said to be characteristically Elizabethan, and the second Jacobean. Behind Elizabethan drama there lay at least two modes of acting first, the tradition of the revels, whether country or popular, and all that these implied of intimate collaboration between actors and audience. Second, the learned tradition of rhetorical and satiric drama upon moral themes, built up in the schools and universities, found expression in an even more intimate private presentation. When these two traditions coalesced, the great age of Elizabethan drama began. Jonson was bold in his readiness to modify classical precept, he admired the native tradition, and the form which he evolved was as far removed from the pedantic as it was from the spontaneous.

4.6 PLOT SUMMARY

Act I

- A letter written by Wellbred to his friend Edward Knowell falls into the hands of his father, Old Knowell. The content of the letter makes Old Knowell concerned about his son Edward as it shows both the young man, Wellbred and Edward, in an unfavourable light.
- Old Knowell's servant, Brainworm, knows about the fact of Old Knowell's heinous act of going through his son's letter secretly. To gain some favour of the young man Edward, Brainworm reveals the act of secretly reading the letter of Old Knowell to Edward. One must remember here that Old Knowell specifically mentioned to Brainworm that he should never disclose the fact to Edward as he wants to pursue his son in London and figure out what he is up to. We will come across in the play that Brainworm is the chief mischief monger of the play and it is he who takes up different disguises in the play for different purposes.
- Edward, as he goes to meet Wellbred in London at a tavern called 'The Windmill', he also takes along with him, his cousin Stephen, a country gull.
- Matthew, who is a town gull, approaches Captain Bobadill (a coward who always pretends to be brave to cover up his cowardice) for help against Wellbred's half brother, Downright, who has threatened to beat up Matthew and Mathew finds himself helpless and vulnerable. Captain Bobadill has taken his temporary accommodation in the modest house of a water-carrier by the name of Cob. Bobadill promises that he will teach Matthew some tricks with the sword so that he will be able to defend himself against an attack of Downright.

Act II

- Wellbred is staying in the house of Thomas Kitely. (Thomas Kitely is married to Wellbred's sister). Thomas Kitely is disgusted with the activities of Wellbred and complains to Downright who is Wellbred's half-brother, that Wellbred is disturbing the peaceful atmosphere of his house by bringing a number of raucous, unruly and irresponsible young friends there and indulging in all sorts of wild behavior in their company.

- At the same time we see that Kitely is feeling deeply disturbed by the fact that it may happen that his wife, Dame Kitely, might be seduced by one of Wellbred's friends. Jealousy and suspicion are the chief traits of Thomas Kitely's character as he is not able to have faith in his wife and feels that he may be cheated by her. He is also anxious about his younger sister Bridget because of Wellbred and the presence of his friends in the house.
- As we have already seen in Act I that Old Knowerll has read the letter for his son Edward and feels that his son is involved in some inauspicious activities and therefore has decided to follow his son Edward to London. Without Edward's knowledge of his father pursuing him, Old Knowell wants to investigate into Edward's conduct in London.
- Brainworm, the servant of Old Knowell who has already told Old Knowell's plans to Edward, disguises himself as an ex-soldier in this circumstance and meets Old Knowell when he is on his way to London. Brainworm manages to get employed as the old man's servant without the old man knowing that fact that this ex-soldier is actually his servant Brainworm. Brainworm has devised this plot of deception by dressing as an ex-soldier as he wants to frustrate the plans of Old Knowell to spy upon the activities of his son in the city of London and moreover to provide all information to Edward about the whereabouts and actions of Old Knowell.
- Bobadill and Downright meet and they are about to fight which is averted by Kitely.

Act III

- As we know from Act I that Edward and Wellbred are supposed to meet, they meet. Together Edward and Wellbred have much fun at the cost of the braggart, Bobadill and at the cost of the two gulls, Stephen and Matthew. This scene is meant to evoke laughter at the cost of the gulls (both city and country) and at Bobadill who pretends to be courageous to cover up his cowardice.
- Brainworm, who is now disguised himself as an ex-soldier, reveals his true identity to Edward and Wellbred. He informs them of Old Knowell's presence in the town to spy on Edward. He does it as we have found earlier to gain some favour from the young master Edward.
- Thomas Kitely, as mentioned earlier, is suffering acutely from the pangs of jealousy as he thinks that his wife Dame Kitely must be having some fun with Wellbred's friends. He becomes over protective of his wife and thinks of not leaving her alone at any point of time. So on the one hand we see Old Knowell being suspicious of his son and spying on him and on the other we see Thomas Kitely suspicious of his wife and not letting her be on her own at any point of time.
- Cob, the water carrier on whose house Bobadill is a guest, gets a beating from Bobadill for his condemnation of the habit of smoking tobacco. Therefore he decides to obtain a warrant from Justice Clement binding Bobadill to keep the peace and he does so.
- Old Knowell and Justice Clement are friends and as they meet, Justice Clement urges Old Knowell not to worry about his son Edward, because Clement thinks that Edward is not a prodigal or a scoundrel to waste his time and energy in doing irresponsible acts.

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Act IV

- According to Kitely's wish, Downright objects to the way in which Wellbred and his friends are behaving roughly and raucously in Kitely's house. Swords are drawn, but a fight is averted with great difficulty by the inmates of the house.
- Edward gets attracted to Bridget (Thomas Kitely's younger sister), and Wellbred promises to get him married to her.
- Downright meets Bobadill and Matthew in a street, and gives Bobadill a thrashing, while Matthew is able to run away.
- Stephen picks up the cloak which Downright has unintentionally dropped. Stephen decides that he should keep the cloak with himself, though Edward advised him not to do so.
- Brainworm fools Old Knowell by fixing things in such a manner that Old Knowell believes that he would be able to catch his son Edward red-handed in the process of making love to a townswoman in Cob's house.
- Meanwhile, Wellbred falsely informs Dame Kitely that her husband, Thomas Kitely, is a frequent visitor to Cob's house which, informs Wellbred, is a kind of brothel. Dame Kitely, being similarly suspicious of her husband as he is of her, rushes to Cob's house to catch her husband red-handed.
- As Dame Kitely leaves, Thomas Kitely enters the house and he is told by Wellbred that Dame Kitely has gone to Cob's house. As Kitely was already suspicious of his wife's conduct, and now instigated by Wellbred, he thinks that Dame Kitely has gone to Cob's house for immoral purposes.
- Everything goes according to plan. Wellbred has managed to send both Kitely and Dame Kitely away from their house by directing them to Cob's house where each wants to find the other in a compromising situation. Old Knowell is also taken care of by the plan of Brainworm where he has also gone to Cob's house to catch Edward there. Wellbred finds it a perfect occasion and takes Bridget with him to the Tower, to meet Edward who is waiting for them at that place in the hope that he will be able to marry Bridget.
- Brainworm, in another subplot of the play, disguises himself as Clement's clerk and then as a city sergeant to throw dust into the eyes of Bobadill, Matthew, Stephen and even Downright, with the result that they all go to Justice Clement's house asking for some kind of judgment on what they have gone through. Each one of them has some grievance or the other as all of them have suffered. Brainworm now comes to the conclusion that he cannot probably carry on making fool of people by disguising himself anymore and will have to face the music of his erstwhile disguises, as an ex-soldier, a Judge's clerk and a sergeant.
- Thomas Kitely, suspecting his wife of involvement with Old Knowell as they were both found in Cob's house, takes them all to Clement's house for a redressal of his grievances.

Act V

- All the characters of the play are now at Justice Clement's house where each character seeks redress of their respective grievances against one another. It is a funny situation as almost nothing has happened and yet all of them have grievances and seek redressal.

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- Thomas Kitely complains that his wife Dame Kitely had gone to Cob's house for immoral purposes, while Dame Kitely accuses her husband of paying frequent visits to some harlot at Cob's house.
- Cob could not believe what he is hearing and accuses his wife Tib of having converted his house into a brothel.
- Downright has been accused of having physically assaulting Bobadill and Matthew. Stephen has been charged with stealing the cloak of Downright.
- Brainworm, who finds no other way now, tells him that he has taken many disguises and his present disguise is that of a sergeant. He reveals his true identity to the judge, and expects the judge to consider his case leniently.
- Brainworm also informs the court that Edward and Bridget have already got married, and are now getting ready to order a wedding-supper at a tavern
- Justice Clement approves of the marriage of Edward and Bridget as soon as he listens about it and moreover declares that the wedding –feast in honour of the couple would be held at his own house, instead of the Tavern. Justice Clement is extraordinarily fond of wine, is full of mirth and as the name suggests is very lenient and compassionate as a judge.
- Punishments suiting their follies are sentenced by Justice Clement to Bobadill and Matthew, to Cob and Tib, to Formal, and to Stephen; while all the others are invited by Justice Clement to the supper which would be held at his house that night. Moreover, Thomas Kitely and Dame Kitely are directed by Justice Clement to shed their jealousy and suspicion for each other, and they do so.
- Justice Clement is full of praise for the mischief monger Brainworm for the wit which Brainworm has displayed by assuming various disguises.

4.7 CRITICAL COMMENTS

With the production of two plays – *Every Man in His Humour* and *Every Man out of His Humour*, Ben Jonson was considered to be an inventor of the new genre of Comedy, the Comedy of Humours. This new form of comedy was based on the Renaissance notions of physiology. Jonson was reinventing the genre of comedy in a newer way so as to stop the Puritans from attacking theatre on the grounds that it was immoral. Jonson was rephrasing the function of comedy. For Jonson, comedy is not merely for the purpose of laughter, but moreover has a therapeutic value – as the intention of writing comedy was to make a satiric attack on follies and foibles of the people, as Harry Levin observes: 'The introduction to *Every Man Out of His Humour* sets forth the full argument for comedy as a social purgative. It is perhaps as relevant to Jonson's work as psychoanalysis is to the dramas of Eugene O'Neill.' What Jonson is doing is nothing new though. The classical dramatists believed the same as they even thought that the purpose of comedy would be to satirize the follies of people.

Renaissance, as we have talked about earlier, means 'rebirth of the classical.' Ben Jonson reworked on the classical form of comedy but gave it a twist with his comedy of humours where each of the character in his play is somehow suffering from a particular character trait which is exaggerated. If Shakespearean characters had a certain spontaneity, then Jonsonian characters are primarily caricatures in the sense that each of them typify one particular trait. One is a coward and therefore puts up a brave face, another is suspicious and jealous of his wife, another is suspicious of his son's

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conduct, etc. It may seem that his characters are not mature individuals, but they are not so as Jonson's intention was to portray these types and then make them look foolish so that the audience can have a laugh at the cost of these characters and at the same time learn from their mistakes. In other words, it can be said that though the characters are caricatures his characters possess an astonishing range of distinguishing traits and an undeniable vitality.

When one tries to define Jonsonian comedy it is obvious that one reads them in contrast to Shakespearean comedies. It is thought that the plays of Jonson are peopled by citizens and therefore it has a harsh ethic. On the other hand, Shakespearean characters seem to be from all walks and stations of life. Shakespearian comedies are usually thought to be sweet and romantic, and Jonsonian comedy, bitter and satiric. Therefore, L. C. Knights remarked 'Of the dramatists handling social themes Jonson is undoubtedly the greatest.' The nature and function of Jonsonian comedy was enunciated in Cicero's dictum cited in the introduction to *Every* Man *Out of His Humour:* 'Comedy is an imitation of life, a mirror of manners and an image of truth'.

When *Every Man in His Humour* was produced for the first time in the English Stage which created an uproar as it was something very new to the English Stage as it observed the unities of time and place very strictly and was a tirade against the fantastic and the extravagant romantic elements of the prevalent romantic comedies. Jonson published the play in 1601. In both, the first production and the 1601 Quarto Production, the play is set in Florence, Italy and the characters had Italian names; whereas when the play was again republished in 1616 in the Folio version the setting of the play had changed to London and the characters are given English names. Though the content of the play more or less remains the same, but the change of the names of characters and the setting is significant as earlier when Jonson was producing the play in 1598 he was new to the world of English theatre and he could not even if he could make a direct satiric attack of the audience for their follies as that would immediately dissatisfy his audience. But by 1616 when the Folio version was published, Ben Jonson was already a big name in the theatrical circle and he could then afford to do what he really wanted. Therefore he changed the names of the characters to English names and made some other significant but minor changes in the play so that the audience could directly identify that the play is about them and their follies.

Below is a list of the characters in the original version during the production in 1598 and the first publication in 1601 with the corresponding changes that are made in the Folio version published in 1616.

Italian Names of the Characters in the Quarto version (1601)	Corresponding English Names in the Folio Version (1616)
Lorenzo Senior	Old Knowell
Lorenzo Junior	Edward
Prospero	Wellbred
Thorello	Kitely
Musco	Brainworm
Hesperida	Bridget
Stephano	Stephen
Matheo	Matthew
Guiliano	Downright
Bobadillo	Bobadill

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The English names that Jonson gives to his major characters are not random names as the names themselves suggest – they provide a key to the characters. Even before we read or watch the play we get an idea about the characters of the play as the names themselves suggest what we are going to find out in the play. For instance, Knowell literally means 'know well' and we know that in the play we will be dealing with what the characters of Knowell does not know. He thinks that he possesses absolute knowledge about everything around him and what we figure out in the course of the play is that he suffers from wrong notions about his son by reading a letter that Wellbred has written to his son Edward. His suspicion and over protectiveness of his son which makes him go to London to spy on him can be considered as the main plot of the play, as Jonson's aim in writing the play was to mock the over-solicitous fathers like Knowell. Wellbred literally suggest one who is bred well, but in the course of the play we see that he is the one who is being accused by Kitely to bring his rowdy friends at his home. It is in Wellbred's letter that they will be enjoying and having fun at the Tavern in London which creates a suspicion in the mind of Knowell. Kitely is another significant character that we meet in the play who is over jealous and suspicious of his wife Dame Kitely as he thinks that probably she is attracted to Wellbred's friends who come to his house regularly. The name of Kitely suggests who is very sensitive in the sense that ordinary incidents create havoc on him. A person who is suspicious will always create havoc out of nothing. The same holds true for his wife as well, Dame Kitely. Both these characters are asked by judge Clement to be not so jealous and suspicious of each other and to have more faith on each other.

One ought to keep in mind the idea that during the Renaissance, women were thought to be transgressive and given a chance they will cross the limits set by patriarchy. Therefore many pamphleteers of the Renaissance, especially people such as Stephen Gosson asserted in their pamphlets that to keep women virtuous they should be always under the control of men. Kitely probably is a person who believes in the same and thinks that women, given a chance, would transgress and disturb the patriarchal order. So as Wellbred's friends come to Kitely's house he becomes suspicious of his wife. One needs to keep in mind that Jonson's play portrays the patriarchal notions of women during the Renaissance.

Many a times it is said that women do not have a considerable role to play in Jonson's plays (as in Classical Comedies) and that it is primarily a masculine world. But that is the core of the issue. Jonson portrays an England where women did not have a role to perform in the outside public world. Women were kept within the households as it was thought that women in the public space would create more and more problems for the patriarchal social and cultural order. Therefore not only were women not allowed to act on stage but even those women who visited theatre were looked down upon. Joan Kelly in her essay, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?' compares the status of women in the Middle Ages and that of Renaissance and comments that there was no renaissance for women. The way women were tied by patriarchal society is something that makes women of the Renaissance appear marginal. Jane Anger (a pamphleteer) in her pamphlet '*Her Protection of Women*' (the only surviving document of a female writer during Renaissance) wrote that 'if our virtues decay daily, it is because men's virtues decay hourly.' But Jonson cannot be accused of being patriarchal just because his plays deal with the masculine world – it is that he is portraying the reality of London during his times and in his time, the public arena of London is primarily a masculine one, though the paradox of the situation is that the time is known by the name of an English Queen – Queen Elizabeth.

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Thus even though there is a love story in the play – the story of Edward and Bridget (Kitely's younger sister), yet that love story is not being developed by Jonson too much in the play. Unlike a romantic comedy where love is the main concern and where Shakespeare has allowed his female characters to take up the major roles of moving the plot of the play (which is otherwise denied to them in reality), Jonson presents the reality of the world of renaissance where women are not given any prominent place in the public realm.

The more significant factor of the play is the classical outlook both of the play and the playwright. Like the classical comedies, Jonson deals with stereotypical characters and unities. Jealous husbands, over-protective father, a cunning servant who moves the plot etc. are the features of the classical comedy which Jonson follows in the play. The character of the servant, Brainworm in *Every Man in His Humour* is very significant as he is the mover of the plot. It is his cunningness; his uncanny ability to take disguises which moves the plot. As the name suggests Brainworm is a clever servant who not only is present at the right moment at the right place, but filters the right information and puts it to the person who needed that information. As soon as Old Knowell reads the letter written by Wellbred for Edward asking him to come to London to have fun and as Old Knowell warns the servant Brainworm not to disclose the fact to his son Edward, we figure out that Brainworm does the opposite by informing Edward what Knowell's plans are – to spy on him in London. Again at an opportune moment he disguises himself as an ex-soldier and gets himself appointed as a servant of Old Knowell in London so that he can warn Edward of the activities of Old Knowell. He is able to fool the Judge's clerk by making him drunk and replace himself as a clerk and also at the same time disguises himself as a sergeant when the occasion demands. Throughout the play, Brainworm plays the significant role of pushing the story further by his activities which may seem outrageous but are essential to create comic laughter and also to bring about the vices of people to the forefront.

Brainworm is thus the chief mischief monger in the play as it is his mischief which creates the necessary laughter with the exaggerations of each characters who overdo themselves in their act of proving themselves – whether it is Bobadill trying to prove his courage to cover up for his cowardice or Mathew trying to cover up his poetic enterprises by plagiarizing from other's works or even Justice Clement who is being lenient in his sentences. Justice Clement is the person to whom all the characters arrive finally in the play to get justice and he being the judge pronounces sentence for everyone. As the name of the judge suggests, he is lenient and compassionate towards the offenders in administering justice. Clement is also inclined towards mirth, enjoys wine and he invites people to join the party which he gives in the honour of the marriage of Edward and Bridget with which the play ends. The romance of Bridget and Edward finds fruition as it happens in a romantic comedy. Furthermore, as the genre of comedy demands, no catastrophe or calamity can happen; however, in no way does the relationship form the central plot of the play.

What we see in the play is that there are five stories which are interconnected to each other though Jonson has not tried to weave them together. According to the classical rules of drama, a play should have three unities:

- Unity of Time: the duration of a play should be not more than twenty four hours
- Unity of Place: that the play should be set in a particular place and the setting should not change from one place to another which would make the audience unsettled as they would have to mentally import themselves to another place as the drama moves on
- Unity of Action: that the plot of the play should deal with a single major action around which the plot of the play will revolve

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Jonson dispenses with the unities of time, place and action in his play, *Every Man in His Humour* as the play is concerned with many actions of different characters. Many scholars feel that the structure of the play is very loose and the plot is diffused. As told earlier there are five stories in the play. They are as follows:

- The story of Knowell, Edward, Brainworm and Wellbred
- The Story of Kitely and Dame Kitely
- The Story of Wellbred, Edward, Stephen, Matthew, Bobadill and Downright
- The story of Cob and Tib
- The Story of Brainworm and Formal

Through these five stories and stereotypical characters Jonson creates a mechanical plot which lays bare the suspicion of an overprotective father, a jealous husband, a coward soldier, two gulls to create a new kind of drama known as the Comedy of Humours.

Ben Jonson based his characterization on the doctrine of humours derived from the Middle Ages still prevalent during the Elizabethan Era. The humours were four bodily fluids - choler, blood, phlegm and melancholy - corresponding in their attributes to the four elements; choler, like fire, was hot and dry; blood, like air, hot and moist; phlegm, like water cold and wet; melancholy, like earth, cold and dry. It was considered that an imbalance of any of these four fluids will lead to an imbalance in the character of the person and would alter his psychological constitution. An imbalance affects the characters' temperament and psyche. As discussed earlier almost all the characters in *Every Man in His Humour* suffer from some temperamental problem or imbalance leading to a disposition which is stereotypical in its characteristics. In *Every Man Out of His Humour,* Ben Jonson states his position on his Comedy of Humours in the opening scene where he states that:

> '... so in every human body
> The choler, melancholy, phlegm, and blood
> By reason that they flow continually
> In some one part, and are not continent,
> Receive the name of humours. Now this far
> It may, by metaphor, apply itself
> Unto the general disposition;
> As when someone peculiar quality
> Do& so possess a man that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
> In than confections, all to run one way,
> This may be truly said to be a humour.'

Humour in Jonsonian terms is an exaggeration of a particular characteristic in a person's character which leads to he or she being dominated by that characteristic in all his or her actions. This dramatic technique in some ways makes the characters stereotypical as each character instead of an individual in his or her own right becomes a prototype of a particular characteristic. This makes the characters simple to study as they are not complex as the characters of William Shakespeare. There is nothing that is surprising or intriguing about these characters. Their motives and actions are all predictable and instead of portraits they seem be caricatures. Thus many scholars are of the opinion that Jonson's characters are too simplistic and are made in such a way that it would not lead the

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audience to be sympathetic to any one of them. Moreover, in such a drama, the audience will be alienated from the characters, but alienation has its own benefits as it leads the audience to be objective making them laugh at the characters onstage. While the audience laughs at the mistakes and the imbalance of the characters on stage, the audience probably realizes that they are also laughing at themselves leading to correct their own vices and follies. In many ways the comedy of humours has its own advantages and disadvantages. If we make a comparison of Shakespearean characters and comedies with that of Ben Jonson then it may seem that Shakespeare is more intriguing, more complex in characterization, more psychologically enriching; but Ben Jonson is more pedagogic as his characters make us learn our mistakes and follies.

Sometimes it is said that whereas William Shakespeare's comedies are timeless (in the sense of its universality, that is, it applies to all time and all places); Ben Jonson's comedies are typically applicable to his time and era. It is about the London of Elizabethan times. Apparently it seems true as Ben Jonson's comedies are realistic and deal with the specific follies of the age. But at the same time it is also true that human follies are vices and are not always age and time specific. Characters such as Old Knowell, Thomas Kitely, Bobadill, Matthew are not typical of any age; but can be found in every age, everywhere and at every time. The morale that Jonson's plays provide is as true of the present age as it was for the Elizabethan age. By being realistic, Jonson has not made his plays specific to his time. It is true that his plays can be read as a mirror of the vices and follies of the masculine world of London of his times, but the appeal of his plays still remains intact. We do not read them just for the sake of procuring knowledge about Elizabethan England; but we read them as they represent some aspect of our own time and age. Even in the twenty-first century we see over-bearing, over-solicitous fathers like Old Knowell, women who need male protection and jealous husbands. We still have people like Bobadill who go on boasting around the world about their heroism and achievements without having a shread of truth on their stories. The fact that these kinds of characters still exist makes Jonson's comedies and his characters appealing. They may be stereotypes in some ways, but those stereotypes continue to exist.

Jonson may have a mechanically diffused plot in *Every Man in His Humour* dealing with the masculine urban world and the follies; but those follies of men are still the same. Human nature has not changed too much in the four hundred years. It may be that some developments have happened, that women are given a bit more respect in the public space than it was during the Elizabethan era, but still men and their ways are questionable. The morale and beliefs of a generation is different from the earlier generation – what is considered useful and profitable by one generation may not be considered so by the next. The difference between Old Knowell and Edward in their perception of things still exists between two generations of people. People like Brainworm still carry on fooling people with their antics and disguises. Thus the Classical stereotypes find a new expression in the hands of Ben Jonson and they still are of interest in the twenty-first century.

A Significant Critical Comment on Ben Jonson's by R. V. Young

(From R. V. Young's essay 'Ben Jonson and Learning' in Richard Harp & Stanley Stewart edited Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonsosn, Cambridge University Press, 2006.)

Of course *Every Man in his Humour* is the most well known of the 'humors comedy' - a dramatization of the way that individuals are inclined to behave in a compulsive, mechanical fashion according to the bias of their physiological constitution. Although the humoral explanation of human nature and conduct has its roots in the ancient medical theory descended from both Hippocrates and Galen, and developed throughout the Middle Ages, it seems to have been a subject of widespread interest in the sixteenth and earlier seventeenth-centuries. A number of books dealing with various aspects of humoral physiology appeared during this era, of which Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) is the most famous. Jonson wrote commendatory sonnets for *Melancholike Humours (1600)* by Nicholas Breton and for *The Passions of the Mind in Generall* (1601) by Thomas Wright - the Jesuit who converted the poet to Catholicism while he was in prison for the murder of the actor Gabriel Spencer. But for all Jonson's apparent interest in humoral theory, the term "humor" is, often as not, a synonym for 'mood' or 'passing fancy.' Knowell claims simply to have outgrown the same frivolous 'humor' that now possesses his son:Myself was once a student; and, indeed,Fed with the selfsame humour he is now,Dreaming on naught but idle poetry,That fruitless and unprofitable art,Good unto none, but least to the professors,Which then, I thought the mistress of all knowledge:But since, time, and truth have waked my judgment,And reason taught me better to distinguishThe vain from useful learnings. (1.1.15-23)A humor can also mean an affectation. When the son, Edward Knowell, sets about to gull his country cousin, Stephen, the latter resolves to be 'more proud, and melancholy, and gentlemanlike' (1.3.104-5). 'It will do well,' Edward says as an aside, 'for a suburb-humour' (1.3.107-8). Perhaps Kitely's choleric jealousy – 'His jealousy is the poison he has taken' (4.8.37), says Wellbred, with disdain for his brother-in-law's suspicions - is the best example of a humor in the strict medical sense.*Every Man in his Humour* lays down a pattern for Jonson's finest and most characteristic comedies. They are inevitably learned in the mode of Renaissance humanism: not only are there plentiful allusions to works of ancient Greek and Roman literature; these plays also are conceived according to the classical norms of comic drama. Jonson is attentive to the unities; his dialogue is written in a crisp, colloquial middle style, rather than grandly or lyrically; and his comic characters generally meet Aristotle's criterion by being, in some sense or other, "worse than are found in the world." To the refinement of this learned perspective, Jonson adds the vitality that comes of his familiarity with the daily lives and language of a broad cross-section of the men and women of Elizabethan/Jacobean England, and a focus on some feature or preoccupation of the life of that era.

Check Your Progress

7. Highlight the unique quality of Jonson's comedy.
8. Identify Jonson's deviation from the norms of writing plays as prescribed by the Greeks.
9. If Shakespearean characters had a certain spontaneity, then Jonsonian characters are primarily caricatures. Discuss.
10. Jonson's plays portray a masculine world. Comment.
11. Name and explain the three unities that should be there as per the classical rules of drama.

ACTIVITY

Read Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. Compare the ways in which Ben Jonson uses the genre of comedy differently.

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DID YOU KNOW

The cast of *Every Man in his Humour* included Shakespeare who also well known as an actor.

4.8 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Ben Jonson — a Jacobean playwright developed a new genre called the Comedy of Humours which is based on the physiognomy of the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan Era.
- According to the Comedy of Humours, the humours were held to be the four primary fluids—blood, phlegm, choler (or yellow bile), and melancholy (or black bile)—whose 'temperament' (mixture) was held to determine both a person's physical condition and type of character. An imbalance of one or the other humour was said to produce four kinds of disposition, whose names have survived the underlying theory: sanguine (from the Latin 'sanguis,' blood), phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic. In Jonson's comedy of humours each of the major characters has a preponderant humour that alters the disposition as per the dominant humour. *Every Man in His Humour,* first produced in 1598, expounds this theory of Comedy of Humours which Jonson follows in all his comedies.
- Jonson is classical in his outlook which is why *Every Man in His Humour* is an attempt to follow the classical unities strictly. Though Jonson is able to follow the unities of time and place, but structurally the plot of the play is not very tight. Structurally it is a diffused play with a mischief monger servant taking many disguises to make the audience laugh and there are many stereotypical characters such as the overprotective father Knowell, the jealous and suspicious husband Kitely, the braggart Bobadill, the gulls, Stephen and Matthew, etc.

4.9 KEY TERMS

- **Satiric comedy:** Satiric comedy ridicules the follies of the people of the time so that the audience when they perceive the follies onstage they are purged of the follies. As Ben Jonson says, satiric comedy deals with follies on men, but not crimes. The early master of satiric comedy was the Greek dramatist Aristophanes, (450-385 BC) whose plays mocked political, philosophical, and literary matters of his age. These kinds of comedies are also known as "corrective comedy"
- **Comedy of humours:** Comedy of Humours is a type of comedy developed by Ben Jonson which is based on the ancient physiological theory of the 'four humours.' The humours were held to be the four primary fluids—blood, phlegm, choler (or yellow bile), and melancholy (or black bile)—whose 'temperament' (mixture) was held to determine both a person's physical condition and type of character. An imbalance of one or another humour in a temperament was said to produce four kinds of disposition, whose names have survived the underlying theory: sanguine (from the Latin 'sanguis,' blood), phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic. In Jonson's comedy of humours each of the major characters has a preponderant humour that gives him a characteristic distortion or eccentricity of disposition. Jonson expounds his theory in the 'Introduction' to his play *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and exemplifies the mode in his later comedies; often he identifies the ruling disposition of a humourous character by his or her name: 'Brainworm', 'Wellbred,' etc.
- **The Renaissance:** 'Renaissance' is an Italian word, meaning re-birth. Renaissance is associated with major social and cultural developments in Europe between the 13th and the 15th centuries. The contribution of the Renaissance to the emergence of modernity in early modern Europe, and especially England, has been for many years an appropriate entry point to the history of the modern world
- **Elizabethan Age:** Elizabethan age is the age which coincides with the period of the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603). However the term Elizabethan age was used loosely to refer to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was a time when the English nation developed in all fields — commerce, maritime power, and nationalist feeling and moreover in art and literature. It is the greatest age of drama with famous playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Webster and others. The famous poets of the age are Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, John Donne, and sometimes even Milton is also considered to be the epitome of Elizabethan poetry. Francis Bacon and Walter Raliegh are also important scholars of Elizabethan era
- **Jacobean Age:** The reign of James I (1603–25) which followed the reign of Queen Elizabeth is known to be the Jacobean Age. This was a period famous in literature for the didactic prose writings of Francis Bacon, John Donne's sermons and metaphysical poetry, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and the King James translation of the Bible and obviously for the plays of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Webster, Chapman and others. Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and tragicomedies are written during the Jacobean age

4.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR QUESTIONS'

1. Ben Jonson uses satire as in his plays.
2. Since Elizabethan theatre did not make use of lavish scenery, instead leaving the stage largely bare with a few key props, the main visual appeal on stage was costumes. Costumes were often bright in color and visually entrancing. Costumes were expensive; hence usually, players wore contemporary clothing regardless of the time period of the play. Occasionally, a lead character would wear a conventionalized version of a more historically accurate garb, but secondary characters would nonetheless remain in contemporary clothing.

   Moreover, the Elizabethans did not have elaborate props for the stage. The stage was primarily bare and the backdrop of the play was left for the audience to imagine. Mostly a placard was hung upon the stage doors to suggest where the scene is set. The play used to start with a flag being unfurled to suggest that the play has started. After some music, the prologue was spoken by an actor where he would give a gist of the setting of the play to make the audience understand the backdrop in which the play is about to be performed. If the play lacked a prologue then in the opening scene(s) the backdrop of the play is referred to make the audience know where the play is set.

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3. A comedy is generally defined as a play where the characters, their follies and discomfitures are mocked with an entertainment factor. In a comedy, no great catastrophe happens to any of the characters and the play ends on a happy note as the main characters achieve what they aspire for. The play is written and performed in such a way that the audience or readers pleasurably engage themselves while watching or reading it. Though a comedy's chief aim is to amuse the readers, there is another function associated with it, and that is – to correct the vices and follies of people, by mocking and criticizing those vices and follies on stage. In other words, the aesthetic purpose of a comedy was to reflect the vices and follies and make the audience understand its repercussions.

4. As against the norms of the Romantic Comedy, Ben Jonson invented a new genre called the Comedy of Humours where the main objective along with evoking laughter was to also correct their vices. Ben Jonson specifically writes in the Prologue of *Every Man in His Humour* that his comedies deal with vices and not with crimes. Jonson was a strict follower of the classical norms primarily that of the three unities set by the Greek playwrights (as mentioned earlier in the features of Classical comedies).

5. Jonson was against the Romantic Comedies which provided a relief from everyday reality by situating the play in a dream like atmosphere as in Shakespeare's *Mid Summer Night's Dream.* Jonson based his comedies on actual conditions of life of the people of the age. Suppose if one makes a comparison between Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour,* one will be able to discern that while Shakespeare's play is set in the fanciful world of the forest of Arden, Jonson's play is set in the everyday reality of the then England. This aspect of Jonson's plays – the everyday reality – makes them more realistic and is a great way to understand the socio-political and cultural scenario of the age.

6. There is a vast difference between Shakespeare and Jonson in their art of characterization which is very essential to comedy. Whereas in Shakespeare we see that his characters are complex beings, in Jonson however, the characters are more of caricatures of a certain type. In that sense, some may think that Jonson has a limited vision and was only concerned with the follies and flaws in characters to make fun of them on stage, to satirize them on stage so that the comic purpose is served.

7. Jonson's comedies are an extension of the world outside the theatre in the sense that the characters with their vices, follies, exaggerations, fears, etc. are presented on stage so that the audience may look and laugh at them. It is while laughing at the characters that realization occurs to those watching the play. The sobering effect of identifying and acknowledging the possibility of being the characters on stage with their follies is the core essence of Jonsonian comedy.

8. Ben Jonson had no intention of pleasing his audience by following the customs of play-writing prevalent during the age. One element that is seen clearly is the deviation of the norm of following the three unities prescribed by the Greeks. Many a times in the duration of the plays it is shown that a play a child or an infant is shown to be growing to manhood, and then growing still older to become an old man (flouting Unity of Time), etc. Ben Jonson disliked such customs of the Elizabethan Drama. As opposed to this, he decided to write realistic plays such as *Every Man in His Humour.*

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He also mentions that this play can serve as a model for other plays as in this play, there is no chorus to tell the audience to cross the ocean in your imagination in order to jump from England to France (flouting the Unity of Place) to watch the subsequent events of the play. Neither is the play produced in a way where smart fireworks are used on the stage to frighten the gentle ladies in the audience nor cannon balls were rolled behind the stage to produce an impression f thunder, etc.

9. If Shakespearean characters had a certain spontaneity, then Jonsonian characters are primarily caricatures in the sense that each of them typify one particular trait. One is a coward and therefore puts up a brave face, another is suspicious and jealous of his wife, another is suspicious of his son's conduct, etc. It may seem that his characters are not mature individuals, but they are not so as Jonson's intention was to portray these types and then make them look foolish so that the audience can have a laugh at the cost of these characters and at the same time learn from their mistakes. In other words, it can be said that though the characters are caricatures his characters possess an astonishing range of distinguishing traits and an undeniable vitality.

10. Many a times it is said that women do not have a considerable role to play in Jonson's plays (as in Classical Comedies) and that it is primarily a masculine world. But that is the core of the issue. Jonson portrays an England where women did not have a role to perform in the outside public world. Women were kept within the households as it was thought that women in the public space would create more and more problems for the patriarchal social and cultural order. Therefore not only were women not allowed to act on stage but even those women who visited theatre were looked down upon.

11. The three unities as prescribed by the Greeks are:
    (i) Unity of time: the duration of a play should be not more than twenty four hours
    (ii) Unity of place: that the play should be set in a particular place and the setting should not change from one place to another which would make the audience unsettled as they would have to mentally import themselves to another place as the drama moves on
    (iii) Unity of action: that the plot of the play should deal with a single major action around which the plot of the play will revolve

4.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Critically comment on Ben Jonson's notion of Comedy of Humours with special reference to *Every Man in his Humour.*
2. Do you think Jonson is a master of caricatures? Why do you think so? Write a critical essay with special emphasis on any one of the characters of play.
3. Do you agree that Ben Jonson was one of the greatest dramatists of the Jacobean age for his perceptions on society of that time and portraying the very same in his comedies? Discuss.
4. Comment on Ben Jonson's characterization in *Every Man in his Humour.*

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5. Write short notes on
   (a) Wellbred
   (b) Edward
   (c) Kitely and Dame Kitely
   (d) Justice Clement
   (e) Bobadill
6. What are the elements of Jonsonian comedy that make him different from Shakespearean comedies? Write your answer with special reference to *Every Man in his Humour.*
7. Discuss Jonson's art of characterization with special emphasis on *Every Man in His Humour.*
8. Jonson's comedies deal with follies and foibles of the characters of his age. Do you agree? Critically comment on Jonson's art of characterization with special emphasis on *Every Man in His Humour.*

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a brief critical comment on the Prologue of *Every Man in His Humour.*
2. Do you agree that suspicion is one of the themes upon which many of the characters of *Every Man in His Humour* are made? Write a critical essay on the characters who suffer from suspicion?
3. Critically comment on the character of Brainworm as a mischief monger in the play *Every Man in His Humour.*
4. Though the play *Every Man in His Humour* ends with marriage and feasting as it happens in a standard comedy, the play nevertheless stands in opposition of the genre Comedy or Romance. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.
5. *Every Man in His Humour* is a play set in Elizabethan London dealing with the masculine world and its follies. Can you think of reasons for studying the play in the twenty-first century? Were you able to relate to the play as you were reading it?
6. Critically analyze the significance of reading *Every Man in His Humour* in twenty-first century?

Textual Passages for Annotations

1. How happy yet should I esteem myself,
   Could I, by any practice, wean the boy
   From one vain course of study he affects.
   He is a scholar, if a man may trust
   The liber*al voice of fame in her* report,
   Of good account in both our Universities,
   Either of which hath favoured him with graces:
   But their indulgence must not spring in me
   A fond opinion that he cannot err.
   Myself was once a student, and indeed,
   Fed with the self-same humour he is now,

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   Dreaming on nought but idle poetry,
   That fruitless and unprofitable art,
   Good unto none, but least to the professors;
   Which then I thought the mistress of all knowledge:
   But since, time and the truth have waked my judgment.
   And reason taught me better to distinguish
   The vain from the useful learnings
2. You are a prodigal, absurd coxcomb, go to!
   Nay, never look at me, 'tis I that speak;
   Take't as you will, sir, I'll not flatter you.
   Have you not yet found means enow to waste
   That which your friends have left you, but you must
   Go cast away your money on a buzzard,
   And know not how to keep it, when you have done?
   O, it is comely! this will make you a gentleman!
   Well, cousin, well, I see you are e'en past hope
   Of all reclaim:—ay, so; now you are told on't,
   You look another way.
3. I am resolved I will not stop his journey,
   Nor practise any violent means to stay
   The unbridled course of youth in him; for that
   Restrain'd, grows more impatient; and in kind
   Like to the eager, but the generous greyhound,
   Who ne'er so little from his game withheld,
   Turns head, and leaps up at his holder's throat.
   There is a way of winning more by love,
   And urging of tho modesty, than fear:
   Force works on servile natures, not the free.
   He that's compell'd to goodness may be good,
   But 'tis but for that fit; where others, drawn
   By softness and example, get a habit.
   Then, if they stray, but warn them, and the same
   They should for virtue have done, they'll do for shame.
4. He cannot but think most
   virtuously, both of me, and the sender, sure, that make the careful
   costermonger of him in our familiar epistles. Well, if he read this
   with patience I'll be gelt, and troll ballads for master John
   Trundle yonder, the rest of my mortality. It is true, and likely,
   my father may have as much patience as another man, for he takes

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much physic; and oft taking physic makes a man very patient. But would your packet, master Wellbred, had arrived at him in such a minute of his patience! then we had known the end of it, which now is doubtful, and threatens—[Sees Master Stephen.] What, my wise cousin! nay, then I'll furnish our feast with one gull more toward the mess. He writes to me of a brace, and here's one, that's three: oh, for a fourth, Fortune, if ever thou' It use thine eyes, I entreat thee—

5. By heaven, no, not I; no skill in the earth; some small rudiments in the science, as to know my time, distance, or so. I have professed it more for noblemen and gentlemen's use, than mine own practice, I assure you.—Hostess, accommodate us with another bed-staff here quickly. Lend us another bed-staff—the woman does not understand the words of action.—Look you, sir: exalt not your point above this state, at any hand, and let your poniard maintain your defence, thus:—give it the gentleman, and leave us. [Exit Tib.] So, sir. Come on: O, twine your body more about, that you may fall to a more sweet, comely, gentlemanlike guard; so! indifferent: hollow your body more, sir, thus: now, stand fast O' your left leg, note your distance, keep your due proportion of time—oh, you disorder your point most i rregularly.
6. He is a jewel, brother.
   I took him of a child up at my door,
   And christen'd him, gave him mine own name, Thomas:
   Since bred him at the Hospital; where proving
   A toward imp, I call'd him home, and taught him
   So much, as I have made him my cashier,
   And giv'n him, who had none, a surname, Cash:
   And find him in his place so full of faith,
   That I durst trust my life into his hands.
7. But it may well be call'd poor mortals' plague;
   For, like a pestilence, it doth infect
   The houses of the brain. First it begins
   Solely to work upon the phantasy,
   Filling her seat with such pestiferous air,
   As soon corrupts the judgment; and from thence,
   Sends like contagion to the memory:
   Still each to other giving the infection.
   Which as a subtle vapour spreads itself

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   Confusedly through every sensive part,
   Till not a thought or motion in the mind
   Be free from the black poison of suspect.
   Ah! but what misery is it to know this?
   Or, knowing it, to want the mind's erection
   In such extremes? Well, I will once more strive,
   In spite of this black cloud, myself to be,
   And shake the fever off that thus shakes me.
8. Observe me judicially, sweet sir; they had planted me three demi-culverins just in the mouth of the breach; now, sir, as we were to give on, their master-gunner (a man of no mean skill and mark, you must think,) confronts me with his linstock, ready to give fire; I, spying his intendment, discharged my petronel in his bosom, and with these single arms, my poor rapier, ran violently upon the Moors that guarded the ordnance, and put them pell-mell, to the sword.
9. God's my life! did you ever hear the like? what a strange man is this! Could I keep out all them, think you? I should put myself against half a dozen men, should I? Good faith, you'd mad the patien'st body in the world; to hear you talk so, without any sense or reason.
10. Is all the rest of this batch? bring me a torch; lay it together, and give fire. Cleanse the air. [Sets the papers on fire.] Here was enough to have infected the whole city, if it had not been taken in time. See, see, how our poet's glory shines! brighter and brighter! still it increases! O, now it is at the highest; and now it declines as fast. You may see, sic transit gloria mundi!
11. 'Tis well, 'tis well! This night we'll dedicate to friendship, love, and laughter. Master bridegroom, take your bride and lead; every one a fellow. Here is my mistress, Brainworm! to whom all my addresses of courtship shall have their reference: whose adventures this day, when our grandchildren shall hear to be made a fable, I doubt not but it shall find both spectators and applause.

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4.12 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 THE WAY OF THE WORLD BY WILLIAM CONGREVE

Structure

5.0 Introduction
5.1 Unit Objectives
5.2 Dramatis Personae/Characters
5.3 Setting of the Play
5.4 Prologue Spoken by Mr. Betterton
5.5 Act-Wise Summary
  5.5.1 Act–I, Scene–I
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  5.5.3 Act–III, Scene–I
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5.6 Epilogue
5.7 Characters
5.8 Plot and Theme
5.9 Summary
5.10 Key Terms
5.11 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
5.12 Questions and Exercises
5.13 Further Reading

5.0 INTRODUCTION

William Congreve (1670-1729) was the most brilliant classical playwright of the Restoration Comedy of Manners. His chief works include: *The Old Bachelor (1693), The Double Dealer (1693), Love for Love (1695), The Mourning Bride (1697), The Way of the World (1700),* etc. He was a social satirist and his plays pointed at the follies and foibles of human nature. But his satire is always interspersed with humour, laughter and comedy which are put across in a very intelligent way. It is true that Congreve chose to paint men and manners: 'As a painter of contemporary life and manners, studied from the vantage point of fashion, Congreve has no equal. His great qualities are lightness of treating the foibles of society, a remarkable power of continuous irony and paradox, and an incomparable sense for rhythmical prose of combined antithesis and balance. His wit is unsurpassed, even by Sheridan.' Alexander Pope, the most celebrated eighteenth-century writer, attributed his *Iliad* to him.

The Way of the World presents the picture of the then corrupt and fashionable society of London. This play is divided into five Acts and each Act contains one scene.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe William Congreve's style of writing by presenting an Act-wise summary of the play
- Explain the plot and the theme of the play *The Way of the World* (1700)
- Discuss the characters in the play

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5.2 DRAMATIS PERSONAE/CHARACTERS

Edward Mirabell	– A wise and intelligent gentleman who is passionately in love with Millament
Millament	– A beautiful and intelligent lady who is in love with Mirabell; she is of liberal mind; the niece of Lady Wishfort
Lady Wishfort	– A distinguished lady of high social rank; mother of Arabella Fainall; aunt and guardian of Millament
Mrs Fainall	– Daughter of Lady Wishfort; wife of Mr. Fainall; cousin of Millament; formerly Mirabell's mistress
Mr. Fainall	– Husband of Arabella Languish, a widow and daughter of Lady Wishfort; lover of Mrs Marwood
Witwoud	– Cousin of Sir Wilfull; follower of Millament
Petulant	– A fop; follower of Millament
Mrs Marwood	– Fainall's mistress; lover of Mirabell
Foible	– Lady Wishfort's maid; later, wife of Waitwell
Mincing	– Millament's maid
Waitwell	– Mirabell's servant; later, disguised as Sir Rowland
Peg	– Servant to Lady Wishfort

5.3 SETTING OF THE DAY

Millament is the niece of Lady Wishfort and she will inherit half of her property, six thousand pounds, from her aunt after marrying a suitor of her choice. Edward Mirabell, a very sharp and handsome beau, is deeply in love with her and both wish to get married. Lady Wishfort is a voluptuous old lady with whom once Mirabell, in order to please her because of her niece, had played the game of love. This was revealed to the lady by Mrs Marwood, a fashionable woman and coquette who pretends to be a friend but dotes on Mirabell. Lady Wishfort's widowed daughter, who had a premarital affair with Mirabell, is married to Fainall, a fop and friend of Mirabell. Mirabell has got Arabella Languish (wife of Mr. Languish and daughter of Lady Wishfort) married to Fainall to hide his love affair. Besides, Mr. Fainall is a greedy and lascivious man who has an illicit affair with Mrs Marwood. He is concerned with getting his wife's property transferred to him by manipulation.

Witwoud and Petulant are fashionable gentlemen who also have a soft corner for Millament. When the play begins, we see that Fainall and Mirabell are friends and Fainall tries to make his match with Millament, his wife's cousin. Lady Wishfort is outraged and scornful after Mirabell's sham lovemaking comes to be disclosed publicly; she considers Mrs Marwood her greatest ally.

Sir Wilfull, a cousin of Mrs Fainall and Witwoud, arrives. Mrs Marwood prompts Lady Wishfort to get Millament married to him and herself plans with Fainall to destroy Mirabell who may be frustrated two ways: one, by the loss of his beloved, and the second, by the loss of money which he will lose when Millament gets married to Sir Wilfull, a country fellow. She and Fainall plan to unite when he will forcibly grab the

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share of his wife, which he will get by forcing Wilfull to get married to Millament. Then, he would force the Lady to transfer that money to her daughter whom he will threaten to divorce. He has already got his wife, after their wedding, to sign a document which enables him to gain all the property which she will inherit.

Mrs Marwood is jealous of the love between Mirabell and Millament and she is equally prejudiced against Mrs Fainall whom she falsely regards as her friend. But now she detests her because she had been Mirabell's love once upon a time and now, she is his confidante. Meanwhile, to achieve the hand and permission of Millament, Mirabell hatches a plot. His servant Waitwell, whom he gets married to Lady Wishfort's servant Foible, is disguised as Sir Rowland. He is presented to her as Mirabell's uncle who is on hostile terms with him and wishes to make him bankrupt by remarrying when automatically Mirabell's property will be transferred to him. Mincing, the servant of Millament and Foible help him in this plan along with Millament and Mrs Fainall. But Mrs Marwood secretly overhears this plot while lurking in Lady Wishfort's chamber. She plans to inform her about the truth of Sir Rowland through a letter carried by a stranger.

Simultaneously, Mr. Fainall threatens Lady Wishfort that her daughter is immoral and he will divorce her. To save her reputation, the Lady had to transfer all her property and the one, which she owes to Millament, also to him. Lady Wishfort is in a deep crisis and in a state of utter bewilderment. She scolds her daughter. Meanwhile, Mrs Fainall has come to know through Mincing and Foible that her husband and Mrs Marwood are villains who plan to unite as they are indulging in a secret love affair.

Fainall gets Sir Wilfull, whom Millament rejects, drunk, and in his drunken bouts he has a serious quarrel with Petulant. Lady Wishfort calms them down.

When Lady Wishfort is in a troubled state, her daughter tells her that Mrs Marwood is a treacherous lady and is promiscuous. In order to prove herself, she brings Mincing and Foible who swear on the Bible. They say that they had seen Mrs Marwood and Fainall together in a compromising situation when all had gone to the park in the night. Also, Mirabell accepts that he will go far away from Millament and she agrees to get married to Sir Wilfull because it would please her aunt if she did so.

Sir Wilfull is to go on a tour of the continent with Mirabell and he is happy to get married to Millament. Fainall forces Lady Wishfort to consent to transfer her property in his wife's name. Mirabell tells her Ladyship that he can save her from the present crisis and restore peace in her daughter's life. Hearing this, Lady Wishfort announces that she will therefore, not only forgive him for his early impertinence, but also give Millament's hand into his.

Mirabell presents a document which has been signed before the deed which Fainall got signed by his wife. The document made him the recipient of her property and this deed's trustee was Mirabell and all of Arabella Languish's property was under his guardianship. In this deed, Mirabell had got Petulant and Witwoud to sign as witnesses and since her property was Mirabell's, Fainall's false deed was proved worthless.

The crisis is resolved as Mrs Marwood is proved to be a treacherous villain; Fainall's tricks fail to give him wealth; Sir Wilfull agrees to go on tour with Petulant and Witwoud; and Mirabell is betrothed to Millament. Lady Wishfort's social reputation is saved and her daughter's marriage is restored.

It is proved that this is the way of the world: if a person harms his or her fellow being, he or she is paid back in the same manner. The play is full of witty repartee and irony. It is a mild satire on the fashionable society of London. It is a satire on those who

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come to town from the countryside and sacrifice their culture, running after the current fashion, like Lady Wishfort and Witwoud. The major issue here is that men and women of all ages were promiscuous regardless of their marital status. The value of marriage as an important social institution had vanished and lust and fashion reigned supreme, regardless of age or gender. The play has a prologue and an epilogue where Congreve begs pardon to present this play and pleads with the audience to accept it with a clean heart and conscience. He also says that it is not a libel aimed to ridicule a special group or people, but an overall observation of the writer's unprejudiced mind.

Act – I, Scene – I

The scene begins in a fashionable Chocolate House, a public place where Mirabell and Fainall are playing cards; Lady Wishforth and the ladies including Mrs Marwood, Mrs Fainall and Millamant, are also enjoying in the other room; Witwoud and Petulant are presented as chivalrous men who are wooing them; Mirabell is insulted by Lady Wishfort in the cabal night.

Act – II, Scene – I

This scene begins in St. James Park, a fashionable outdoor location where Mirabell, Mr. Fainall, Mrs Marwood, Mrs Fainall and Foible assemble; it is night when all have come for a stroll; the basic planning of presenting Sir Rowland; Waitwell's marriage with Foible; Mrs Marwood's secret affair with Fainall, etc., are revealed.

Act – III, Scene – I

Acts III, IV and V are all set in the home of Lady Wishfort.

Act III opens in a room in Lady Wishfort's fashionable house where the plots of Mirabell and that of Fainall are revealed and the crisis is resolved by the happy union of Mirabell and Millament; Sir Wilfull, Witwoud and Petulant also serve as important characters to sustain Mirabell's plot; Fainall and Mrs Marwood's plan is failed by the joint effort of all the characters except for Lady Wishfort, who is victimized. The play ends on a happy note.

5.4 PROLOGUE SPOKEN BY MR. BETTERTON

Poets are the most ill-fated men because their success is dependent on destiny. Fortune abandons them after she has made a fool of them. In the case of Nature, it is different; all the children who are fools look alike. The cuckoo lays her eggs in other bird's nests and that bird hatches it beside her own with no less care than what she bestows on her own eggs.

Poets have short-lived existence; are fooled by the people in the city; and, their early success may finally end in loss of repute. Every produced work brings them into such a risky situation- just like a squire who is praised highly and then he is ruined at last. So, the author of this work, though has had great public support, does not wish the audience to judge him on behalf of his past achievements. If he is judged so, he is sure to lose his place on Mount Parnassus, which is the seat of the Muse. If his present effort is not of some literary value, kindly excuse him for his inability or curse him and he also will not take his side to protest his worth. He has displayed a plot, ideas, humour, etc., here. Since the audience did not expect any correction of vice in such a modern and reformed city, he has not dared to use it. He has written this drama to entertain and not to instruct.

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Instructing the audience would be insulting. However, if a fool is exposed, the audience must not mind because none is a fool here. The poet is passive and he leaves all judgements in the hands of the audience. Now to praise or curse, the poet has left completely to their discretion.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. According to the author, who are the most ill fated men and why?
2. Why does the author not wish to instruct his audience?

5.5 ACT-WISE SUMMARY

5.5.1 Act–I, Scene–I

A Chocolate-House

Mirabell and Fainall rise from playing cards. Mirabell is upset and he has lost interest in the game. Mr. Fainall asks him whether his beloved Millament had upset him or she had been with another man in his presence. Mirabell says that Witwoud and Petulant had come. Lady Wishfort, who is her aunt and Fainall's wife's mother, who is passionate about her, was also there. Mrs Fainall, Mrs Marwood and three or four other ladies were also there. They all whispered to each other having beheld Mirabell and Lady Wishfort hinted about his long visits where Millament also encouraged her. Mirabell showed to her why now she took him as a burden and as she was embarrassed, he left the room. Mirabell does not agree with her previous night's attitude while Fainall tries to make the matter light by saying that it was the Cabal night where ladies around meet each other, sit and exchange their views. Earlier, men were prohibited but upon consideration, they resolved to enlist Witwoud and Petulant as their members. Millament is supposed to marry a person chosen by Lady Wishfort to enable her to gain half of her aunt's fortune. Mirabell is furious with Lady Wishfort, a voluptuous woman of fifty-five. To please her, he has to pretend courtship to her while he loves her niece. But she has turned into his enemy despite all his efforts to please her; she expected him to love her beyond the limits of civility.

While Fainall laughs at Mirabell's pains, he hints at his affair with Mrs Marwood. Here, Fainall leaves for the adjoining room where people are busy playing cards. Petulant and Witwoud enter and ask Betty for chocolate. Betty tells Mirabell that it is 1.00 am, which happens to be the marriage hour. Mirabell's servant Waitwell and Lady Wishfort's maid Foible have been successfully married. Mirabell asks the servant about the marriage and he affirms that it has already taken place. He tells the servants not to consummate their marriage until he has given permission to do so.

Mirabell is surprised why Fainall has allowed his wife to enjoy the Cabal night. Fainall reveals that he is not afraid but rather Mirabell is afraid that Millament will leave him and flirt with someone else. Mirabell accepts that she may be a flirt but he loves her so much that her faults are nothing to him and he wishes to marry her. A messenger arrives with a letter for Squire Witwoud from his forty-year-old step-brother, the nobleman Wilfull Witwoud who is expected in town that day. His mother is sister to Lady Wishfort.

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After marrying Millament, Mirabell would be a cousin to Wilfull, who is a fool and is fond of travelling.

Here, Congreve laughs at the English society where there is hardly a lady or a man who may be considered as having no vice.

Sir Wilfull's character is being defined by both gentlemen. When drunk, he is full of love as coarse as Caliban's in the *Tempest*. Sometime he is dull and at times he wakes up to sense and wit and he pretends that he has an understanding for it. Witwoud enters to ask for his letters. He is puzzled because his cousin, whom he regards as a fool, is visiting London. He praises Mrs Fainall and reveals that no husband and wife in town enjoy good relations, so Fainall must not mind him praising his wife. Petulant is in the adjoining room counting money which he lost to him in cards. Mirabell and Witwoud discuss that Petulant is a little learned, witty and argumentative fellow and is also a great liar. The coachman enters asking for dishes of chocolate and cinnamon water for the ladies who are sitting in the coach and are desirous of meeting Petulant. Witwoud further reveals the character of Petulant who pretends to be a gallant person and disguises himself as a lady who is in search of him. Petulant comes accompanied by Betty, showing that he has been much in demand by the ladies for whom he does not care if he is not in a good mood. He informs the gentlemen that the ladies awaiting him are related to Witwoud. Betty informs that the women have left in anger. The gentlemen mock at Petulant; Mirabell argues with him on the matter of his love-making with Millament; he reveals that Mirabell's uncle, who stays with Lady Wishfort, is not on good terms with Mirabell; he has a condition that if he gets married and has a child by such a marriage, Mirabell will lose the right to his inheritance. Mirabell, very shrewdly, enquires the origin of this secret. Fainall and Witwoud discuss how much Mirabell loves Millament; Millament is a beautiful and unpredictable lady; and, Mirabell's uncle, in good terms with Lady Wishfort, has some agreement which if materializes, Mirabell is to lose everything. Having taken out the secret from Petulant, Mirabell invites Fainall to walk till the Mall and the other gentlemen follow. The ladies are expected there, so the party leaves thither. Mirabell tells that where a woman's modesty is taken as bad manners, impertinence and ill will may be regarded as wit.

5.5.2 Act–II, Scene–I

St. James Park

Mrs Fainall and Mrs Marwood enter discussing how they must make use of their age and life. As men have their own vents for passion, so must women, asserts Mrs Marwood, whom Mrs Fainall calls a wanton woman. Together they pass comments on each other's characters. They discuss that they cherish hatred towards men. Through their discussion, Congreve shows how the level of modesty had fallen in the eighteenth century English society and how much the value of marriage had gone down.

Then, Mrs Fainall asks her if she could have married Mirabell which makes Mrs Marwood blush and accept that she wished it very much. Fainall and Mirabell enter and Fainall asks his wife if she had been feeling unwell. She asserts that she was fine and wants Mirabell to relate the half-told instance of the previous night - the details of which had been interrupted by his mother.

Mirabell tells that her husband may not like it to be told publicly; she admits that the whole world knows that they do not like each other and takes him to a private corner to listen to him; Fainall declares how he hates his wife but it is only for inheritance that

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he endures her. Mrs Marwood suggests following them; Fainall understands her trick and discloses that both women love Mirabell; he also accuses Mrs Marwood of her treachery. He further tells her that she is creating obstacles between Mirabell and Millament by instigating Lady Wishfort against his love towards her by saying that it is pretence.

He reproaches her; she pretends her love to him; he comes to talk about her love for himself. Mrs Marwood threatens Fainall that she would expose him to his wife regarding his affair with her; he reveals that Mrs Marwood, out of jealousy, informed Lady Wishfort of Mirabell and Millament's secret wedding; If the wedding had taken place, Millament would have lost half of her fortune which had fallen to his wife; and, he accepts that his marriage to a rich widow had taken place because of her inheritance which made him spend affluently on his sensual pleasures and Mrs Marwood. She pretends that her faith and love have been thwarted by Fainall. He says all that can please her and they leave. Enter Mirabell and Mrs Fainall discussing about Fainall and Mrs Marwood. His wife hates him and Mirabell wants her to be sensible and hate him only to keep her lover alive in her mind; she declares her love for Mirabell; he suggests he wanted her to marry Fainall because her pregnancy needed a husband to cover the fact and if she wanted to get rid of him, though he was a reasonably good man, she could go for it.

Here, it is disclosed that Mirabell and Mrs Fainall had a secret affair too. Mirabell's uncle, as per his new scheme, is his servant Waitwell, who is in love with Foible, woman-in-waiting to Lady Wishfort, whom he can win in Mirabell's favour. Mirabell's uncle (Waitwell) will engage Lady Wishfort and will lay a trap in some contract; Mirabell will expose him as already married with Foible by producing the certificate in time. This will be done in order to win the confidence of Lady Wishfort and coax her to get him married to Millament with her inheritance. Lady Wishfort is to marry Mirabell's uncle secretly and in public she had spread the word that Millament is being betrothed to Mirabell's uncle.

Through the discussion on lewdness of men and women of every age, the dramatist has shown how weak the English society had been for sensual pleasures, in his age. Millament, Witwoud and Mincing enter the scene. Mirabell passes comments on Millament's not being followed by many men. They fall into discussion why the lady took so much time to join their party. Witwoud tells that she met Fainall on her way but did not ask about Mrs Fainall. Mrs Fainall says that she was already ready to come out while she was yet dressing and Mincing reminds her that a pack of letters was responsible for her delay. Millament retorts to Witwoud that letters which are written in verse are used by her to pin up her hair. That morning it was a hectic task which tired Mincing. Letters interspersed with poetry are used for tying and pinning Millament's hair and this gives a crispy look to her hair. She enquires if the event of the previous night has troubled Mirabell; he agrees to it; and she feels happy to see the lovers in pain. Mirabell refutes her logic; he feels that lovers let the beauty of ladies shine; and, she expresses that they over-estimate themselves. Mirabell tries to prove his beloved wrong in her opinion that feminine beauty has nothing to do with a man's flattery of it. Witwoud occasionally gives indifferent comments which are not related to this matter. Millament, since her arrival, is pestered by unnecessary comments by Witwoud; Mirabell requests Mrs Fainall to take him away and she does so. Mirabell is annoyed for the previous night. She wants Mirabell not to be serious like King Solomon and tells him that it is the best time to woo her; he has to convey something which her lightness of mood prevents to be conveyed; she disagrees to listen to his plot and before she leaves him, she hints that she has the

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knowledge of it. Mirabell compares his situation with a whirling windmill because he is a lover. Waitwell and Foible enter. Waitwell is playing his uncle Rowland. Foible has planned everything wisely and has informed Millament also. Mirabell is very happy by her intelligence; gives her money to enjoy without her husband's interruption; and she takes her leave as Mrs Marwood secretly wants to see what Foible is doing with them. She bids them goodbye to wait on her Lady and Waitwell disguises himself as Sir Rowland. They all leave.

5.5.3 Act–III, Scene–I

A room in Lady Wishfort's house

Lady Wishfort is dressing up and Peg is attending to her. She is getting impatient because Foible has not arrived. She asks for some red paint to beautify her complexion as she looks pale; it is locked by Foible; and, now she demands some brandy which Peg brings, after an interval, in a China cup. She is extremely impatient; Mrs Marwood enters and informs that under a mask, she saw Mirabell and Foible conversing with each other; and, Lady Wishfort becomes more impatient lest he would give away her secrets to Foible. She sends Peg to fetch Foible and herself reads *A Short View of the Immortality and Profaneness of the English Stage.*

Foible enters to inform her Ladyship that Sir Rowland is passionately in love with her picture which he keeps; she senses what Mrs Marwood had been doing there; and, she also incites the wrath of Lady Wishfort by adding that Mirabell was exposing her low character in public. The lady wishes to poison him; Foible suggests that she marry Sir Rowland which will be the greatest punishment for him as he will be dismissed from the inheritance; and, she also tells her how he was calling her an old woman like 'discarded clothes' who is hatching a plot to get Millament married to his uncle.

Lady Wishfort agrees to be engaged to Sir Rowland that very night; Foible informs her that he is also dying to see her Ladyship. The old lady swears time and again to strip Mirabell of all his desires of inheritance. She will pay the villain through his uncle and her niece, both. The lady becomes so angry that her white painted face shows cracks on the fold of the wrinkles which puts her off and she wants to repair it nicely so that Sir Rowland finds her better than her picture. Then she worries whether Sir Rowland would court her or not; she takes suggestions from Foible as to how she must behave in front of him; and, she describes that she looks best while she wears a captivating face to woo a man. The lady shows her passionate behaviour at this age which surprises the audience. Foible tells that Sir Rowland is a handsome and energetic man. As Lady Wishfort exits, her daughter appears. Mrs Fainall suspects that Mrs Marwood will reveal her meeting with Mirabell to her mother. She also tells Foible how Mirabell has intimated her with the plot; Foible reveals how she convinced her Ladyship that Mirabell was mocking at her old age to show that what Mrs Marwood informed her would be wrong; Foible also informs Mrs Fainall that Mrs Marwood is passionately in love with Mirabell and now he keeps a close watch on her. Mrs Fainall leaves with Foible at the entrance of Mrs Marwood who reveals in a soliloquy what she thinks about Mrs Fainall. She foresees into the secret matter; assumes the role of Mrs Fainall and her love for Mirabell; and, expresses her feelings for both Mr. and Mrs Fainall whom she hates vehemently because they prevent her from making love to Mirabell on whom she dotes. While she grudges thus, Lady Wishfort enters, to whom also, she scorns at secretly. Lady Wishfort feels sorry for leaving Mrs Marwood behind. Mr. Wilfull, a travelling enthusiast, is expected; Mrs Marwood suggests that he should rather get married as he is forty; his aunt frets

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that marriage is more dangerous than travelling. Then Mrs Marwood leaves a choice to her to get Wilfull married to Millament upon which Lady Wishfort agrees positively that she will give it a second thought.

When Foible enters, Lady Wishfort informs her that Wilfull is expected by dinner; Foible also tells her that Witwoud and Petulant are waitng to dine with her; the lady requests Mrs Marwood to entertain the gentlemen and leaves with Foible to get ready. Millament enters with Mincing; she is angry with Petulant because of his arguments; and, informs Mrs Marwood that Witwoud and Petulant have quarrelled. Millament tells them that it is not good as they both are friends and friends are not like clothes which we choose. Mrs Marwood adds that if man had the choice to choose his friends, he would soon grow tired of acquaintances. Millament discusses that she may accompany a fool happily provided he leaves her company timely which is not possible if a person is a fool. So, like clothes, it is better to give them up to some servant after wearing them two or three times.

Mrs Marwood gives her view about fools and at last tells that Millament cannot hide her affair with Mirabell however hard she tries to disguise; it is like the pregnancy of Mrs Primly or the large face of Lady Strammel who is too fat. Millament tells Mincing to call the gentlemen upstairs because she would prefer them to Mrs Marwood. Millament shows her anger towards both Mrs Marwood's comment and Mirabell. Mrs Marwood pretends that she hates Mirabell though she is jealous of Millament because Mirabell loves her ardently. Millament knows that her lover is this lady's weakness and she politely laughs at her situation. Millament shows to her that she also hates Mirabell but it is unfortunate that he still loves her though Mrs Marwood is more beautiful than her. Mrs Marwood warns her against Mirabell but she prefers to listen to a song.

Mincing enters to inform that the gentlemen will appear soon and Millament orders her to bring Mrs Hodgson in the adjacent room to sing. The song means that without ambition, love is a weakness of mind; it is the fuel of love, without which it will burn like a pale flame. A woman is not happy only to secure a joyous man but she also experiences the pride to win the heart of such a gallant man which others of her sex with inferior beauty cannot. It is more important to win the heart of a man much wanted by others. Love of a man can only be felt in the feelings which she has secured in his heart for her –the heart of the man who other women fretted to lose. This song is divided into three stanzas and relates to the situation between Millament and Mrs Marwood who are listening to it.

As it ends, Witwoud and Petulant appear on the scene. Millamnet asks whether their disagreement is settled finally, upon which they reply that their quarrel is like those of two lovers or like the harmony of musical notes in a song. Witwoud compares their habit of contradiction with the number of Jews; it is based on no particular logic; though Petulant prefers to substantiate it with sound proofs. They indulge in a nonsensical discussion which Mrs Marwood finds quite wise in nature. Witwoud again passes comments on Petulant's little learning. Petulant asserts that scholarship is the enemy of people; Millament retorts that she cannot fancy a fool offering love to a gentlewoman; he replies that ignorance has nothing to do with love or marriage; it is the duty of a priest to sing at a hanging and a marriage both and anyone can be a party to both the ceremonies without much knowledge about it.

Millament leaves his company with Mincing, in anger and surprise. Sir Wilfull of Shropshire enters in a countryman's attire attended by Lady Wishfort's woman servant who ushers him into the room. He surprisingly hears that his aunt takes too much time in

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dressing; tells the servant that he is a nephew to Lady Wishfort; and, the servant informs that there is hardly a servant who stays more than a week with her Ladyship whereas her time for service has been the longest. She does not know her actual looks as her make-up always changes that. He sends her to inform that her nephew has arrived and she leaves the room denying her knowledge of the gentlemen of whom he asks her. He does not recognize Witwoud but wishes them to begin a talk; Mrs Marwood feels embarrassed with the behaviour of the gentlemen who avoids Sir Wilfull; Witwoud and Petulant start making fun of him. They laugh at his dress and his messed up state, which he tolerates. They laugh at his mud-worn boots; they call his horse a donkey; and, it is Mrs Marwood who comes in his defence and wants him to recognise Witwoud.

Witwoud shows offence again and it hurts his brother; but since it is not the manner of the city to recognize relatives and be emotional at their sudden appearance, he prefers to follow that. Sir Wilfull tells that Witwoud has become a fop which he guessed by his letters where it was clear that he forgot all his civility and values that one should have while addressing an elder brother. He reminds him of his old days when he could detect his having walked on a good path. He reveals that Witwoud was an apprentice to Pimple Nose, attorney of Furnival's Inn; Petulant laughs at his friend's reality of being a clerk; and Witwoud says that he was an orphan who had to be dependent on Wilfull and curses him. Wilfull argues that any training would have been better for him than the art of fop which he has learnt. Mrs Marwood intervenes to change the subject; she asks if he means to travel abroad; and, he informs that he wishes to sail to the counties which England and France have signed peace treaty with. He wants to learn French before his departure and while Mrs Marwood praises him and suggests a school for learning French, Witwoud makes fun of him again. Lady Wishfort and Fainall enter. They wish each other and the guest is offered a drink before dinner. He declines the drink but complains to her that her cousin, Tony Witwoud, has forgotten him after coming to the city, so he was afraid whether she would also do the same. She makes light of the matter and tells him that he loves him but it is the current fashion to make fun of those whom you love and he will understand it better in France where mockery, joking and jesting is very common. Mincing enters to announce that the dinner had been laid. Since they have made of fun of his shoes, he requests for a slipper upon which Lady Wishfort also feels embarrassed and requests him to get down to the hall and take his shoes off. She also begs pardon from the people on his behalf calling him 'uncultured'.

Mrs Marwood and Fainall stay back while all else proceed. Fainall speaks against his wife and Foible, saying that they are big cheats. He also reveals that his birth is illegitimate by some respected man of the town whose death has bereaved him; thus, he was thrown into wretched poverty which forced him to this marriage to which he never agreed mentally. Mrs Marwood suggests him to nullify his marriage and stop the marriage of Mirabell and Millament, so that her share may not fall into Mirabell's hand. Fainall frets over his fate because the inheritance would have fallen into his wife's share and from her it should have entered his destiny had Millament not been there. She consoles him and tells him to put up a little more with Mrs Fainall who is as corrupt as she was at the time of his marriage. Mrs Marwood tells him not to pine over Mirabell's grip over his wife and maintain his marriage which may prove more fruitful to him than his expectations. As Mrs Marwood has come to know about Mirabell's secret plan to cheat Lady Wishfort, she wants Fainall to threaten the old lady to divorce his daughter. This would make Sir Rowland to provoke her anger so that she sacrifices her niece, her property and her senses to him and she must be present there to instigate her wrath. She also reveals that she has put the proposal of marriage between Sir Wilfull and Millament.

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Fainall plans to make Wilfull drunk that night and succeed in their plot. He, in a clever statement, discloses how fallen and selfish the English society has been in Congreve's age. He says that neither he nor his wife have any reputation or social prestige which may be at stake if he tries to play with it according to this plan. Mrs Marwood stresses that marriage must lead to respectability. His dialogue means that the most important social institutions, like marriage in his age, were a disgrace to every honest man or woman because the partners were not faithful to each other. Mrs Marwood disagrees with his words and says that it depends upon the family. Since Lady Wishfort herself is corrupt, so her daughter has learnt that. She decides to write a letter which will be given to Lady Wishfort exactly at the time when Mirabell's servant will pose himself as Sir Rowland. A stranger is supposed to bring that letter in. Mrs Marwood wants to save her image in the eyes of Foible who already knows some of their secrets; and, annoying her too much may prove dangerous to them. She is so aggressive in her intent to avenge Mirabell and Millament that she does not care what will happen if Foible lets their secrets out. Fainall says that he is not afraid even if his marriage is spoilt because he has already deceitfully taken his wife's signature, which transfers a part of her property to him. She proves to him her hatred of Mirabell as true and receives his kiss as his confirmation of her words. He says that let husbands be jealous and lovers be faithful to their beloveds. He considers himself a bachelor even after his marriage and suggests to married men: 'All the husbands of the world for sure brook pain or shame of infidelity or cuckoldry; the intelligent husbands are extremely jealous of their wives' infidelity which is the main reason for their unrest and suffering; Fools are secure because they do not know about their wives' infidelity but when they discover it, they are at a loss.' They leave.

5.5.4 Act–IV, Scene–1

The scene continues. Lady Wishfort and Foible enter. Lady Wishfort asks her maid whether everything is ready for the reception of Sir Rowland and she confirms that all arrangements as per her orders have been made. Lady Wishfort herself is prepared and expects musicians to play well to satisfy the passionate urge for love which is bringing the gentleman there. She decides her position and posture to cast an everlasting impression on him when he arrives. She orders Foible to tell whether Sir Wilfull has started courting her niece or not upon which she is informed that the gentleman is drinking in the parlour. She wants Foible to bring her down for the purpose of being with Wilfull, and decides to go to Sir Rowland where the maid must join her later. As she leaves, Millament and Mrs Fainall come. Foible informs her secretly that Mirabell is waiting for her though her aunt wants her to entertain Sir Wilfull but Millament refuses to see Mirabell because she in a reflective mood and wants to be left alone. She speaks in a verse: 'No woman in this world was ever born who was not cursed. That is really hard for them to bear.'

Mrs Fainall passes a comment over her love for Sir John Suckling and other poets whose verses she had been reciting. But she laughs at it. She agrees to meet Mirabell and recites a verse for him: 'Thyrsis was a young man who belonged to the category of inspired people in this world.'

She repeats the line. She requests Mrs Fainall to keep Sir Wilfull accompanied because she has the nerves to tackle fools, is married and has learnt to deal with such a situation patiently. She wants to remain alone. However, Mrs Fainall politely refuses her request and as Wilfull enters the room in a drunken state, tells the man to court his beloved Millament who is deeply immersed in love and is thoughtful. He admits that he may make love to her but before that he should gain confidence by drinking a little bit

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more. So, he wants to go and have some drink which makes him bolder and more confident.

Mrs Fainall forcibly leaves both of them together and locks the door from outside. He is afraid to be locked within because Millament is there and she sees him struggling to open the door. She speaks in verse: 'I pray you gentle boy to spare me, kindly do not press to attain that mean pleasure.'

Sir Wilfull does not understand her and begs her pardon for his ill conduct. But Millament again returns in verse: 'I swear that it will not play its part however you play your part and employ your power and techniques upon it.' She praises the verse of Sir John Suckling which is simple and good. Sir Wilfull foolishly hears that she has addressed him a baby boy and tries to make her understand that he is not. Millament calls him a countryman of the middle ages. He is simple and does not understand what she actually meant and she directly asks if he had to say something to her. He shakily suggests if they could go for a stroll and she derisively declines his proposal telling him that she hates villagers and the habits related to their life-style. He tries to please her by asking if she liked the city life but she declines. Then he tries to stretch the conversation on the issue naively but she sternly brushes him off. He is yet building his courage to speak his mind. She wants him to leave her alone which he accepts cordially but as the door is locked, he is sorry to disturb her being in the same room. She shows him another way to go out and says: 'Like Phoebus (Sun) sends verses to a boy who was amorous.'

When Mirabell enters, he quotes another line from the same poem: 'She was as bewitching and modest as Daphne.' He is surprised to see her locked behind doors, which makes it a bit difficult for him to search for her. She pretends that she does not like his will over her but at the same time; she would also like to be wooed by him till he weds her finally, and even afterwards. When he surprisingly asks her the reason for such a wish, she tells him that it is only because she must feel the same importance even afterwards. Mirabell complains that too much effort on his part towards courting and wooing her may lessen his interest in her after their marriage.

Millament is a woman of free spirit and this we have seen throughout her dialogues. Here, she says that a lover must ascertain his devotion to his beloved every hour of his life and if he does not do so, he is not welcome to her anymore. Her lover should certainly prove himself always and never look satisfied in his efforts towards courtship; nothing would seem so offensive and hopeless to her than having such a man as her lover. She must wed a man who will always be in bondage with her and let her free to use her will the way she wishes. Mirabell asks her in a witty remark whether she would like to have such a pleasure of exercising her will before marriage or wait to get married to him and then have it. She understands his funny remark and tells him to decide whether he will allow her the same pleasure of liberty which she has now even when they have got married or not and will he make love to her only as long as she would wish without a changed feeling from now. He agrees that he will get up early if she would not; she wants him not to call her by names that husbands usually do; and, never show in front of people that they love each other as others do and detach in a few weeks. She would not like to visit places with him and let them show in public that there is unquestionable lov- between them. Instead of this, they should rather show their relation as separated couples; keep distance like those who are married for many years; and they should do like the people of refine breeding do. Mirabell appreciates her for the good ideals that her concept of wedding has. Her other minor conditions are: that she will meet anyone she likes; that she will correspond with people of her interest; he will not compel her to endure the company of his friends or relatives whom she does not like;

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she must not always accompany him at their dinners if she is upset and he will not make an issue of it; she would keep the right of privacy of her closet; he will always wait for her at their tea; and, if he agrees to regard all these conditions, she may someday regard herself as his wife. He finds her last condition a little bit difficult to agree to and requests her to listen to his conditions as well. Millament very civilly gives him pleasure to state all his conditions upon which he begins: that she will never open up her secret to her friends and treat them formally; no female friend will either reveal her secrets to her nor tempt her to do so; she will not visit theatres with her friends in masks and lie at home putting questions to him whether he also had been there. Secondly, he also wants her not to force her made up face on him, rather leave him to like her at his own pleasure; and, forbids her to use any cosmetic or bring any woman who deals in it. After pregnancy, she will not wear tight fitting clothes and drink alcohol to make her friends happy which may harm his baby. He then agrees to wed her in front of Mrs Fainall. Millament reluctantly accepts him as she shows that she hates him. Mrs Fainall advises her to marry him and wants Mirabell to leave as her mother Lady Wishfort is about to meet Millament there. He must take the back door and meet Foible who is waiting to speak to him. She tells Millament that Wilfull is madly drunk and creating a scene. When Mirabell leaves, Millament tells Mrs Fainall that she loves him deeply and if he does not prove himself in their marriage, she will be at a loss.

Witwoud enters. Mrs Fainall asks him if the quarrel between Wilfull and Petulant has been settled. He wittily said that Lady Wishfort has resolved their quarrel and also informed that it was a baseless dispute. Petulant comes drunk. He proposes to Millament and demands her answer. Witwoud passes comments on his precise and meaningful way of making a proposal. He and Petulant get into a dispute where Petulant blames him for his as well as his brother's foolishness .Witwoud calls him too frugal and witty in using words. Millament intervenes to ask the reason of their dispute and Petulant informs her that she is the cause of their quarrel. When Witwoud stands for his brother's support, he tells that he is going to sleep with his maidservant. Mrs Fainall asks Witwoud about the quarrel and he tells her that it was plotted by her husband in order to get rid of Sir Wilfull. Sir Wilfull and Lady Wishfort enter the scene. He is badly drunk and his aunt scolds him for that because Millament will never entertain him in this drunken state as a suitor. Sir Wilfull says in a song that he is not a stupid man to choose a woman when the choice is between wine and woman. Lady Wishfort introduces the drunken Wilfull to his niece Millament apologetically. Wilfull again sings that let him and others drink like the sun who drinks everyday and that is why he is able to give shining light to this world. He, in a very foolish and absurd manner, proposes to Millament telling that he would marry her in both the cases; if she is a virgin or if she is made pregnant by someone. Millament takes leave of her aunt with her cousin telling that she cannot endure a vulgar man who is so heavily drunk. When she has left, Lady Wishfort uses abusive words for her which the drunken Wilfull takes for himself and speaks that Turks are Mohammedans who prefer to abstain but Christians do not. He sings again that drinking is the favourite pastime of Christians whereas the Turks, Persians and Muslims remain pagan and foolish. They drink tea or coffee.

Foible enters and whispers into the ears of Lady Wishfort that Sir Rowland is impatient to be with her. She requests Witwoud to take Wilfull away from there; Witwoud manages to invite him to see a cock fight; and Wilfull agrees to see that but only in the company of girls. He kisses Witwoud in anticipation of a girl and they both leave. His aunt repents on seeing his crudity and vulgarity.

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Sir Rowland (Waitwell) comes in an offended mood and shows to her Ladyship how anxious has he been to take her word of promise. He reveals to her that if Mirabell, who hates her very much, comes to know about his feelings, he will poison him to death. Lady Wishfort is disgusted to hear that Mirabell can change so much. He was till recently, ardently in love with her which he swore every now and then. Sir Rowland swears to kill him if he has become his rival for Lady Wishfort's love but she suggests that it would be better to make him bankrupt and then die.

In a very energetic statement which is sarcastic according to Lady Wishfort's age, she makes her declaration that she accepts the love of her suitor Rowland and is ready to get married to him but he must not think that she is doing it for the sake of her loneliness as a widow or driven by sexual desire. Sir Rowland swears that she is a pure and saintly soul about whom he can never think in that way.

Foible enters the scene and announces that the musicians are ready and an unknown person has arrived with a letter for her. She wishes Sir Rowland to decide how he takes her and goes. Waitwell (Sir Rowland) and Foible's talk about Lady Wishfort is an antithesis to the idea of love or sex. Lady Wishfort enters with the letter in her hand and decides to read it in the presence of Sir Rowland; but Foible recognizes the handwriting of Mrs Marwood and understands that she has tried to play a trick on their plan. She requests her husband (Sir Rowland) in whispers to take it away from her hand. Sir Rowland tells Lady Wishfort that the handwriting in the letter is rather a man's whose throat must be cut. But he cannot take it from her hands though she is happy to see him jealous about the letter which he feels some man has written to her. She reads it aloud to show him that the letter is not written by a man and is stunned to read the content which reveals that Sir Rowland is a dupe in disguise.

Foible understands what Mrs Marwood has done and tells Waitwell to take the letter from her hand and declare it being sent from Mirabell to end his courtship. Sir Rowland goes to her and earnestly swears that the letter has been written by Mirabell to curb their marriage. Foible tells her that he passed by her that afternoon wearing a mask and heard their plan. Lady Wishfort believes that he had entered her house that day because she had heard that Millament had gone out with him. Sir Rowland swears to end his life but Lady Wishfort requests him not to take law in his hand and he stops as requested by her. He wants to show her some proof of his love towards her but he has to go and bring it. Before he leaves to bring proof to show the depth of his love, Lady Wishfort wishes him a long life and asks him to return soon .This proof is the document for their marriage which is to take place the same night. He leaves thinking himself to be a chivalrous knight.

5.5.5 Act–V, Scene–I

The scene continues. Lady Wishfort and Foible enter the scene. She is very angry with Foible and bids her to leave. Foible is asking for her forgiveness. The lady is dismissing her from services and she is pleading for her life. Foible makes her defence by convincing her that it is the fault of Mirabell who tempted her for money and she innocently fell prey to his plot. She reminds her Ladyship that even she could not resist the love and charm of an enchanting man like him then how could she expect a maid servant to do that who was so deprived and foolish. She swears that her marriage to Waitwell was a bitter truth for her Ladyship for which she could but beg her forgiveness. Lady Wishfort, in utter wrath, threatens to hand her over to the police along with her husband, and goes out to find a policeman. Foible is extremely horrified at the very idea of being handed over to the police.

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Mrs Fainall enters. Having been asked the very reason for her worry, she informs that her mother has threatened to put her behind the bars like her husband and has gone out to look for the police. She consoles Foible that Mirabell has gone to get a bail for him and free him from jail. Mrs Fainall also informs that Mrs Marwood and Mr. Fainall have hatched this plot against them. Foible informs that Mrs Marwood was hiding stealthily in Lady Wishfort's chamber and she heard their conversation and she revealed to Foible about Mirabell's plan, before dinner. She informed Lady Wishfort through a letter but when Foible managed to conceal that information from her Ladyship, with the help of her husband, Mr. Fainall plotted her husband's arrest by the police when he went out to bring proof of papers to show his fidelity to Lady Wishfort. When her mother, Lady Wishfort was alone, Mrs Marwood, pretending to be her great friend, told Mrs Fainall about their planning. Mrs Fainall asks her if there had been any reference related to her in the letter to her mother and has she come to know if she had been a part of this plot against her. She believed that Mrs Marwood has not told Mrs Fainall's involvement in the plot so much so that she feels suspicious of her; though she knows it well that Mrs Marwood has told her husband everything about her and Mirabell. Foible informs that they tried to hide successfully that part of the letter from her mother.

Mrs Fainall also tells Foible that Mrs Marwood has ruined her married life by revealing her secret affair with Mirabell and everything and he is going to leave her that very night. Then Foible discloses that Mrs Marwood and her husband have a secret affair, which she and Mincing have been witness to. When they had gone to Hyde Park, she and Mincing saw them and Mrs Marwood made them swear on a book thinking it to be the Bible. Since the book was not the Holy Bible, they can become witness to the affair of Fainall and Mrs Marwood. Mrs Fainall is surprised to hear about her husband and Mrs Marwood's intimacy, which if proved, can help them in the present crisis.

Meanwhile Mincing enters to inform that Millament who is with Mirabell is calling upon Foible. Mirabell has bailed out Waitwell and wants Foible to hide in Millament's personal chamber until her Mistress, Lady Wishfort's, wrath calms down.

Mr. Fainall is threatening Lady Wishfort that he would leave her daughter and the lady is crying bitterly. Mr. Fainall wants her to transfer Millament's money to his share or he will divorce his wife. Mrs Fainall asks Mincing if her lady, Millament and Mr. Mirabell know what her husband is doing and she replies that it is truly known to them who have sent her to bring Sir Wilfull to them immediately if he is in a condition to talk to.

Millament is ready to marry Sir Wilfull and does not wish to lose such a large fortune worth six thousand pounds. Mincing takes Foible away as she hears Lady Wishfort approaching. Both Foible and Mincing agree to give evidence to help Mrs Fainall against Mrs Marwood and her husband whose intimacy they had caught. Mrs Marwood and Lady Wishfort enter. Lady Wishfort is very grateful to Mrs Marwood, her friend, whom she feels, has saved her reputation by informing of the black deeds of her daughter and the deceit of Sir Rowland, Mirabell and Foible. She is very upset regarding her lost social status because of these happenings. Mrs Marwood, the greatest of her well-wishers, suggests that she settle as a shepherdess in a forest. Mrs Marwood's falseness is hidden and she is projecting herself as an ideal friend who can do anything for her Ladyship. She has also been instigating Lady Wishfort against her daughter. She turns the attention of the lady towards her daughter who comes there. Lady Wishfort, the mother of Mrs Fainall, starts scolding her daughter for her blamed promiscuity no sooner than she enters the room. When Mrs Fainall says that she does not understand why her mother is accusing her of something she has never done, the lady tells that it is because of her faithlessness and infidelity that she will have to forgo all her wealth and sell every article

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of their house to pay the sum which her husband has demanded against this accusation. She will also have to transfer Millament's fortune to him to settle the matter which is so disgusting. Mrs Fainall humbly conveys to her mother that she has been trapped in the plot by Mrs Marwood and her husband who are having an illicit love affair and through this trick they want to ruin their family. Mrs Marwood protests and speaks in her defense which Mrs Fainall brushes off telling that she has proof of what she says and this will be exposed at the right time. Mrs Marwood complains to her mother; helping her family has become a question of disrepute to her where her character has been called infidel. Lady Wishfort severely reproaches her daughter, placing Mrs Marwood as a person who has proved to be instrumental in making her aware of the faults of her family members and so is a well-wisher, and orders Mrs Fainall to beg her friend's pardon immediately. But Mrs Fainall consoles her and blames Mrs Marwood of treachery. She tells her that she is going to prove her friend's falsehood and expose her very soon; if she fails to do so, then her mother may give her any legal punishment which she will gladly accept.

When her daughter leaves the room, Lady Wishfort explains how she always kept her from the company of men except her father. She has given her the perfect rearing and Mrs Fainall never showed any ray of faithlessness or promiscuity. Mrs Marwood keeps fanning her anger ironically but the lady at last resolves that her husband must prove his accusation against her daughter. Mrs Marwood then perceives that if the case is dealt in the law court, their falsehood may be exposed, so she starts filling her ears that her Ladyship's social repute will be at stake if the case goes to court. Besides the loss of property, she is also going to lose the dignity about which she boasts everywhere. The entire court will laugh at her family; the matter will spread beyond the boundaries of court and reach the society; and, at last, it will reach all the households through newspapers and the whole city will come to know that Lady Wishfort's family is lusty and promiscuous. Everybody will turn away from her family when they move in society. The lady, hearing this, is greatly upset and is now completely under the control of Mrs Marwood.

Meanwhile, Mr. Fainall enters and tells her Ladyship that it is on Mrs Marwood's pleadings he has made concessions regarding her future expenses for which he will allow her freedom only if she promises never to marry again and remain at the mercy of Fainall. Mrs Marwood coaxes her by telling Fainall that the Ladyship had just been desirous of settling in the forest, so she will never trouble him with her wish to remarry. The lady is disturbed by their decree and protests that she may marry if her health needs it, but Fainall brushes her off and straightaway tells that at her age it is not needed nor will he allow her to do so. Now she will do whatever he will wish her to do and he wants her to transfer the remaining portion of her wealth to him.

The lady feels helpless, calls him more savage than a Russian husband and protests vainly. But Fainall tells her to transfer the six thousand pounds of Millament's share into Mrs Fainall's account, so that he may have the money which late Sir Jonathan Wishfort left for his niece. Millament has done a grave mistake by refusing Sir Wilfull's hand and he will now no more fuss over this matter. He gives her time only till he returns with the preliminary legal deed and after taking her signature on it he will go for a more comprehensive deed.

Lady Wishfort is surprised to see his devilish spirit and laments over her fortune as well as her daughter's deed which has put her prey to Fainall. She remembers that her first son-in-law called Languish was very polite and sweet natured.

As Fainall leaves, Millament and Sir Wilfull enter the room. In a very apologetic manner, Sir Wilfull tells his aunt that Millament has agreed to marry him. Millament

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affirms that he is upright and also tells that she and Mirabell, for the sake of her aunt, are mutually ready to sacrifice their love.

A ray of hope is kindled in the heart of Lady Wishfort. They request her to meet Mirabell who is waiting outside. But they insist on her seeing him because if she does not agree, he may not sign the new agreement with Millament which ensures their break off and stick to the old one in which he was entitled to get married to Millament. Now the choice was in her hands. It would be for the last time that he faces her. He will not trouble her afterwards. Sir Wilfull and Mirabell are going to travel abroad and he will accompany Wilfull only for the sake of his happiness. Mrs Marwood senses some underhand plot from their behaviour and goes out to know its origin. When Lady Wishfort tries to stop her as she is her bosom friend, she assures her that she would return soon. Sir Wilfull and Mirabell enter as she leaves. Mirabell feels ashamed to look Lady Wishfort in the eye; Sir Wilfull lends him mental support; and he begs pardon for troubling her Ladyship in the past. Sir Wilfull for a moment is confused whether Mirabell will take him abroad as promised or not, but Mirabell assures him that he will. What he did in the past to her, pretending to be her lover, was a shameless act, and he deserved her harsh punishment for that. But he knows that she was a lady of great heart and she will for sure pardon him now and forget all. He also says that he is making the present sacrifice just to beg her pardon, and though it will snatch all his happiness away, he will still do it because she is in dire need of their mutual sacrifice. When Sir Wilfull pleads on his behalf again, she consents to forgive him though he deserved a serious punishment for having played with her heart. Mirabell also informs her that there are certain papers which his man has gone to prepare, regarding his refusal to marry Millament, which will be brought soon.

Lady Wishfort again feels the fire kindled in her heart regarding her love for Mirabell as he looks deep into her eyes and speaks all this. Mrs Marwood and Fainall enter and he forces her to sign the deed. Lady Wishfort shows her helplessness in agreeing to what he says because Millament and her nephew Sir Wilfull are ready to tie the knot. Fainall rejects this idea with utter disbelief and tries to dissuade Lady Wishfort from being deceived. Sir Wilfull becomes angry at this and gets ready to raise a deadly fight with Fainall. Fainall still threatens the old lady by telling her that he will divorce her daughter if she agrees to do anything but transfer Millament's share of property into Mrs Fainall's account. He tells her to decide between the fate of his daughter and his niece. Fainall's adamant behaviour makes her listen to the request of Mirabell who comes forward with a remedy. Lady Wishfort is so worried about saving the fate of her daughter, fortune of her niece and her own prestige that she agrees to accept anything from Mirabell at that moment. Mirabell tells her that his love has been given to Sir Wilfull, yet he will not do anything but serve her to save Mrs Fainall's honour and her social prestige. On hearing this, the old lady promises to break the given consent to Sir Wilfull and get him married to Millament if he happens to save her honour. Her words make him happy and he wishes her Ladyship to see two criminals in front of her; one of whom is Foible who is extremely repentant of her ill conduct against her mistress. Mrs Fainall, Foible and Mincing enter the room. Mrs Marwood, in great disturbance, whispers in the ears of Fainall that these witnesses have been brought there to expose her promiscuity. Mirabell and Lady Wishfort go to Mrs Fainall and Foible. Fainall tells Mrs Marwood that he will continue to be as he has been and nothing will make him change his conditions. He will press upon it even more. Foible and Mincing accept by the Holy Bible what they have said had been seen by them, and so it is true.

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Lady Wishfort condemns Mrs Marwood who duped her in the guise of a friend and had an affair with her son-in-law and also became a partner in his plans. Mrs Marwood tries to accuse Mincing and Foible as whores who are speaking lies because of money. Mincing declares what they said was correct and they had seen Mrs Marwood and Mr. Fainall in the blue garret that night. Fainall brushes Mincing's allegations aside and talks to Lady Wishfort about her daughter whom he is going to expose bluntly in front of people and divorce.

His wife openly disregards him and tells him to leave her as she is not in need of his name anymore. Again he threatens the old lady, who, in a very agitated manner, tells Mirabell that such a revelation is of no value to her and it will not solve her purpose. Mirabell wants her to allow him to produce another offender who is also repentant.

Waitwell enters with a box of writings in his hand. She is startled at the presence of Sir Rowland and calls him a rascal. He begs her pardon for his impudence of daring to deceive her Ladyship but hands her the black box as desired by her. Mirabell reminds her of the promise that she made to him regarding his marriage with Millament, which Lady Wishfort happily remembers. Witwoud and Petulant are called in. Petulant asks about the person who is creating trouble and what the matter is. Witwoud and Petulant are reminded by Mirabell that once they had signed on a document as witnesses and they agree that they had signed without knowing what they had been signing. It was a deed which declared that Mrs Fainall, before her marriage, signed a deed which showed that she transferred her property to Mirabell because she could perceive her husband's future evil designs. It was a legal document which her genuine friends and counsels, who knew the avarice and unstable character of Fainall, gave her wise suggestions to make before she got married to him when she was a widow. He hands over that deed to him which read: 'A Deed Of Conveyance of the Whole Estate Real of Arabella Languish, Widow, in Trust to Edward Mirabell.'

Mirabell knew that Fainall is marrying Arabella because of her property and so he got it signed before their deed of transferring money. Fainall runs to his wife in anger but Sir Wilfull stops him and Mrs Fainall tells Mrs Marwood to calm down. Mrs Marwood threatens to ruin her or if not, she would rather ruin herself.

Lady Wishfort is very happy to have a wise daughter who has shown her mother's wit only. In reply to this remark of her mother's, Mrs Fainall tells her to thank Mirabell who, by his intelligence, has saved their honour. Lady Wishfort thanks him heartily and forgives both Sir Rowland and Foible for his sake. She also announces to break the promise of Millament's marriage with Sir Wilfull. Mirabell asks for her forgiveness and himself begs for the consent of Sir Wilfull in this regard. Sir Wilfull is a naïve gentleman who gladly agrees to this and resolves to go abroad with Witwoud and Petulant. Petulant says that he has no objection to what has happened and is ready to welcome the future. But Witwoud is still in the state of confusion and does not know anything about the matter that has taken place. He says he is like a dog in a state of surprise which has been put in dancing school.

Lady Wishfort announces the marriage of her niece and Mirabell. The lovers unite. While they kiss each other, Sir Wilfull summons the music, so that others also may enjoy with them and they may have a nice time together. Foible announces for those musicians who had come to serve Sir Rowland. Lady Wishfort tells that she is very tired and afraid that her son-in-law may harm her again by hatching some plot. Mirabell assures her to make him yield to her daughter and requests Mrs Fainall to allow him to transfer her property to her, so that she may spend her life comfortably with Mr. Fainall

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ever after. Moreover, he says that such an occurrence is a lesson to those who try to use fraud in the name of marriage to deceive a partner who is weak and innocent and ruin the pleasures of marriage. This is the way of the world.

Check Your Progress

3. Who is Mirabell in love with?
4. What condition has Lady Wishfort laid for Millament's inheritance?
5. Why did Mr Fainall marry Arabella Languish, a widow?
6. Who does Waitwell disguise himself as?
7. What impression does Lady Wishfort want to give Sir Rowland?
8. Whom does Mrs Marwood propose Millament should marry?
9. Till when does Millament wish to be wooed by Mirabell and why? What is Mirabell's reply?
10. How does Lady Wishfort get to know that Sir Rowland is a dupe in disguise?
11. What does Foible say to defend herself?
12. Who was Mrs Marwood having an affair with? Who discovered her secret?

5.6 EPILOGUE

Spoken by Mrs Bracegirdle

After this Epilogue, when the audience will disperse to go back, I am sure it will remark critically about the play. But as it will pass comments upon all its scenes and acts, and will reject it finally as the worst one, it will be very hard for the author to please all kinds of people. There are some critics who are so ill-tempered that it is very hard to please them. It will be beyond mortal power to please a critic against his will. All the mean poets are enemies to plays and how they are flourishing, this the city knows well. The playwright has seen critics assembled in a pit and passing their verdict against a specific play. The world knows how misfit they are as judges, because they have no skill of their own, nor any commendation to back their worth. They are unintelligent people who can but criticize others and they lack wit themselves. They are condemned by the people and dissatisfied thus, they seek to do ill to others by criticizing. There are also those who watch plays with hostile intentions to criticize only. These people try to identify the characters of those who are playing with the world outside. However, they fail because there is no such likeness represented in the characters there. Still, all such people affirm that they know how the poet has ridiculed this or that man of the milieu. By making false interpretations regarding the play because of their own ill nature, these men misinform others about a simple satire as a personal attack or libel. Such a large number of city-bred fops think that the author has made them the subject of his satire. If there is a fop who very arrogantly feels that the whole scene mentions him only or the fools like him are good enough to entertain the audience throughout the play, it seems surprising. The learned and prudent know it well that it is not the aim of satire to fall so low in order to segregate a few people of the society and rail at them. It is rather like the painters who paint an incomparable face and to create such a face, they gather beauty and grace

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from many beautiful faces. In this manner, the dazzling beauty of a portrait by a painter becomes a courtesy to many such features around him and no single beauty can boast that representation has been inspired by him or her only. Therefore, it is often that the poets present on one canvass what may be called the whole assembly of coquettes and beaus.

5.7 CHARACTERS

Mirabell

Edward Mirabell is the hero of *The Way of the World*, a famous eighteenth-century Comedy of Manners: a fashionable beau and very intelligent and witty man, deeply in love with Millament. All the ladies mentioned in the play, except for the two servants, are deeply infatuated by his beauty and intelligence. He is shown as a person who loves the natural beauty of a woman and not a made up face; this is very candidly exposed when he proposed to his beloved Millament and demanded her to stay away from cosmetics.

Also, he is a lover of values because he strictly wants his wife to avoid fashionable clothes when she becomes pregnant which may put pressure on the head of the child. He does not wish his wife to entertain men and flirt with them. He wants her to be a genuine friend to every man and woman. He puts a condition on Millament that she will strictly not reveal any of their family's secret to any woman friend. He wants to remain faithful to her and wants her to be faithful to him also.

But he is also shown as a character with a little flaw as Congreve felt that there was no purity of character found in his contemporary society. Mirabell had a love affair with the widowed daughter of Lady Wishfort, Mrs Fainall, and to hide his faults, he gets his needy and wanton friend, Mr. Fainall to marry her. Mirabell is very clever and manipulates the situation so that he ultimately gains his beloved Millament's hand.

He is projected as a man who does not trust his friends either. In the beginning, he is friends with Fainall but later in the play, we come to see that he has never trusted Fainall's friendship. That is why he has helped Mrs Fainall with the signed bond before her marriage where she makes him the trustee of all her future property. In this manner, he not only saves the reputation of Mrs Fainall and Lady Wishfort, but also thwarts the evil intentions of Fainall and Mrs Marwood, which is not suspected in the beginning.

Mirabell is shown as a great manipulator. This may be referred to as a positive quality or may be considered his negative feature. To gain Millament whom he passionately loves, he appeases the lust of Lady Wishfort as a beau and lover. At the end of the play, when the ugly plot of Fainall and Mrs Marwood put the lady in great distress, he appears to be her saviour and brings her happiness. She forgives him and gives him his reward.

Congreve has bestowed most witty dialogues to his character and through him he has satirized the society of his age. In this manner, in the character of Mirabell, we see a mixture of good and avoidable, which had been the trait of the age and society. By portraying his virtues, the author has tried to present a solution to the rampant immorality of the society and by the immorality, he has tried to put forth that even Mirabell is prey to common human weaknesses.

Lady Wishfort

Lady Wishfort is an elderly widow of Sir Jonathan Wishfort, a distinguished family of the upper class society of London. Mrs Fainall is her daughter and Millament is her niece

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under her guardianship. She is a comical figure from the onset of the play but her character shows development by the end.

She is introduced to us as a lusty woman, who at the age of retirement from a socially active life, is seduced by the gallant, Mirabell. Through Mrs Marwood, another admirer of Mirabell, she comes to know that Mirabell had been playing with her sentiments because he planned to wed her beautiful niece Millament. Hence, she becomes his aggressive enemy, along with Mrs Marwood. She continues her hatred towards him until the story is resolved at the end.

She is very particular about her looks and make-up. When she is to get introduced to Sir Rowland, Waitwell in disguise, she takes a lot of time to prepare herself and there are long exchanges of conversations between her and her maid, Foible. It is upon her time-consuming make-up and changing of clothes that Sir Wilfull, her nephew from Shropshire, has to wait for her longer than necessary. When she comes down, he is surprised why she took so much time in preparation.

She is also a modern lady and a rich one who is notable in the society. This is proved at many instances. We always find her speaking: "As I am a person of distinction…' She decorates her house in a special way as she is expecting Sir Rowland. Sir Rowland intends to wed her and by marrying him, she will ultimately take revenge from Mirabell, her previous lover. She gives instructions to Foible to mend the cracks in her face with specific colours; she wants her house decorated in the manner in which Sir Rowland would like it; and wants Foible to suggest to her which way she should look to leave a long lasting impression on her suitor.

She is fond of socializing. She attends the cabal night and entertains gentlemen much younger to her till late night. She never considers herself to be old or a widow. She is greatly enraged when Foible provokes her against Mirabell's criticism about her figure and personality. It is also proved when she asks Foible about the energy level of Sir Rowland. She is foolishly funny at times. Fainall compels her to forget about remarriage for the rest of her life as she was an old widow and it was ironical to her situation. She reasons that she should be allowed to marry as she is not able to look after herself in a state of illness. She insists that marriage keeps a person healthy. She is interested in following men and being followed by them too. She is a simple soul, who readily believes in people and is easily duped by Mrs Marwood who pretends to be a good friend.

Millament

Millament is a beautiful young lady of a liberal nature with whom Mirabell, Petulant, Witwoud and Sir Wilfull have fallen in love. However, she is only in love with Mirabell. She is the first cousin of Mrs Fainall and is very friendly with all the characters in the play. She is naturally charming and beautiful because we find Mirabell reminding her to stay away from cosmetics when he puts his conditions to marry her.

She is a little careless by nature. She loves to entertain but has her preferences and carefully chooses whom she entertains. When she has nothing witty to say, she prefers to be alone and remains thoughtful. She is of a strong nature and does not endure impertinence and the scornful attitude of Mrs Marwood who is extremely jealous of her.

She poses as a lover of music and poetry. Often in the play, she has been seen reciting verses of Sir John Suckling (1609-1642), a notable lyric poet of England.

She is presented as a lady of supreme wit. This is manifest whenever we see her dialogues and her attitude. When Mirabell proposes to her, though passionately in love

with him, she hides her feelings and puts certain conditions which if he agrees upon, then only she will accept him. It shows that she does not love him blindly but uses her wisdom and expresses her love for liberty even after her marriage. She stresses on his maintaining the same passionate love towards her even after their wedding. She also wants him to leave her to herself whenever she needs her solitude. This shows that she has a strong character and she does not wish to sacrifice her identity to even her most favourite person.

She is much more appreciated than Angelica of *Love for Love* because of her beauty and intelligence and also regarded as one of the most accomplished heroines of the entire Restoration Age.

When Mrs Marwood tries to belittle her, she gives her a good lesson through her dialogues and the song, which she calls Mrs Hodgson to sing. Mrs Marwood at last becomes too spiteful and openly hostile to Millament finding her both beautiful and intelligent. She likes to talk to everyone in a humourous vein. She is never dry, dull or boring; instead, she is fresh, vivacious and full of wit. She, with Mirabell, outshines all the other characters of the play. Her elegant beauty, refined taste and liberal outlook give a rare charm to her character.

Fainall

Fainall is Lady Wishfort's second son-in-law and the villain in the story. In the early acts, he poses to be friends with Mirabell, the man who got him married to Lady Wishfort's daughter. Later, we find him to be a man of a superficial character who feigns friendship with Mirabell and turns out to be an immoral villain. He is also a man of loose character who is maintaining a secret relation with Mrs Marwood, on whose instruction he becomes ready to divorce his wife. Upon her provocation, he plays with the reputation of his wife and his mother-in-law. He is proved to be a malicious and selfish man who married a widow of high social rank not because of love, but because of greed for money and high rank.

Later in the play, we see him revealing that his design after such a marriage will not go in vain and he will blackmail Lady Wishfort into transferring her property, which he ultimately does. He is not only treacherous but cruel because he forces Lady Wishfort to abstain from any pleasure which she is accustomed to and remain dependent on his wishes forever.

In the early days of his marriage to Arabella Wishfort, he makes her sign a deed in which she transfers all her property to him, but she understands his evil intentions, and by her sheer intelligence, makes a false deed to avert her future insecurity. If Mirabell would not have taught him a lesson by his intelligence and pre-supposition, he would have turned the plot into a tragedy. He is also shown as an unfaithful man. Except for his mistress, Mrs Marwood, Fainall is shown as being unfaithful to each character of the play. He is also pretentious like Mrs Marwood: they both feel something else and project some other image about themselves.

Mrs Fainall

Arabella Languish, a widow and the daughter of Lady Wishfort, after getting married to Mr. Fainall, in a second marriage, becomes Mrs Fainall. She was one time the mistress of Mirabell also. She is a very intelligent lady whose courage and wisdom restores her to happiness at the end of the play.

She gets married to Fainall with the help of Mirabell when he fears that he has made her pregnant. Though sufficiently promiscuous like her husband in a secret manner, she is regarded here as a lady of significance and intelligence. She is cautious with Mrs Marwood because she knows how treacherous she is, but simultaneously, we see her being friendly with Mirabell, Millament, and everyone else.

She supports the plot of the play as an active agent. When she enters the scene, we see her very intelligently warding off Mrs Marwood's attention and as Mirabell comes, she walks away with him where he discloses his plot of Sir Rowland to her.

She is shown speaking little but meaningfully. At the crisis of the play, she proves that her husband has no right to accuse her of promiscuity because he himself is licentious. Not only this, with the help of Foible and Mincing, she also gives evidence of it. When Mrs Marwood blames her for her loose character, Lady Wishfort readily believes it. But when Mrs Fainall tells her to present an evidence that she is not a wantonly woman, her mother gives a long dialogue how she was brought up in the company of women only. Except for her father, she never encountered any man. She adds how she has taken after her mother and she is pure and innocent. Though besides her qualities which are undoubtedly proved to the audience, it is also true that Mrs Fainall is a typical Restoration lady of high society with all its traits and foibles. Her help to the hero and the heroine in the drama in a very clever way proves that she is a positive character.

Mrs Marwood

Mrs Marwood is a shrewd and pretty, young woman, two or three years Millament's senior in age. She is secretly the mistress of Fainall. She is a negative character and it is by her design that Fainall vows to get rid of his wife. Though she is a villain, we never find her cruelly ugly in the execution of her designs. Instead of this, we see her as a soft-spoken and polite interlocutor. The main aspect of her character is jealousy, which is born from her thwarted one-sided love for Mirabell and his perpetual inattention towards her.

Like a cunning and cultivated lady of the Restoration period, she always displays her hatred for Mirabell, but it is partly because she cannot get hold of him as a lover. She wants to steer away all the other ladies and win his love and attention which she is not able to do till the end. Her malice is first exposed when Mrs Fainall and she are walking and when they meet Mirabell and Fainall on the way; Fainall's wife takes a stroll alone with Mirabell and Mrs Marwood is left alone with Fainall. Here, we come to know that she has an illicit relation with him also. We also come to see how she is jealous of Millament's beauty and Mirabell's admiration towards Millament. She openly insults Millament the evening when Sir Wilfull is to arrive and before that, she has already prompted Lady Wishfort to get Millament married to Wilfull instead of Mirabell. She is always spying on Mirabell and Millament; under the mask, she secretly finds Foible in conversation with Mirabell and later, she overhears the exchange of talk between Mrs Fainall and Foible while lurking in Lady Wishfort's chamber. After this, she gets the chance to avenge upon both Mirabell and Millament.

She plans secretly with Fainall and sends a letter to Lady Wishfort to disclose about Sir Rowland's truth; and, finally provokes Fainall to divorce his wife and deprive her of all her property by proving her to be a lady of loose character in front of her mother and the society. When it is proved in front of Lady Wishfort that she is a crooked woman who is wantonly and loose herself, in order to defend herself, her reactions become more poisonous.

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She fails in her all efforts towards ruining Mirabell's life and loses her status of a friend to Lady Wishfort. She is also proved a coquette.

But she is a woman of genuine sympathy too. Though with some underhand designs towards Sir Wilfull, because she heartily wishes to see Millament defeated in love, Mrs Marwood talks very politely and sympathetically to Wilfull when there is no one to entertain him as he arrives at the house of Lady Wishfort. It is when Witwoud and Petulant make fun of him because he is a simple country fellow, Mrs Marwood gives company to the gentleman and though offended by them, Wilfull feels a little relieved in her company. Besides this single quality, she has acted as a villain throughout the play.

Check Your Progress

13. How do we know that Mirabell loves natural beauty in a woman as opposed to a made-up face?
14. Why does Arabella Languish, a widow, get married to Fainall?

5.8 PLOT AND THEME

The plot of *The Way of the World* is a complex one which at times renders illusion of obscurity. In Act – I, at the Chocolate House, we see how Mirabell and Fainall are friendly and trust each other. Mirabell loves Millament and Fainall plays in his support. But Mirabell is confused about the behaviour and character of his beloved.

Lady Wishfort is a distinguished lady whose niece Millament is under her care and she has to receive half her property, that is, six thousand pounds, when she marries a man by her consent. Mirabell has lost the goodwill of the lady by flirting with her which she has come to know through Mrs Marwood, was a mere pretence. Sir Wilfull is announced and Mirabell's servant's marriage is secretly arranged. Here, Witwoud and Petulant are posed as rivals to the hero.

In Act – II, at St. James Park, we come to know that Fainall has an illicit affair with Mrs Marwood, which is a long-term bond between them. Also, Mrs Fainall and Mirabell have sexual relations and when he fears that she may be pregnant, he gets her to marry Fainall. Also, Fainall does not like his wife and the only reason he got married to a widow was because he wanted to usurp her property and then get rid of her.

Mrs Marwood hates both Mirabell and Mrs Fainall and she is the principal villain. Mirabell's plan to present Waitwell as Sir Rowland is imparted to Mrs Fainall and we find her acting as an agent in Mirabell and Millament's favour since then. Poets of the age are satirized. At this stage of the story, we feel that Millament does not care for Mirabell. Foible and Waitwell are married and Mirabell has prepared to present him as Sir Rowland to Lady Wishfort, who will propose to her and pose himself as an enemy of Mirabell. When she will deeply fall in love with him, it will be revealed that he is already married to Foible and to save the honour of her Ladyship she will reconcile with Mirabell and give Millament's hand to him.

Act – III, set in a room in Lady Wishfort's house, reveals how all the major characters, except Lady Wishfort, Mrs Marwood and Fainall, are one. Mrs Marwood comes to hear of their plan and prompts her Ladyship to get Wilfull engaged to her

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niece; Lady Wishfort is busy with making herself presentable to Rowland, uncle of Mirabell who is hostile to him and if he marries and has a child, Mirabell's property will be transferred to him making him bankrupt. Mrs Marwood's open hostility towards those who support Mirabell is exposed when she counsels Fainall to nullify his marriage. Fainall forces Lady Wishfort to transfer her property to him and destroys Mirabell's plan by sending a letter to the lady which reveals the identity of Waitwell.

Act – IV has all the major characters assembled in Lady Wishfort's room. Sir Wifull, the traveller, gets drunk, quarrels with Petulant, is scolded by his aunt (Lady Wishfort) and rejected by Millament. Millament is in a philosophical mood and while she cites poetry, Mirabell comes and proposes to her. She puts her conditions of agreeing to his proposal and he also puts his conditions to her. They both consent mutually and promise to marry each other. Sir Rowland comes and Lady Wishfort is eager to be proposed to by him but the letter arrives.

Act – V, the scene continues in the same room and at the climax, the game is also over when Lady Wishfort is informed through Mrs Marwood's handwritten text sent by a stranger that he is actually Mirabell's servant, Waitwell.

Foible, Waitwell, Mirabell and Mrs Fainall are shown as fickle characters. Foible is thrown out of her job. She informs Mrs Fainall how Mrs Marwood caught her Lady and filled her ears with the whole plan. Mrs Marwood has taken her in a firm grip where she is not ready to believe even her own daughter's goodness and refuses to accept that she has not been of loose character.

Mincing and Foible inform Mrs Fainall that her husband and Mrs Marwood were caught by them in a critical state of physical intimacy when they had gone to St. James Park that night; they become ready to serve as witnesses of this incident when needed.

Millament and Mirabell convince Sir Wilfull that she can marry him and when Fainall forces Lady Wishfort to sign the deed, Mirabell, Wilfull and Millament come to accept that she will get married to Wilfull while Mirabell will gladly sacrifice his love for her Ladyship. Mrs Fainall proves to her mother that Mrs Marwood is treacherous and a false friend who has cheated her by making a plan to get married to her son-in-law and grab all her property. Mirabell presents Witwoud and Petulant as his witnesses with their signatures on the deed. This saves the honour of her Ladyship, proving him the nominee of Mrs Arabella Languish's (Mrs Fainall) properties prior to the false deed signed by her in which Fainall became the master of all her wealth. Lady Wishfort now looks favourably on Mirabell and she happily gives him her niece's hand in marriage.

This is the plot but it is very confusing at times and only at the end, the audience is sure that the hero and the heroine will unite. It also has some loose ends, like till the end the identity of Mrs Marwood is not completely revealed though she is the main villain here; Witwoud and Petulant at times seem superfluous; how Mirabell takes Sir Wilfull's consent is not told; Sir Wilfull readily leaves Mirabell to marry his betrothed without a word, etc. The beautiful and witty remarks of Mirabell and Millament are engaging. Poets are condemned by the fops and ladies of the London society. The dramatist has presented the immoral society of London life and Mirabell and Millament as their most possible icons of virtuosity. In them, he has also presented intelligence, cleverness and worldly wisdom which he has called the way of the world.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

15. Why does Mirabell lose the goodwill of Lady Wishfort?
16. Who is the chief villain of the story?

ACTIVITY

Read Congreve's play *The Mourning Bride* (1697).

Did You Know

William Congreve wrote some of the most popular English plays of the Restoration period of the late 17th century. By the age of thirty, he had written four comedies, including *Love for Love* (premiered 30 April 1695) and *The Way of the World* (premiered 1700), and one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697).

5.9 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The time period during which Restoration drama was produced and acted is generally taken as the period from 1660 to 1700.
- The playwrights of Restoration Comedy portrayed the fashions of the time, its manners, its speech, and its interests. The audience saw their own images reflected in the characters of the plays. The theatre became a social centre for the fashionable classes.
- In Congreve's *The Way of the World*, it is difficult to remember every relation between the characters as there are too many characters. The play gives a true picture of loose morals and adulterous relationships.
- Loveless marriages, unhappiness in marriage, marriage for money, marriage for love, love and marriage find a true representation besides the greed of the legacy-hunters, women's vanities, and fashions of Restoration high society.
- There is very little action in the play. The plot is complex and there are too many characters with knotty links with each other. By the time the relationships among them become clear we have reached almost the end of the play. The dramatist has, in this play, presented the immoral society of London life.

5.10 KEY TERMS

- **Fop:** A man who is preoccupied with and often vain about his clothes and manners; a dandy
- **Bubbles:** Short-lived existence
- **Gamester:** Gambler

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- **Knight-Errant:** Brave young man wandering in search of adventure
- **Panegyrick:** Praise
- **Epistle-Dedicatory:** Letter in praise of the patron which dedicates a work to him
- **Roxolana'a:** A favourite mistress
- **Catterwauling:** Quarrelling like a cat
- **Conventicle:** Religious meeting of nonconformists
- **Raillery:** Mockery
- **Penthesilea:** Queen of Amazons
- **Moiety:** Part, half
- **Green-Sickness:** Anaemic disease of young girls during puberty which gives pale or greenish complexion to the skin
- **Jade's:** Woman
- **Maritornes the Asturian:** Asturian chambermaid who brings a jug of water to bring Sancho Panza to life when Don Quixote was given the Knighthood
- **Dishabille:** Not dressed completely
- **Frippery:** Old, discarded clothes
- **Tatterdemallion:** Dressed like a beggar
- **Gibbet-Thief:** Wooden structures to hang thieves
- **Drap-du-berry:** A heavy woollen cloth form the province of Berry in central France
- **Salop:** Shropshire
- **Rekin:** The name of a hill in Shropshire
- **Pam:** The Jack of Clubs; a highest card in Loo, a game of card
- **Cuckoldum:** Being fooled by one's wife
- **Play the Incendiary:** Play the role of an instigator
- **Pullvill'd:** Pulvilio, a fragrant powder for periwig
- **Thyrisis, a youth of the Inspir'd Train:** The first verse of Edmund Waller's poem, the story of Phoebus and Daphne
- **L'etourdie:** Giddy meaninglessness of town life
- **Inprimis:** Firstly
- **Gemini:** A pair of twins
- **Mufti:** A Muslim judge or an expert on religious law
- **Bridewell-Bride:** A prison for women in which the prisoners beat hemp as punishment
- **Quiblers:** Those who render varied interpretations
- **Gorgon:** Three mythological sisters whose gaze turned people to stone
- **Pylades and Oretses:** Pylades was a friend of Orestes
- **Harkee:** Hearken, listen
- **Groat:** A coin of small value
- **Belles Assemblés:** Assembly of people

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5.11 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. According to the author, poets are the most ill-fated men because their success is dependent on destiny. Fortune abandons them after she has made a fool of them.
2. The author feels that instructing the audience would be insulting to them therefore he has written this drama to entertain rather than instruct.
3. Mirabell is in love with Millament, Lady Wishfort's niece.
4. Millament is supposed to marry a person chosen by Lady Wishfort to enable her to gain half of her aunt's fortune.
5. Fainall is only superficially sincere to his wife. His eye is actually on the vast wealth that she has inherited from her dead husband and her mother, Lady Wishfort. Her wealth would allow him to spend lavishly on his pleasures.
6. Waitwell disguises himself as Sir Rowland, Mirabell's uncle.
7. Lady Wishfort wants Sir Rowland to see her as a graceful and beautiful woman. She wants to attract him and tries to make herself look better than her picture.
8. Mrs Marwood proposes that Millament should marry Sir Wilful.
9. Millament says she would like to be wooed by Mirabell till he weds her finally, and even afterwards. When he asks her the reason for such a wish, she tells him that it is only because she must feel the same importance even afterwards. Mirabell complains that too much effort on his part towards courting and wooing her may lessen his interest in her after their marriage.
10. Lady Wishfort receives a letter from an unknown person in which it is revealed that Sir Rowland is a dupe in disguise.
11. Foible defends herself by convincing Lady Wishfort that it is Mirabell's fault who tempted her with money and she innocently fell prey to his plot.
12. Mrs Marwood was having an affair with Mr Fainall. Her secret was discovered by Foible and Mincing who had seen them together in a critical state of physical intimacy in Hyde Park one evening.
13. Mirabell's preference for naturally beautiful women is very candidly exposed when he proposes to his beloved Millament and demands her to stay away from cosmetics.
14. Arabella Languish gets married to Fainall, with the help of Mirabell, when he fears that he has made her pregnant.
15. Mirabell has lost the goodwill of Lady Wishfort by flirting with her which she has come to know through Mrs Marwood, was a mere pretence.
16. The chief villains of the story are Mrs Marwood and Mr Fainall.

5.12 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is a cabal night?
2. What kind of a person is Lady Wishfort?
3. Where does Act I Scene I take place?
4. Who is Mirabell?
5. Name the chief villains and the roles they play.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Sketch the character of Mrs Marwood and tell what kind of role she plays in Congreve's famous eighteenth century play *The Way of the World*.
2. Do you think Mirabell is a typical hero of the Restoration period? Explain.
3. Describe the setting of the play.
4. Write a short note on theme and plot of the play *The Way of the World*.

5.13 FURTHER READING

Fujimura, Thomas H.; *The Restoration Comedy of Wit*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1952.

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UNIT 6 MAN AND SUPERMAN BY G.B. SHAW

Structure

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Unit Objectives
6.2 Background of the Playwright
6.3 Shaw's Method and Technique
6.4 Plot Overview
6.5 Summary
6.6 Key Terms
6.7 Answer to 'Check Your Progress'
6.8 Questions and Exercises
6.9 Further Reading

6.0 INTRODUCTION

People look upon George Bernard Shaw as a prime writer who struggled to be recognized. He had written five novels in his 30s but not even one managed to make a mark. Undeterred, he carried on. Then, when he was 38, in 1856, he managed to make his debut with his dramatic work and with his plays some time later on.

Even though he mostly penned comedies, he was of the opinion that a play was capable of influencing those who read or viewed it. He spent his time writing more than 60 plays for the theatre. Shaw's play *The Apple Cart* got him the Nobel Prize for Literature and his *Pygmalion*, as a film, got him an Academy Award.

Shaw's plays, since he believed they could influence the general population, were geared to address various and a huge array of social issues.

For the larger part of his life, Shaw remained a bachelor. As a result, he has portrayed some characters (comical ones) in his plays as bachelors (Henry Higgins and Jack Tanner, for example).He was a fan of letter writing and wrote thousand of them to his fellow theater-lovers, colleagues and friends. From these correspondences it appears that for actresses he had an extremely devout passion.

In Ayot St. Lawrence, England, you will find George Bernard Shaw's final home named Shaw's Corner. It is a beautiful manor though only as big as a writer would require. His work room is tiny and unique as it is created to be mobile so that it can catch lots of sunlight. In this very room, Shaw penned letters and many of his plays.

This unit focuses on one of G.B Shaw's well-known plays *Man and Superman*.

6.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life of George Bernard Shaw
- Discuss the techniques employed by Shaw
- Summarize and analyze the play *Man and Superman*

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6.2 BACKGROUND OF THE PLAYWRIGHT

George Bernard Shaw was born on 26 July, 1856 in Dublin. He was an Irish playwright. Shaw is known to be a writer of short stories, novels and essays. His writings addressed the social problems of the contemporary scenario and incorporated the elements of humour and comedy. Shaw addressed issues like class privilege, health care, government, marriage and education. He co-founded London School of Economics.

His anger was acute when he felt that the working class was being exploited. Shaw was a passionate socialist, and he is even known to have written a number of speeches and brochures for the Fabian Society. In addition, he was an accomplished orator who furthered the cause of the society. Some of the issues addressed by him were promoting healthy lifestyles, withdrawing private ownership of productive land, alleviating abuses of the working class and equal rights for men and women. Shaw served on the London County Council and was also active for a brief period in local politics.

George Bernard Shaw was wedded to Charlotte Payne-Townshend in 1898. She was also a Fabian. Shaw is the sole individual to have got both the Oscar (1938) and Nobel Prize in Literature (1925). Not wanting a public honour, Shaw wished to decline the Nobel Prize yet agreed to accept it at the behest of his wife saying it was a tribute to Ireland. He did not accept the associated cash component and displayed his wish that it be utilized to translate to English from Swedish the writings of August Strindberg.

Life of George Bernard Shaw

The birth place of George Bernard Shaw is Synge Street, Dublin. His mother was Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw a singer by profession and his father was George Carr Shaw who was not only a successful merchant of grains and was also a onetime civil servant. George Bernard Shaw was the third and youngest child and the only son of his parents.

For a short period of time, Shaw studied at the grammar school Wesley College in Dublin, which was under the Methodist Church in Ireland. Then he joined a private school located close to Dalkey from where he moved to Dublin's Central Model School. His formal education was completed at the Dublin English Scientific and Commercial Day School. During his school days, he disliked schools and teachers. To quote Shaw, 'Schools and schoolmasters, as we have them today, are not popular as places of education and teachers, but rather prisons and turnkeys in which children are kept to prevent them disturbing and chaperoning their parents.' He has depicted his own schooling experience through the caustic prologue he wrote for *Cashel Byron's Profession* where he describes young Byron's educational experience. In his *Treatise on Parents and Children*, he provides meticulous details of why he had such aversion towards formal education. He was of the opinion that it was useless to implement standardized curricula as it dulled the intellect and suppressed spirit. Shaw strongly opposed corporal punishment that was practised at that time.

When Shaw was nearly 16 years of age, his mother, with both her daughters, left and went to London, following George Vandeleur Lee, her voice teacher. Shaw stayed back with his father in Dublin. When he completed his formal education, he began to work in an estate office as a clerk. Though he was unhappy there, he worked with efficiency for a number of years. Shaw moved to London, in 1876, to live with his mother, his sister Lucy and Vandeleur Lee. Shaw was given a pound each week by his

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mother. He utilized his time writing novels and studying hard in the reading room at the British Museum and other public libraries. Shaw's novels were not accepted for publication and he had negligible literary earnings till the year 1885, and then he became a critic of drama which earned him enough money to support himself.

His reading turned him into a Socialist. He also became a Fabian Society charter member. Established in 1884, this was a middle class organization for slowly and peacefully spreading socialism. It was during this time that he became active in politics and came in contact with Charlotte Payne-Townshend She was a fellow Fabian who was also an Irish heiress. In 1898, the two tied the wedding knot. They never consummated their marriage, at the insistence of Charlotte.

The couple moved, in 1906, to a house which has now become famous as Shaw's Corner. The house is in Ayot St. Lawrence which is just a tiny village in Hertfordshire.

While Shaw refused to contest for MPship, as a Progressive he got elected to the post of local councillor to the London County Council. This happened in the year 1897.

It was in the 1980s, that Shaw's plays began to be staged and before that decade came to a close, he was an established and celebrated playwright. Shaw authored sixty-three plays. He has left behind a huge volume of private correspondence, essays, critiques, pamphlets and novels. Shaw is credited with having composed over two lakh fifty thousand letters. In 1895, Shaw founded the London School of Economics and Political Science with members of the Fabian Society, Graham Wallas, Beatrice Webb and Sidney. It was funded by private philanthropists. Of the libraries at LSE, one is named in Shaw's honour. In this library are housed collection of his photographs and papers. *New Statesman*, left-wing magazine was established in 1913 and Shaw helped in the process as did the various prominent Fabian Society members and the Webbs.

In 1885, William Archer sponsored Shaw and he joined the reviewing staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. This is when he became an arts critic. He authored pieces using the pseudonym 'Corno di Bassetto' meaning 'basset horn' for the explicit reason that no one knew what it meant and it did sound European. He used the byline 'GBS' in various other periodicals, such as *Our Corner* (1885–86) and *Dramatic Review* (1885–86.) As drama critic from 1895 to 1898, with the *Saturday Review*, which was owned by his friend Frank Harris, Shaw used the opportunity to campaign for removing the Victorian hypocrisies and artificialities with a theatre of thought and actuality.

Following is a quote from one of the reviews by George Bernard Shaw where we find him criticizing the practice of and holding Sir Henry Irving for clipping parts of plays written by Shakespeare to make their 'acting versions':

'In a true republic of art, Sir Henry Irving would ere this have expiated his acting versions on the scaffold. He does not merely cut plays; he disembowels them. In *Cymbeline* he has quite surpassed himself by extirpating the antiphonal third verse of the famous dirge. A man who would do that would do anything –cut the coda out of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or shorten one of Velázquez's Philips into a kitcat to make it fit over his drawing room mantelpiece.'

He is, therefore, credited with the cause for this 200 year old editing practice for creating 'acting versions' of Shakespearean plays. This accolade was showered on him by John F. Matthews, a Shavian scholar.

In most of the critique of music done by Shaw, whether they are his short comments or the book sized essay titled *The Perfect Wagnerite*, Shaw praises the work done by Richard Wagner, a German composer. Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which is a

musical dramatization that comprised four volumes was looked upon by Shaw as a work of genius. Shaw performed a detail review of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Outside the realm of music he looked upon it as an allegory of social evolution. Wagner was sympathetic towards the working classes this perspective has been highlighted by Shaw. On the other hand, Shaw belittled Brahms and scoffed *A German Requiem* opining that, 'it could only have come from the establishment of a first-class undertaker'. According to him, there was no intellect in Brahms- there was certainly a huge amount of musicality, saying '...nobody can listen to Brahms' natural utterance of the richest absolute music, especially in his chamber compositions, without rejoicing in his natural gift'.

The music related writing done by Shaw became hugely popular as, opposed to the other critics' writings of those times, since it was easily understood by the general well-read audience. *Shaw's Music* contains all the critical analysis that he did. In his role as a drama critic in *Saturday Review*, Shaw greatly supported the playwright Henrik Ibsen who appalled the Victorian public with his realistic plays. Shaw passed away in 1950 at the age of 94.

Check Your Progress

1. On whose insistence did Shaw agree to accept the Nobel Prize and why?
2. Where was Shaw born?
3. What major event occurred in the life of Shaw when he was sixteen years of age?

6.3 SHAW'S METHOD AND TECHNIQUE

About *Man and Superman*, Shaw is known to have said that he had written 'a trumpery story of modern London life, a life in which . . . the ordinary man's main business is to get means to keep up the position and habit of a gentleman and the ordinary woman's business is to get married.' From this we can glean that *Man and Superman* is a comedy of manners which is filled with farcical elements, and it is not an actual deviation from the usual Victorian theatre. The play has rather familiar melodramatic and romantic components like capture by brigands, seemingly fallen woman, a love triangle and a will. Various common and much familiar comic types are part of the play and some of these are a mother bent on getting her daughter married, a servant who is impertinent and brash and is more aware than the master, and also some caricatures like the one of the American millionaire Malone. When it comes to character portrayal, Shaw more often than not leans towards overstatement, a form of exaggeration which is attributed traditionally to satirists and comic writers.

Like various other writers, in *Man and Superman*, the situations that Shaw develops are with the help of a trail of misunderstandings that we can refer to as being 'mistaken awarenesses.' This gives him the ability to generally create both exciting and amusing climax to every act. To take an example, quite early in the first Act, Ramsden is depicted as being confident of being Ann Whitefield's sole guardian and he is bent upon keeping Jack Tanner, a revolutionist, away from her. On Jack's appearing, Ramsden gets to know that Jack, much against his will, is to be the young lady's co-guardian. An audience is always satisfied by such dramatic irony. In Act One itself, a sub-plot takes off, that of Violet Robinson-Hector Malone and it serves as the main action's counterpoint.

In keeping with the main plot, this sub-plot too develops the theme of sex, depicting woman to be the partner who is dominant in the game of love. Before Violet makes her entry, everyone is of the opinion that she has disgraced herself. At this point, Shaw has developed and carried through very finely the modern drama's dramatic irony. He has handled with great finesse and expertise the counter-discovery, or the correction of mistaken awareness: the lady, Violet, turns out to be a respectable and married woman. This and other such situations play a vital part towards a character's development. Jack gets a chance to speak out his modern day thought, beliefs and ideas, which are much in contrast to those of the old-fashioned liberal Ramsden. This is done by Jack when the latter shows dissent toward the unsolicited and new responsibility thrust upon him and more so when he defends her expressively and gets rebuke from her. All of this is not as though irrelevant as far as the play's main theme is concerned, as it depicts Violet as well as Ann to be young women who in their own ways are determined to have their way.

With the unfolding of the play we see how Shaw carries on putting dramatic irony to effective use. Jack Tanner and Starker's initial conversation reveal to the viewers that Tanner who is blissfully ignorant is the one who will become prey to Ann's prey and not young Octaves. When Ann enters, she does not know that the note from Rhoda specifying the actual reason for the younger sister's disability to accompany Tanner on the motor trip has been received by Jack. Hector Malone makes his entry. He is the only one aware that Violet's husband is no other than Violet herself. The comic possibilities that this situation possesses are not lost as Shaw uses them to his advantage to balance it well with the earlier situation involving Violet and Jack. Jack is profuse in defending Hector who only becomes indignant with Jack.

In the second Act, a melodramatic story element is introduced by Shaw. While brigands in the Spanish Sierra capture the protagonist along with his chauffeur, the audience gets to know that the leader of the brigand, Mendoza, was pushed into his ways due to the fact that love for a young lady went unrequited. However, as coincidence would have it, the lady turns out to be Louisa Starker and she is the sister of the captive chauffeur.

The Don-Juan-in-Hell interlude also holds both mistaken awareness and coincidence. The old crone who makes inquiry to the first soul she meets turns out to be Dona Ana and learns that she is conversing with her father's 'murderer' and her one-time lover.

The fourth Act is chockfull of instances of mistaken awareness. Malone thinks his son to be chasing a married woman only to get to know that she is married to Hector. This incident creates a balance with the episode in Act One. Away from the sub-plot, the main plot reveals that Ann finally refuses to Octaves and Jack becomes aware that he is now caught and stuck will prove to be supreme examples of mistaken awareness and subsequent discoveries.

Inversion is employed by Shaw extremely masterfully. And he was an innovator when looked at in the light of nineteenth century drama, specifically Victorian drama. Shaw has adroitly used the character of Henry Starker, to depict a servant more aware than his master. In Mrs Whitefield's characterization as done by Shaw, there is a comic inversion. She is a mother in popular drama and is bent upon getting her daughter married. She is devoted to Octaves like he is her best son but she cannot let him fall victim to Ann so she should be matched with Jack. The Don-Juan-in-Hell interlude too has sterling Shavian inversions. While heaven is boring, hell is a place of enjoyment. Hell houses the

Seven Deadly Virtues in whose names most of the world's misery has been caused. The Devil is a would-be gentleman and democrat, acclaims beauty and love and wishes happiness for all. In the play, Don Juan cannot be held to a murderer and condemned sensualist. In fact he is a high-thinking individual who is of pure reason and idealistic.

Man and Superman is full of farcical incidents, comic reversals and is highly melodramatic with the use of type characters. According to Shaw, 'This pleasantry is not the essence of the play.' The play is a comedy as well as a philosophy. It is even great theatre.

Deftly, Shaw brings variation in each character's manner of speaking. Shaw is known to have said, 'My sort of play would be impossible unless I endowed my characters with powers of self-expression which they would not possess in real life.' If we make a comparison of the speech delivered by Tanner and the one delivered by Ramsden we will see how Shaw works with the voice of his characters. . Ramsden's words make him appear to be 'a president of highly respectable men, a chairman among directors, an alderman among counsellors, a mayor among alderman.' However, the brash remark by Tanner has scandalized him and he then appears to be like a dignified Member of Parliament who is accustomed to success through the 'withdrawal of opposition and the concession of comfort and precedence and power.' On the other hand, the style attached to Jack much like an orator who makes his speeches at street corners and public parks. His talk is intense and exciting apt for a person who takes pride in being an iconoclast and much like Shaw has understood that to attract attention one has to shock and startle. In the play, Tanner has been made master of aphorisms, epigrams, jests and sallies. Unhesitatingly he calls Ann 'a boa constrictor,' and Ramsden 'an old man with obsolete ideas', even declaring that 'morality can go to its father, the Devil.' All this pleases the audience.

Violet wanted a rich husband and has got one, and she articulates in much different a manner than Ann Whitefield. Her words are always to the point and direct. When Jack Tanner, after being crushed, tries to defend her, her terse words are, 'I hope you will be more careful in the future of things you say.' Her practical counsel to Hector is, 'You can be as romantic as you please about love, Hector; but you must not be romantic about money.' Ann, who is superior to Violet in intellect and is the Vital Woman, is capable of and actually does utter such words as to appear as a dutiful daughter, helpless and weak. She finds no difficulty in fooling Granny Ramsden and in making Octaves think of her as the model Womanly Woman. On Tanner confessed gloomily that he also has to be her guardians, Anne is overjoyed, 'Then we are all agreed; and my dear father's will is to be carried out. You don't know what a joy that is to me and my mother!' then, when she and Jack are alone (she knows that Jack understands her act) she has a new style of discourse and easily matches wits with him.

The play is also operatic in yet another way. Jack Tanner's longer speeches, as also some made by others, are pieces of exceptional brilliance much like grand opera arias. Some examples are found in Tanner's defense of Violet, and his denunciation of the tyranny of mothers and of the institution of marriage, Don Juan's memorable discourse in which he makes the announcement that he intends to leave Hell and move to Heaven.

Check Your Progress

4. What are some of the techniques used by Shaw?
5. Which element is introduced by Shaw in the second Act?
6. What kind of mistaken awareness takes place in the fourth Act?

6.4 PLOT OVERVIEW

Act I

Man and Superman opens in a study in Portland Place, London. Roebuck Ramsden, elderly man who looks to be of affairs and affluence is present onstage. The maid announces a young poet, Octaves Robinson. Octaves Robinson enters clad in an elegant mourning suit. Through the consolation that Ramsden provides to Octaves Robinson, it is revealed that Mr Whitefield, Octaves' friend and benefactor, has passed away. It is shown that Ramsden is completely certain and confident of being guardian to Ann and Rhoda, Whitefield's daughters. He also goes on to say he is hopeful of a marriage between Octaves and Ann. There is, Octaves believes, nothing else that could bring him such happiness. During the conversation, Octaves receives a warning from Ramsden regarding Ann's friend John Tanner who has authored the infamous volume *Revolutionist's Handbook.* Tanner is looked upon by Ramsden as being of low morals. Ramsden himself takes pride in being both liberal and of advanced thought. In case Ramsden will be made Ann's guardian he wants to ensure that Tanner gets nowhere near her.

This very moment sees the entry of Jack Tanner, the very object of Ramsden's disapproval. He is attractive as also, quite clearly, a man who is superior. He appears to be panicking. Excitedly, he tells Ramsden that Whitefield's will has made both Ramsden and himself the guardians of Ann. The irony is that Ramsden had provided advice to Mr Whitefield to team him with a man who was younger and he never expected that Mr Whitefield would choose Tanner. Tanner begs Ramsden to help him escape from this situation with the argument that Ann might appear to be but is not a dutiful and weak young woman. Tanner opines that she is both hypocritical and willful and he goes on to say that, she would 'commit every crime a respectable woman can.' On the other hand, Ramsden makes it crystal clear in no uncertain terms that he will not be co-guardian along with Tanner. At this point, Tanner makes a prediction that they will never get away from the responsibility that has been thrust upon their shoulders. It is appalling for Octaves to hear Tanner talking of Ann in such unflattering terms and making her out to be a siren, and an unscrupulous one at that. Octaves looks upon her as being a goddess, and Tanner's words will not make him believe otherwise. Octaves is naive and for him, Anne is 'reality of romance.'

Ann enters at this point. She is described by Shaw as being, 'perfectly ladylike, graceful, and comely, with ensnaring eyes and hair.' She is filled with vitality, the trait that makes her different from other women who are also beautiful. She is accompanied by her mother, Mrs Whitefield. She is a little, lacks vitality and carries an expression which is of 'muddled shrewdness.' Ann is acting the helpless and dutiful daughter. She hears Ramsden out while he informs her that he and Tanner are named as co-trustees and co-guardians for her and her sister. Now the prophesy made by Tanner comes true. Ann will not go against the will of her father. So, Jack and Ramsden (she calls him "Granny) will have to serve.

When Jack and Octaves were busy putting forth their personal, and contrasting, views regarding Anne, Ramsden had gone off stage. Now he enters carrying some 'terrible news.' Violet is Octaves' sister. She is going to become an unwed mother. Everyone is shocked, except Tanner. He says that Violet needs to be congratulated for achieving 'the fulfillment of her highest purpose and greatest function — to increase,

multiply, and replenish the earth.' Everyone, especially Ramsden put forth their conventional views: Violet has fallen victim to 'a rascal . . . a libertine, a villain worse than a murderer' who is in their very midst! Ramsden says he suspects Tanner, describing him as 'a man of notoriously loose principles.' Skillfully, Tanner makes it clear that Ramsden, too, is not above suspicion.

Jack and Ann are shown alone on the stage for the first time and they are in conversation. It is brought out that they have been acquainted since childhood and Ann has had Jack express his love to her once. Ann confesses that at one time when Jack had made a pretence of being in love with some other girl, she had violated his confidence; Anne had informed the girl that Jack already had told her about the attachment. At this point, Tanner declares that this caused him to believe that the only real passion was moral passion; he no longer wants romance. This exchange is full of Shavian ideas that are extremely interesting. This conversation also makes it evident that in the game of love, Ann is the active one. In Tanner's words, 'I never feel safe with you: there is a devilish charm — or no: a subtle interest.'

There is re-entry of Miss Ramsden, Octaves and Ramsden. Miss Ramsden is a spinster who is extremely hardheaded. She is resolute to immediately have Violet leave the house as she seemingly wants to again meet the person who betrayed her. Enter Violet, an impenitent and self-possessed individual. Tanner is profusely approving of her and in return she turns upon him, fiercely rejecting the compliments he has given. In the process Violet ends up telling that she is already married, secretly.

Act II

This Act opens in the carriage drive of the park in the house near Richmond. Tanner is on stage and is attired in the contemporary motoring costume. He is looking at Henry Starker, his chauffeur, who is busy fixing the vehicle. Their verbal exchange brings out that Enry (Henry Starker) falls in the category of the new type of servants, those who are fully conscious of their superiority, in the case of Enry it is machines. Rightly so, Jack Tanner makes an observation that he, the master, is now a slave to both the chauffeur and the car. Enry is informed by Tanner that Octaves is being driven down by Mr Malone, in a new American steam car. Mr Malone is an American gentleman. The chauffeur shows his frustration at being unable to race them yet finds consolation in the fact that the group will be using both cars as transportation. The group comprises Jack, Rhoda, Ann, Violet and Octaves.

Octaves enters at this point. At this point in the play there is a humorous discussion with Tanner describing the status of Enry as being of a New Man, belonging to the group of engineers who are class conscious. Enry is not disrespectful even though he is fully conscious of the fact that he has more knowledge of machines than his master Tanner.

When Octaves and Tanner are alone, Octaves seeks sympathy from Tanner. He had proposed to Ann but his proposal was rejected. Jack is insistent that Ann has not rejected him; it is just that she is still not done teasing him. According to Jack, while Ann is the pursuer, he, Octaves, is her chosen victim. Octaves is lovesick and quick to discard what Jack advocates as according to him, Jack is again wallowing in 'eternal shallow cynicism.' As soon as Tanner gets to know that Octaves was reproached by Ann only because he did not seek permission before approaching her, Jack blesses the two with happiness. He does add that Ann and Octaves are both equally free to choose. An argument ensues between Octaves and Tanner regarding the views they hold about love. With the re-entry of Starker, there is a shift in conversation and the discussion now is about the preoccupation that Enry's has with motor racing.

Jack has Rhoda Whitefield's note handed over to him by Octaves. The note says that Rhonda has been forbidden by Ann, her elder sister, from taking the motor trip where Tanner will be there. She has even forbidden Rhoda from ever being with Tanner, since Tanner is 'not a fit person for a young girl.' Octaves' views match those of Ann, in that the views that Jack holds are not right for the growth of character and mind of a young girl.

Ann enters at this point. She gives the information that Rhoda is having a headache and is unable to join them. This hugely amuses Jack; Ann has been trapped by him in a lie from which she, according to him, cannot get out. But she does. She send off Octaves for taking care of Mr Malone and then informs Jack that she only did her mother's bidding as the dutiful daughter. This, of course, is just another one of her lies. Here Jack gets an opportunity to burst out against the tyranny of mothers and to throw a challenge to Ann for making her independence evident by accompanying on a continental motor trip. He is mortified when she does not hesitate to agree. Her explanation is that since Jack is her guardian and stands in her father's place, there will not be any impropriety.

Enters Hector Malone in the company of Mrs Whitefield. They are followed by Octaves and Ramsden. Jack is hopeful that Ann will be forbidden by Mrs Whitefield to undertake the trip with him. He learns that she has no — what reason could there be for her to object? She goes on to say that she wanted to speak with Jack and ask him to occasionally take Rhoda riding. Jack again gets to know that Ann told a lie. Jack exclaims, 'Abyss beneath abyss of perfidy!' To avert further outburst, hurriedly, Ann introduces Jack and Hector. In the conversation between Hector, Octaves and Tanner, Hector's devoutness to Violet becomes evident. He is warned of her being married though who her husband is still remains a mystery. Chivalrous Hector declares that he intends to respect her wishes but wonders why a husband would not want his wife to reveal his identity. The conversation trails to the subject of marriage and womanhood, with orthodox views being aired by Tanner. Hector expresses his wish to hold a short private conversation with Violet.

Hector and Violet are alone on stage and exchange kisses. This reveals the fact that he is Violet's husband. The reason due to which they kept their marriage a secret was that Hector's father, a millionaire, wished Hector to marry into an aristocratic family so that the bride would have 'a handle to her name.' Violet is pushed by Hector to allow him to publicly announce the marriage even if this disclosure gets him disinherited from his father's fortune. Violet is against all such 'nonsense.' She tells Hector that there is no reason to get romantic when it comes to money and does not wish to battle with poverty and a life of struggles. On his saying that he could borrow money and go to work, Violet displays shock responding with: 'Do you want to spoil our marriage?' Young Hector continues to worry the lie they have told, and more so since Jack Tanner's argument that the unknown husband of Violet was not ennobled by marriage. As far as Violet is concerned, Jack is no more than a hateful beast. To Hector, the tolerant young American, all that Jack needs is a good woman's love.

Starker and Tanner return while Violet and Hector head off for a steam car inspection. A discussion tales place between Enry and Jack regarding the continental trip. While the conversation is under way, the insightful Enry tells Tanner that Ann will never marry Octaves and it appears she is after Jack. This appalls Tanner for it makes him 'the bee, the spider, the marked-down victim' that Ann is going all out to capture. Wanting to escape, Jacks beseeches Enry to create a new record in motoring and go across the Continent far away from the reach of Ann.

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Act III

The third Act is set in the evening time in the Spanish Sierras and the stage is a natural amphitheatre. Around a campfire which is nearly out, about a dozen men recline. One man is seen at the adjacent rise of ground playing the role of a lookout. The men are an international band of brigands who rob the occupants of motor cars 'to secure a more equitable distribution of the wealth.' Mendoza is their leader. He is a man of ready wit and fine voice. His group has a drink ruined bullfighter, some Americans, cockney Englishmen and at least one Frenchman. They appear to be on the right side of their 30s while one of them is 10-20 years older than them and is attired like a broken-down English gentleman; his description is that of the group's respectable member.

As they sit in wait of victims, they continue with their evening debates, subjects being Social-Democrats and Anarchists. In the group there are three Social-Democrats and one Anarchist which makes the discussion lively. Others say they are Christians and gentlemen. The discussions are presided over by Mendoza with his characteristic skill and wit, smoothly controlling the excited and intense speakers. There is the sound of a motor car approaching and the debate halts. The brigand is ready: road is strewn with nails to cause punctures while a rifled brigand is standing in wait in case the nails do not work. Nails prove useless. Forcefully, the car is stopped and Jack and Enry are taken as prisoners.

With good humour, Tanner gives in to his capture. On the one hand, Mendoza makes his introduction as the President of the League of the Sierra who makes a living by robbing the rich, on the other Jack says he is a gentleman who lives by robbing the poor. Hence, the two of them have a common bond. The exchanges that take place between the brigands and Enry Starker make Enry undecided about whether Jack and he are in a Socialist meeting or taking a joyous mountain trip.

Mendoza the courteous and dignified, makes an announcement that Spain one puts off business until the next day and also dismisses the group. It is now possible for everyone to relax; ransom will not be mentioned. Responding to the question posed by Tanner and the occasional remarks made by Enry, Mendoza begins by speaking about Socialism and moves on to narrate the story of his life. He was once a waiter who was very successful, failure in love made him a brigand. She was not the daughter of an earl and was far more attractive than ladies of the English aristocracy. Had not she been 'a woman of the people,' she would have been scorned by him. He had had to face rejection for being Jew. Having been employed with a Jewish family convinced her that Gentiles, specifically the English Gentiles, were looked upon by the Jews as being of dirty habits. At this point, Enry remembers his sister as having cooked for a family of Jewish. This unfolds a dramatic coincidence. Enry's sister Louisa is Mendoza's beloved. The leader of the brigand has heard a lot about his beloved's favourite brother Enry. Yet, Enry is displeased with the idea of brigand talk of the love he had for Louisa. So much so that once even Tanner has to prevent physical violence by his intervention. With things under control and quiet, Enry sleeps with the other brigands. Jack and Mendoza carry on discussions and the brigand's tendency to paraphrasing Shakespeare and poetry becomes visible. In a solemn tone, Tanner urges him to stop thinking of Louisa and let go of the romantic pose, saying that all that this is, is 'sacrificing his career to a monomania.' Tanner's advice will not be taken by Mendoza because the mountains create dreams of beautiful women; certainly 'this is a strange country for dreams.'

As Tanner lies down to sleep, the brigand narrates to him an original love poem addressed to his beloved, and before it finished, Jack has fallen asleep.

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There is a further deepening of the darkness. At a place there is visible the start of a pallor. A man, accompanied by music which is eerie, is identified. He is visible but ghostly. The man lifts his head to the Mozartian strains of the music. However, the strains die out, killed by wind instruments uncannily wailing and, the man is seen to slump dejectedly. The man is a fifteenth-sixteenth century Spanish nobleman — Don Juan. It might appear odd but he looks a lot like Tanner. They also have similar names - Jack Tanner - Juan Tenorio. A lost looking old crone strays into the void. Their conversation reveals her to be a newcomer, a person who passed away that very morning. She is both shocked and disbelieving, when she is informed by Don Juan that it is Hell that she has entered. She was confident to get Heaven or at least to be sent to Purgatory. She lives neither as a lady nor as a faithful daughter of the Church, attending confession regularly. She is assured by Don Juan that Hell has many good people, too. When she asks about him, she gets to know, to her dismay, that he was a murderer. He does later say it was self-indictment, as the man died dueling with him. Again when she is told by Don Juan that she is actually in Hell, she is lamenting for having let slip many opportunities for doing wicked. She is still not ready to believe. There is no pain that she feels, why? She is told by the Spaniard that in Hell there is comfort for the wicked and that she is here is no mistake. The Spaniard confesses of his discomfort in Hell as it bores him completely. He does go on to imply that he was never really wicked and reveals the duel's circumstances. The dueling partner he had was an enraged father out to defend the honour of his daughter and attempted to kill Don Juan. Actually he fell foolishly in love with the girl who screamed when he proclaimed his love.

The new soul in Hell is insistent that Don Juan, same as all other men, was but a murderer and libertine. She confesses that it was the same scenario that took her father's life. It was her duty to scream while the honour of her father required that he attack the prospective lover. It is explained by Don Juan that Hell is attained as duty's reward. Here lies the home of justice, duty, honour and all seven of the deadly virtues, since wickedness on earth is performed in the name of all these virtues.

Post discussion about her being the Devil's subject, she is informed by Don Juan that she can choose to be as old as she desires. Her age of choice is twenty-seven and it makes her a radiant beauty so attractive that she could have been taken to be Ann Whitefield. Don Juan is amazed and addresses her as Dona Ana de Ulloa, the cause of his dual. At this point, Ana exclaims, 'You who slew my father! even here you pursue me.' Yet Don Juan is insistent that he did not slew her father. It makes her delighted to know that there is a possibility of her paying a visit to her father. On being asked by whether or not he had been in love with her, Don Juan becomes impatiently and tells her to refrain from mentioning love. Those in Hell keep speaking of the spirituality, holiness and beauty of love but have no clue what love actually is.

Music is heard playing in the background. It is evident to Don Juan that this is the music of the statue of Mozart. He tells Ana that soon her father will appear. At a former time he had informed Ana that bored of Heaven her father often visited Hell. Enter the Commander of Calatrava's living statue. He chose to remain in the form of a statue the form in which he had gained more admiration. Ana he cannot recognize; he is even unable to recall his daughter's name and tells not to look upon him as her father but rather a fellow creature. The fact does stand that while she died at eighty he had died at just sixty-four. It horrifies Ana that her father is all praises for life in Hell: his conclusion is 'Hell . . . is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself.' These words draw a sigh from Don Juan. The Statue makes up its mind to reside in Hell, giving up Heaven discomfort and dullness. He waves a hand and music begins to play - Mozartian

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chords mingle grotesquely with strains from Gounod's Faust. A dramatic appearance is made by the Devil. His appearance resembles Mendoza, the brigand leader. The Statue is welcomed by him as he enthusiastically talks of the infernal preoccupation with beauty, happiness, love and joy. While the statue is awed by it all, Don Juan feels sickened. It elates the Devil that the statue has permanently left Heaven. As the Devil and Don Juan cannot stand each other, the Devil first tells Ana and then the statue to make Don Juan moves to Heaven. He gives a long explanation of the gap between Hell and Heaven and he talks from firsthand experience as he has lived in both. While in Hell happiness is pursued and tender emotion cultivated, in Heaven remains intellectual and therefore cold. To Don Juan, those residing in Hell are just full of romantic illusions. Don Juan desires to give himself up to contemplation, more specifically to help life struggle upward as he holds enduring faith in the potential of humanity. He praises humanity, calling it the greatest miracle of organization reached by life with only a little bit still to develop. The Devil looks upon humans to be creatures that cause destruction and bungle with peace. This does not trouble Don Juan. His argument is that the Devil makes the mistake of considering us at our own evaluation of ourselves. Don Juan gives a long speech regarding the destiny of humanity, and says that Life Force's greatest object is intellect —the philosophic man's progression. It has been seen that great ideas have moved man – as seen in the force of Christianity. We must be moved by the Life Force to reach the ideal of the philosophic.

Don Juan is just as empathic on Ana's bringing up the topic of women relative to men. Don Juan provides an explanation that in the eyes of woman the role of man is to ensure the children are provided for. By instinct, a woman is aware of her great mission, which is bearing children: 'Sexually, Woman is Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its highest achievement. Sexually, Man is Woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way.' Don Juan concludes by saying that the numerical strength of man and his excess energy makes him dissatisfied with self-reproduction alone: So, civilization is created by him, but not in consultation with Woman. An unflattering view of the civilization created by man is put forth by the Devil. Don Juan is in agreement that man's civilization is in no way a success, yet the point he puts forth is that as Life makes a 'continual effort not only to maintain itself but to achieve higher and higher organization and complete self-consciousness,' battles are all that have been lost, the larger conflict still remains. The force called Life always attempted and is still making efforts to make higher individuals on its attempt toward godhead. It is Life that is 'driving at brains' which man uses for obtaining self-understanding and self-consciousness.

Brains are not respected by the Statue as he feels that thinking is not needed for majority of his pleasures. Don Juan gives this as the reason for intellect not being popular and adds that it is essential for Life Force's survival. While all are tiresome failures, the philosophic man is happy as well as respected universally. Don Juan backs up the argument using examples of the Artist who gives us enchanting paintings and loves lyrics, doctors of divinity and doctors of medicine. Don Juan confesses that the Artist (romantic man) is the reason he worships Woman though his wealth and social rank have saved him from falling victim to romantic illusions. He did learn that women relentlessly pursue men when motivated by instinct.

Don Juan's personal experiences had made him feel that marriage is recognized by the Life Force just for the purpose of ensuring the most children possible without a care for 'honor, chastity, and all the rest of your moral figments.' He proposes that marriage is popular as it is humans' most immoral institution and this shocks Ana and her father. Ana defends marriage saying that this institution, and not wickedness, populates

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the world. Don Juan says that the day is not far when those who are prudent will seek sterility and prior to this there will be reaction. The key reason for breeding human kind to 'heights now deemed superhuman: that purpose now hidden in a mephitic cloud of love and romance and prudery and fastidiousness, will break through into clear sunlight as a purpose no longer to be confused with the gratification of personal fancies, the impossible realization of boys' and girls' dreams of bliss, or the need of older people for companionship or money.' In the following discussion between the Statue and Don Juan there is amusing illustration of the dreams and fancies referred to previously.

Don Juan and then informed by the Devil that in Hell he has got none of what he was repelled by but all of that which he sought. Don Juan says it has given him just disappointment: 'I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life.' To put it another way, within him works the Life Force providing 'incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, more intense self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding,' which clearly point towards Superman's ultimate emergence.

Don Juan, already disgusted by the Devil's repetitive talk of religion of beauty and love, gets to know of the fact that Heaven has no artistic beings, he wishes to leave. When he asks directions for reaching there, he is told by the Statue: "The frontier between Heaven and Hell is only the difference between two ways of looking at things; any road will take you across." A this point, Don Juan makes his way out.

A warning is given to the Statue by the Devil to not start pursuing Superman as it is a dangerous thing to do and will cause 'an indiscriminate contempt for the human.' On being asked by Ana where Superman can be found, she is told he does not exist yet. She replies, 'Then my work is not yet done. I believe in the Life to come.' Talking to the universe, she says: 'A father, a father for superman.' With this Ana is gone. The scene moves back to the Sierra.

The setting is the morning after. The sanctuary wakes up the brigands telling them that an automobile is coming towards them along with a couple of armored cars carrying soldiers. Enter Ann, Violet, Hector Malone, Ramsden, and after a pause Octaves. On entering Ann directly goes to Jack Tanner. Jack is informed by Hector that Ann tracked him at every stopping place — 'She is a regular Sherlock Holmes. The Life Force! I am lost,' Tanner exclaims. The Brigand is not arrested, all thanks to Tanner who says they are not his captors but escorts. The brigands show him gratitude, except the Anarchist. He folds his arms in defiance to the State.

Act IV

The scene is set in Granada, in the garden of a pretentious and expensive villa. Enter Enry Starker and an elderly Irishman. Enry was given the task of delivering a note to Hector at the latter's hotel. Enry remains confused as this Irishman is being said to be Hector Malone but had given in to bring him to the villa on being informed that 'it's all right.' He now learns that stranger is not even aware of the name of Violet Robinson. Violet enters at this point. The Irishman says he is Hector Malone, Sr. (now on he will be called Malone and his son Hector, Jr.). Enry and Malone have amusing exchanges regarding their respective dialects. An apology is made by Violet regarding any rudeness Enry might have committed: 'But what can we do? He is our chauffeur.' The mechanical skills make Enry indispensible.

Malone did understand that his son was deeply interested in a woman he did not know. Now he gets to know that Violet is whom Hector wishes to marry. Malone

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informs Violet that from Hector 'will not have a rap' if they marry as he has other plans. It is granted by Malone that though Violet is an excellent and amiable young lady, both she and his son are romantics unconcerned with money. He is surprised to hear Violet say she is not as foolish and money must be given to Hector. Malone says Hector will need to work for it and Violet says calmly if one has to work then it is useless to have money. Violet nearly goes out of control on hearing Malone say she should not wed on this belief. Her question is if her position is not as good as his sons. Malone says the Hector's social position will remain just what he wishes to purchase. The father amply clarifies that he will wed Hector to an aristocrat's daughter. Malone confesses that there would have been no objection from his side if Hector had decided to wed barefooted Irish girl since his grandmother was one too. Then Hector would have received financial help from Malone as this spending would have been concerned with 'social profit.' Now, his wedding with Violet would leave things 'just like they are' keeping Hector remain middle class.

Malone begins to respect Violet and considers her 'a pretty straightforward downright sort of young woman.' But stays firm: 'I want no middle class properties and no middle class woman for Hector.' Hector's entry interrupts the discussion between Malone and Violet regarding what the father should and Violet could do for him. This annoys Violet as she wanted to turn Malone to her side and it needed some time. Behaving like a man of honour, Hector appears indignant at his father for opening a letter addressed to him: 'That's disawnerable.' Fearful of a scene, Violet tells him not to be unreasonable, the letter was opened as the envelope carried Malone's name.

Muted glares are exchanged between father and son. Enter Ann, Octaves, Ramsden and Tanner. When asked by Violet to introduce his father, Hector refuses bluntly: 'He is no father of mine.' Astonished, Octaves and Ann withdraw and Violet implores father and son not to create a scene. There is nothing Violet can do while 'in helpless annoyance as her husband soars to higher and higher moral eminences without the least regard to the old man's millions.' Complication is added to the situation by Tanner when he reveals the fact that Violet is married. This make Malone believe that Hector has pursued a woman who is married. 'You've picked up the habit of the British aristocracy, have you?' he nearly screams into Hector's ear. Now, Hector reveals the truth and Malone is crushed. He says, 'She's married a beggar.' Hector reveals the fact that as of that afternoon he has become a working man. He will accept no remittances from one who is insulting his wife. This declaration of independence makes the romantic Octaves tearful. He begs to shake Hector's hand. Tears have welled in Violet eyes, but due to rage. 'Oh, don't be an idiot, Tavey, says the vexed Violet.

Octaves and Tanner generously offer Hector support to make a good beginning. Malone feels jealous that others should not help Hector. Malone apologizes to Violet and asks Hector to take no rash step. Malone says Violet is the right wife for Hector. It seems to have gone fine for Hector and Violet. However, Hector wants to remain independent. Malone tells Violet to make him see sense. He even agrees to take no step till he consults her and hands him a bill of thousand-dollar, Hector's 'bachelor allowance.' Tanner who has observed the change in behaviour of the Irish multimillionaire, 'one of the master spirits of the age,' begins to think if a woman will ever force him to become so. At this point, Ramsden opines that the sooner it happens the better it will be for him.

Exit Violet. Malone is extremely happy. 'That'll be a grand woman for Hector. I wouldn't exchange her for ten duchesses.' The Ramsden, Tanner and Malone conversation makes it evident Malone is in Granada on account of his investment in Mendoza. Malone is told by Jack that Mendoza is completely a commercial man. Jack promises Malone to take him to Mendoza. Exit Malone and Ramsden. Octaves and Ann are walking in the garden. Jack calls to Octaves, and says that the father-in-law of his sister is 'a financier of brigands.' Then, he rushes after the two men who had just exit the scene.

Octaves again makes an attempt to win the hand of the one he worships. She informs him that her mother wishes her to wed Jack. Tavy for an instance is of the belief that his friend has been false while pushing him not to wed Ann. Ann is insistent that this is not true, and goes on to say that Jack is unsure of what he wants. Ann informs Tavy of the fact that while her mother is insistent that she wed Jack and this was also her father's wish. This makes Ann out to be a dutiful daughter in the eyes of Octaves. A little pity is felt by Ann for the romantic Octaves which makes her gentle towards him. Ann reminds him that she can never attain the idea he had of divinity and he would forever worship the ground she walked. He needs to stay a sentimental bachelor. Octaves vows suicide but Ann says that it would be an unkind act. She tells Tavy not to inform Jack of the marriage or he will again run away. This shocks Tavy. Will she wed a man who is unwilling? Ann tells him that the man is no more unwilling when a woman is really after him: 'The only really simple thing is to go straight for what you want and grab it." She tells Tavy it is best to just dream of women and in actuality stay away from them. She tells Tavy that Violet is "hard as nails.' Ann enters the villa after saying goodbye to Tavy and patting his cheek.

Enter Mrs Whitefield. She runs to Tavy who is crying. She is told that Ann will wed Jack, as per the wishes of her mother. Though Mrs. Whitefield tells him the truth, he is sure Ann will not lie to him. Enter Tanner. He informs that he has left Malone and Mendoza in each other's company. Seeing the state Tavy is in he asks what the matter is. In a sad tone, Tavy requests Mrs. Whitefield to inform Jack of her wishes. Then he leaves. This puzzles Jack. Mrs Whitefield talks of the complications like now-a-days: 'Nothing has been right since that speech Professor Tyndale made at Belfast.' Jack is in agreement and wishes to know what it is she wants him to do. Mrs Whitefield says that he will wed Ann but must not put the mother at fault for it. Emphatically Tanner says he does not intend to wed Ann. Mrs Whitefield wishes they marry as then Ann will meet her match. Jack calls Ann a liar with a hypocrite, a bullier of women, a croquette, a liar with no scruples. Mrs Whitefield is in agreement and goes on to say she is fond of Tavy and would not want him to suffer at the hands of Ann while Jack is well capable of looking after himself. She goes on to say that it is not as though she has no love for Ann just because she does know what faults her daughter has.

Enter Violet and Ann. Ann says that she has heard what has happened between Jack and her mother. Violet is there to bid goodbye. Violet tells Jack he should get married quickly. He knows that time is running out and says probably by day close he will be wed. Mrs Whitefield is tearful at seeing Violet go.

Tanner and Ann are alone. Jack moans that he is treated by all as though his marrying Ann is a matter that is settled completely. To this Ann replies gently that she did not propose and if he so wishes he need not marry. A sparring match ensues between Ann and Tanner. Finally, Jack takes Ann in his arms declaring his love for her and that the Life Force enchants him. As he makes a final attempt to be free of her embrace, Ann swoons.

Enter Violet, Octaves, Mrs Whitefield, Malone, Ramsden, Mendoza and Starker. Everyone is worried for Ann's wellbeing, who is enough revived to declare Jack's promise to marry her. Tavy bravely congratulates Jack.Jack tells him he was trapped even when

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he did not propose. It is a relief to Ann to hear from Violet that nothing had been said by Jack. Ann seems to swoon again but bounces back to announce her happiness. Malone finds Jack 'a rough wooer,' and is impressed by him. Jack is congratulated by all. In his last speech of length, Jack describes his status as not being a happy man. Ann and Jack have both knowingly given up tranquility, freedom, happiness and above all 'the romantic possibilities of an unknown future."' Violet says that Jack is a brute, yet Ann's eyes have fond pride for him. Ann caresses Jack's arm. 'Go on talking,"'she says. 'Talking!' exclaims Jack, and there is universal laughter as the play folds.

Check Your Progress

7. Where does the play *Man and Superman* open?
8. Who is Octaves Robinson?
9. The third Act is set in the evening time in the Spanish Sierras and the stage is a natural amphitheatre. (True/False)

ACTIVITY

Read the play *Candida* by G.B Shaw and draw a character sketch of the protagonist. Contrast it with the character of the protagonist of *Man and Superman.*

Did You Know

George Bernard Shaw was an Irish playwright and a co-founder of the London School of Economics.

6.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- George Bernard Shaw was born on 26 July 1856 in Dublin. He was an Irish playwright. Shaw is known to be a writer of short stories, novels and essays.
- Shaw was a passionate socialist, and he is even known to have written a number of speeches and brochures for the Fabian Society.
- The birth place of George Bernard Shaw is Synge Street, Dublin. His mother was Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw a singer by profession and his father was George Carr Shaw who was not a successful merchant of grains and was also a onetime civil servant.
- Shaw's novels were not accepted for publication and he had negligible literary earnings till the year 1885, and then he became a critic of drama which earned him enough money to support himself.
- It was in the 1980s, that Shaw's plays began to be staged and before that decade came to a close, he was an established and celebrated playwright. Shaw authored 63 plays.

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- Shaw is, therefore, credited with the cause for this 200 year old editing practice for creating 'acting versions' of Shakespearean plays. This accolade was showered on him by John F. Matthews, a Shavian scholar.
- *Shaw's Music* contains all the critical analysis that he did. In his role as a drama critic in *Saturday Review*, Shaw greatly supported the playwright Henrik Ibsen who appalled the Victorian public with his realistic plays. Shaw passed away in 1950 at the age of 94.
- About *Man and Superman*, Shaw is known to say that he had written 'a trumpery story of modern London life, a life in which . . . the ordinary man's main business is to get means to keep up the position and habit of a gentleman and the ordinary woman's business is to get married.'
- Like various other writers, in *Man and Superman*, the situations that Shaw develops are with the help of a trail of misunderstandings that we can refer to as being 'mistaken awarenesses.'
- With the unfolding of the play we see how Shaw carries on putting dramatic irony to effective use.
- *Man and Superman* is full of farcical incidents, comic reversals and is highly melodramatic with the use of type characters. According to Shaw, 'This pleasantry is not the essence of the play.'
- The play is also operatic in yet another way. Jack Tanner's longer speeches, as also some made by others, are pieces of exceptional brilliance much like grand opera arias.
- Man and Superman opens in a study in Portland Place, London. Roebuck Ramsden, elderly man who looks to be of affairs and affluence is present onstage.
- The second Act opens in the carriage drive of the park in the house near Richmond. Tanner is on stage and is attired in the contemporary motoring costume.
- The third Act is set in the evening time in the Spanish Sierras and the stage is a natural amphitheatre. Around a campfire which is nearly out, about a dozen men recline.
- In Act four the scene is set in Granada, in the garden of a pretentious and expensive villa. Enter Enry Starker and an elderly Irishman.

6.6 KEY TERMS

- **Protagonist:** The main character in a drama or other literary work
- **Comedy of Manners:** Is a comedy that satirically portrays the manners and fashions of a particular class or set
- **Brigand:** A robber or bandit
- **Orator:** An eloquent and skilled public speaker

6.7 ANSWER TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. He agreed to accept the Nobel Prize when his wife called it a tribute to Ireland.
2. The birth place of George Bernard Shaw is Synge Street, Dublin.

3. When Shaw was nearly sixteen years of age, his mother, with both her daughters, left and went to London, following George Vandeleur Lee, her voice teacher.
4. Shaw makes use of dramatic irony, comedy of manners and other farcical elements.
5. In the second Act, a melodramatic story element is introduced by Shaw. While brigands in the Spanish Sierra capture the protagonist along with his chauffeur, the audience gets to know that the leader of the brigand, Mendoza, was pushed into his ways due to the fact that love for a young lady went unrequited.
6. The fourth Act is chockfull of instances of mistaken awareness. Malone thinks his son to be chasing a married woman only to get to know that she is married to Hector. This incident creates a balance with the episode in Act One.
7. *Man and Superman* opens in a study in Portland Place, London.
8. Octaves Robinson is a young poet
9. True

6.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on what Shaw thought of his schools and teachers.
2. What are the main techniques that Shaw uses in his writings?
3. List the names of some of Shaw's novels.
4. What is the ploy employed by Ann to trap Jack into marriage?
5. What does the concept 'mistaken awareness' suggest? Give an example of how it is used in the play.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a detailed note on the life and background of G.B Shaw.
2. Summarize the first Act of the play *Man and Superman*.
3. What are the thoughts of the Devil about heaven and hell?
4. What are the thoughts of the Spaniard about heaven and hell?
5. Why do you think Shaw introduced the Don Juan scene into the play?

6.9 FURTHER READING

Shaw, G.B.; (1903). *Man and Superman*, The University Press, Cambridge.

UNIT 7 *WAITING FOR GODOT* BY SAMUEL BECKETT

Structure

7.0 Introduction
7.1 Unit Objectives
7.2 Background of the Play
7.3 Beckett's Intuition: Nothing Really Ever Happens in Man's Existence
7.4 Beckett's Use of Language
7.5 Beckett's Dramatic Technique
7.6 Summary
7.7 Key Terms
7.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
7.9 Questions and Exercises
7.10 Further Reading

7.0 INTRODUCTION

Samuel Beckett can deservedly be called the father of the Absurd as his play *Waiting for Godot* was to become the defining text of the theatre of the Absurd. He has inspired well-known Absurdist playwrights like Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter who have created powerful texts of the form of the Absurd. *Waiting for Godot* changed the vocabulary of drama when it first appeared in the 1950s and since then continues to be read as a defining landmark in modern theatre.

The most interesting aspect of *Waiting for Godot* is its plot. There is no story, unlike other plays, and there is no development or denouement whereby one can identify a plot. The plot has no single story, no tension and therefore no resolution. The essential situation remains the same: that on a given day, at a given place, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for someone named Godot. The absence of a plot is symbolic of the meaninglessness of life itself. Because it is impossible to view and explain life in a linear manner, the plot is non-linear and random. The entry of characters on stage is abrupt and so is their exit. This is a reflection of modern life, one without a centre.

This unit discusses the play *Waiting for Godot* from a critical perspective.

7.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the genre of Absurd in *Waiting for Godot*
- Describe the plot and dramatic technique of *Waiting for Godot*
- Analyze central characters in *Waiting for Godot*
- Appreciate Beckett's use of language in *Waiting for Godot*

7.2 BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

In the early 1950s, a number of dramatists came forward – Ionesco, Adamov and Genet among them – whose works can be put within the theoretical structure of what has been termed as the 'Theatre of the Absurd'. These dramatists did not regard themselves as a coherent group or school but all seemed to share certain attitudes towards the predicament of man in the universe, a stranger in an inhuman universe. Essentially they were those summarized by Camus in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), which diagnoses humanity's plight as purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings. Awareness of this lack of purpose in all we do – the situation of Sisyphus, forever rolling a stone up a hill, forever aware that it will never reach the top, is a perfect metaphor here – produces a state of metaphysical anguish which is the central theme of writers in the 'Theatre of the Absurd'. In their work, as distinct from the plays of Camus himself, for instance, the idea is allowed to shape the form as well as the content: all semblance of logical construction, of the rational linking of idea with idea in an intellectually viable argument is abandoned, and instead the irrationality of experience is transferred to the stage.

Recognizing such 'strangers' in stage characters in the 1950s, Martin Esslin published his influential work, Theatre of the Absurd in 1961. He defined the plays which belong to this genre as presenting man's metaphysical absurdity in aberrant dramatic style that mirrored the situation. The Theatre of the Absurd was never a formal movement and remained confined to post-war France mainly but with the arrival of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, it soared to international acclaim. Esslin's main 'absurdities' are Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco and Genet with less attention to Albee and Pinter. As the Cambridge guide puts it:

> *The techniques are of the disruptive kind associated with farce but there is no presiding context of harmony to give reassurance to an audience. Instead there are stage images of extraordinary concreteness dissociated from the milieu that normally defines them.*

Historically speaking, *Waiting for Godot* accomplished what had not been accomplished for many decades, what even T. S. Eliot's impassioned dedication did not accomplish: it gave the theatre a new point of beginning. When Samuel Beckett began to write *Waiting for Godot*, he could not predict that he was sounding the clarion call of contemporary drama. The play opened new avenues in the history of twentieth century drama. It was performed in Paris in 1953 and inspired a great variety of interpretative criticism, much of it centered on the character of the cryptic Godot. The play's allusiveness has drawn a wide variety of interpretations and speculations. But it has been commonly agreed that the real subject of the play is not God but the act of waiting. A curious sense of the passage of time and the wretchedness of man's uncertainty about his destiny has been communicated by Beckett out of the very unpromising material.

The two principal characters in the play are Vladimir and Estragon, two tramps who are waiting endlessly for a Mr. Godot, though they do not know who he is or why they are waiting for him or when and where they will meet him. In the meantime, they get a message, apparently from Godot, that he has postponed his visit and will come the next day. Vladimir and Estragon consider hanging themselves but do not. The sub-plot involves the character of Pozzo, a sadistic master and Lucky, his mercilessly tyrannized

servant. These two characters epitomize the master-servant relationship. Everything can be understood as a metaphor for the human situation: Godot could be anything or nothing, and in Vladimir's and Estragon's journey through time it is pointless to consider whether it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive, because arrival is never seriously in question and even hope is scarcely possible. May be it is marginally better to travel than not to travel, to keep on keeping on because there is nothing better to do but even that is arguable. On the other hand, while these are associations the action of the play undoubtedly carries for most spectators, and it is not illegitimate to read it in this way, the play is not limited by such interpretations, it cannot be confined neatly and completely to them.

Indeed, Beckett himself has made gentle fun of spectators eager to know what his plays mean: in his third full-length play, *Happy Days*, written in English and first produced in New York in 1961, he has his heroine, Winnie, who is throughout the play largely buried in a mound of earth, first up to her waist, then up to her neck, take exception to the comments of a couple of passers-by who want to know:

> *What's the idea?....stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground?*
>
> *What does it mean? What's it meant to mean?*

To herself obviously, she does not mean anything, she just is. And in all Beckett's plays we find a similar avoidance of exact definition, no doubt because Beckett himself does not know, or is not willing to define for himself, who Godot is, what Winnie means, what is the significance of the master-servant relationship sketched in *Waiting for Godot* and fully developed in *End Game* or any other of the questions which arise while watching his plays. And there is, anyway, something that tends to get overlooked in Beckett's plays: a teasing sense of humour which makes even the blackest of them often very funny. Beckett himself seems to be forbidding us to take him quite as solemnly as we are inclined to.

Check Your Progress

1. Name some of the popular Absurdist playwrights of the 1950s.
2. Define 'absurd plays' as per Martin Esslin.
3. What is the real subject of the play *Waiting for Godot*?

7.3 BECKETT'S INTUITION: NOTHING REALLY EVER HAPPENS IN MAN'S EXISTENCE

The important fact that every writer had to face in the first half of the twentieth-century was that the society in which he was living had lost its meaning and had simply ceased to make sense – previously held certainties had dissolved the firmest foundations of hope and optimism had collapsed. Their works are essentially a product of the European predicament during and immediately after the World Wars. The world which they hold up to us is one in which all values have collapsed, all beliefs corroded, a world which can only generate despair and a feeling of meaninglessness. It is the picture of a world in which, as Yeats wrote:

> *The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere*
> *The ceremony of innocence is drowned;*
> *The best lack all conviction, while the worst*
> *Are full of passionate intensity.*

And suddenly, man sees himself faced with a universe that is both frightening and illogical, in a word, absurd. All assurance of hope, all explanation of ultimate meaning has suddenly been unmasked as nonsensical illusions. Even language has lost its communicative function and has been reduced to empty chatter whistling in the dark.

Better even than the existentialist philosophers like Sartre, Beckett may be said to have incorporated all the features of the void which confronts man in his present compromise with the world. Beckett's works clearly show that he is not a didactic author concerned with putting across a message in literary form. Such 'truths' as he does enunciate are the simple observations about the human condition that have been common since Job and Sophocles. Though he is obsessed by the loneliness of modern man, he has been able, like other great writers, to express his dominant theme in a series of works which surprise us by their variety. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is the most apt dramatic image yet created of our situation in a world without God, deprived of the transcendent confidence that belief in the existence of God confers. For just as man cannot live by bread alone, he now realizes that he cannot continue to live by mere thinking or hanging on in vain for a salvation which does not exist. *Waiting for Godot* becomes, for those in need of uncertainty, a bible of pessimism.

Waiting and not sure what you were waiting for – deliverance, a disaster, or simply for something to happen – it was understood that the texture of contemporary experience was like that. *Waiting for Godot* is a dramatized metaphor for the most general existential experience of humanity, the experience of something which we feel ought to have meaning, ought to reveal its meaning, but which, from one day to another, always fails to produce that meaning. *Waiting for Godot* depicts a world without any divinity but a kind of malignant fate, a world in which man waits and hopes for something to give a meaning to his life, and relieve him of the absurdity of a death that irrevocably terminates all. But he waits in vain, and so our life is as meaningless as our death. There is little to choose between man's life and a mayfly's: hence Pozzo's remark, 'the light gleams an instant', an instant only. It is, after all, a monstrous paradox that, for the individual, life is an eternity while it lasts, but that it is less than an instant with regard to cosmic time, just as a man's six foot is nothing compared with the immense distances between the galaxies.

Man is held in a two-dimensional prison: time. In this prison, only forward motion is possible but man deludes himself that he is progressing on his own free will to some sort of goal. As Beckett puts it:

> *We are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call attainment.*

In Beckett's best-known play, that nullity is named 'Godot'. Birth, for him, is a 'calamity' because it launches us on our one dimensional way, from which the only release is death. *Waiting for Godot* is therefore, quite simply, a picture of the antics of man as he tries to distract himself until 'Godot' comes. But Godot is only death. He is not, however, seen as death because man flatters himself with groundless hopes; thus Godot becomes anything the expectation of which helps man to bear his existence. Or as Estragon puts it:

> *We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?*
>
> *Waiting for Godot presents the total condition of man. The play is, as Jacques Dubois remarks, a microcosm of the macrocosm which is our universe:*
>
> *.....one day we were born, one day we shall die,*
>
> *.....we have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries.....*

In the play, different characters enact Beckett's intuition that nothing really ever happens in man's existence. The play ends as it began, with two tramps waiting in vain for Godot. The dialogue continues on its doleful repetitive course, the 'nothingness' of everything becomes nauseating. There is nothing left for them but to try and hang themselves – but alas, we know that they cannot even succeed in doing that. The idea of *Godot* as a play in which 'nothing happens twice' is understood by no one so sharply as by the tramps – Vladimir and Estragon – nothingness is what they are fighting against and why they talk. Vladimir and Estragon ask questions and they make statements. But they do so as though they expect to get answers or to establish facts. So all they ever do is pass time with their words. To get anywhere, they would have to make that quantum jump of realization that the words we have never really 'mean' only ever 'say'. Granted every day the chance and the materials of a new start, Vladimir and Estragon cling doggedly to old patterns, old habits and old masters. Although Biblical images abound as the common currency of hope, prayers go unanswered – and when characters pray, the effect is bitterly parodistic:

> *Nothing doing! The Bastard! He doesn't exist!*

So, life has no transcendental meaning. 'We are alone'; and socially defined aspirations are no less illusory than religious justifications. On a universal scale, civilization is reduced to debris, while material circumstances are irrelevant to the human condition. Death is seen as an avenue of escape, a line leading away from the condition of nothingness. Birth and death are the defining facts of existence, diminishing the variables of individual experience to insignificance:

> *The essential doesn't change....Nothing to be done.*
>
> *For Pozzo, human existence is like the infinitely small fleeting instant:*
>
> *They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant,*
>
> *then its night once more.*

But Vladimir, who takes up the image, counters that life is long and infinitely large because there is too much time to grow old and suffer:

> *Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole,*
>
> *lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps.*
>
> *We have time to grow old:*
>
> *The air is full of our cries.*

In *Waiting for Godot*, salvation or purpose, equaling thematic resolution as well as meaningful significance for the characters' actions, is indefinitely postponed: promised for a tomorrow that can never be reached because the present is always today. Even the negative ending of suicide proves impossible; and its tragic connotations are deflated by the slapstick crudity of Estragon's over-sized trousers falling round his ankles. As Vladimir says:

> *In this immense confusion one thing alone is clear.*
>
> *We are waiting for Godot to come –*

What does Godot represent? What does the message contain? The same mystery but also a comparable hope of salvation. Godot is what his name implies: just another diminutive God like all the other little Gods – some divine, some political, some intellectual, some personal – for whom men wait, hopefully to solve their problems and bring point to their pointless lives, and for whose sake they sacrifice the only real gift they have, their free will. But alas! Godot continues to postpone his visit. The two tramps continue to

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believe the young messenger who appears each time to announce that Godot will come not that day but the next day. The image of man, always deceived in his dreams and ideals, nevertheless perseveres in his illusions and utopias.

It is, therefore, not difficult to understand that *Waiting for Godot* is the fullest statement of the problem that has bedeviled Beckett, as it bedevils nearly everyone else: how do you get through life in which nothing really ever happens? His answer is simple and not encouraging: by force of habit, by going on despite boredom and pain, by talking, by not listening to the silence, absurdly and without hope. We can see quite clearly what Beckett wants to express: human beings waiting for the arrival of someone or something with whom they may or may not have an appointment. Are we not all born into this world without knowing what our purpose is, are we not all, now that we are here, assuming that perhaps we have a purpose and that the next day will bring the moment of revelation – and then night falls and we are told to try again the next day and so on forever after? Are we not all, whether we just hang around waiting like the two tramps Vladimir and Estragon, or rushing about madly like Pozzo, trying to give our life some purpose, trying to while away time in some fashion, knowing full well that without that final knowledge about what we are here for, all our activities are merely futile antics? Are we not all, like Pozzo and Lucky, subject to the most violent reversal of fortunes, hale and hearty one day, blind and helpless the next? Are not all our most clever attempts at thinking and theorizing, like Lucky's ultimately reducible to an empty rust of meaningless words, and shall we not all end, like Lucky, be struck dumb? And are we not all, social beings, irrevocably tied to each other, however much we might loathe each other's company, simply because one human being cannot live in isolation and yet all contact between human beings produces friction – as between Vladimir and Estragon – or dominance and subjection – as between Pozzo and Lucky?

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett has employed intensely poetical, immensely expressive images, as most of the Absurdists do, to bring out the fragmented, meaningless and irrational character of the human condition in post-war Europe. Like the existentialists, he believes that the human condition does not fit into neatly packaged concepts. He does employ apparently unconnected expressionistic images and motifs as the surrealists do, but his work is far from being a nihilistic gospel of despair. But as Kay Boyle has observed, in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett began the construction of a bridge across the abyss, offering through unremitting work, sometimes despairingly, sometimes with wry humour, a way back for man's stricken, paralyzed will. Although Godot was in many ways – structurally, stylistically, thematically – a new development in Beckett's writing, it expressed his basic concerns as faithfully and sincerely as his novels. If there had never been a play about waiting before, that was because no dramatist before Beckett ever thought of attempting such a thing. It is this that makes *Waiting for Godot* one of the seminal works of post-war European drama, setting a mode, a tone, a style that was echoed and imitated by younger dramatists like Pinter, Albee and Stoppard from the late fifties to the early seventies.

Check Your Progress

4. How does Beckett portray the world in *Waiting for Godot*?
5. What does Godot represent?

7.4 BECKETT'S USE OF LANGUAGE

NOTES

Hugh Kenner has called Beckett 'the clearest, most limpid, most disciplined joiner of words in the English language'. Like music, his language is shaped into phrases, orchestrated and cunningly repeated. Beckett's prose is never solemn and he has written some of the funniest lines in the English and French languages. Over the years, he has pared down plot, probed to the core of his characters and experimented with syntax, from the periodic sentences in his early stories to floating phrases, incantatory repetitions and simple questions or statements. Beckett is, as Dina Sherzer observes:

> *....a great manipulator of, exploiter of, and performer with the manifold resources and possibilities of language.*

For, the use of banal, everyday conversations mixed with literary language, the slang, puns and modified clichés, the importance granted to talking (to make time pass), and the careful creation of rhythms and use of repetitions are all ways of demonstrating the exuberance of language and Beckett's ability to play with it and to manipulate it, result in a new and powerful dramatic expressiveness.

Beckett was writing in the post-world war years in which all values had collapsed, a world in which all assurances of hope, all explanation of ultimate meaning had suddenly been unmasked as nonsensical illusions. Even language had lost its communicative function and had been reduced to empty chatter whistling in the dark. In this world of absurdity, where meaning either vanishes or proliferates beyond understanding, language itself plays a double role. It is the only instrument with which the characters can hope to know or control the world outside them but it can offer no true knowledge at all. Whatever they say about the world makes no difference. Reality remains outside the grasp of the language they have learned. And yet they go on speaking, for words are all they have. *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, is a play in which literally nothing happens, a play designed to show that nothing can ever happen in human life. It is a play with very little action. Here we seem to have a maximum of words because nothing at all is going on except waiting. The characters talk to kill time, talking for talking's sake. Vladimir knows the answers he wrings out of Godot's boy are empty of meaning: "Words, words". Yet after a pause, he adds: 'Speak'. This is the paradox on which all Beckett's work is built. Language is a poor, faulty instrument but there is nothing else to work with. Beckett's genius is to turn words against themselves, making them show up their own emptiness. His characters' misery comes from taking words at their face value. Vladimir and Estragon are reluctant to admit that the words are not so much their key to freedom as the stones of which their prison house is made.

Vladimir and Estragon rely on language to see them through their daily life. Time and again, it comes to pieces in their hands. They try hard to use language as they should, with the precision and clarity which the academic tradition teaches. It isn't pure desire for knowledge that drives them but need. Vladimir feels he needs certainty. He labels a tree a tree, not a bush or a shrub (and as an extra flourish names it a willow) because he needs to convince his partner and himself that their anonymous space is the particular place of appointment with Godot. Estragon needs to eat, and he distinguishes between a carrot and a turnip and a pink radish or a black one because not all, for him, are edible. Unlike Vladimir, he feels no need for extra flourishes. Vladimir's solicitous 'How's the carrot?' gets a laconic answer: 'It's a carrot'. Language that really works will satisfy authentic need and then fall silent. Vladimir has to go on spinning words because he is

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hoping to satisfy his need – Godot's coming – which is only make-believe. It can never be satisfied, so he can never shut up. In the absence of anything else, trying to be precise is better than nothing. It fills in the silence, passes time and stops things from sliding into grey, undifferentiated chaos. Estragon puts it graphically:

Everything oozes....It's never the same pus from one second to the next.

Words can't fix meaning totally but they can at least be used to make some slight discrimination out of the ooze, so the tramps go on practicing:

Our exercises....movements...elevations...relaxations....elongations.

As the drama runs its second round, in Act II, the critical intellect is increasingly aware of the lie, the confidence trick that is language. So, as Estragon bustles towards a new diversion, delighted to have found something else 'to give us the impression we exist', Vladimir's comment is ironic: 'Yes, we're magicians'. The language of the pair have inherited is a vehicle of illusion. It is a collection of techniques not for telling the truth but for inventing and deceiving. When the conjurers are only second rate, or when the gap between lie and reality becomes too wide, language has to own up to its trickery: and this is what this drama sets out to make it do. If the characters could see through language, they could also see through all those power structures it props up. They, of course, don't; but the audience, sitting at a distance, has a better chance. While the characters are only dimly aware of the dangers of language, the audience sees their plight with painful clarity. Much of the dramatic pleasure – and unease – that the play produces is in the feeling of the language – ground shifting underfoot, sudden estranging gulfs opening in the words and phrases that are the small change of everyday life. Mrs. Rooney draws attention to the same problem in Beckett's radio play, *All that Fall*:

Do you find anything...bizarre about my way of speaking? [Pause] I do not mean the voice. [Pause]. No, I mean the words. [Pause more to herself]. I use none but the simplest words, I hope, and yet I sometimes find my way of speaking very....bizarre.

The language of Beckett's characters is pruned down to the minimum and backed up only where necessary by equally pruned down and stylized mime. Simple phrases stand stark naked in all their triteness. Pauses and silences are rarely hesitations. As in poetry, they are carefully placed at sense points, to create more coherence, not less. Colloquial jerkiness is smoothed out into lyrical or dramatic rhythms by judicious placing of commas, or subtle repetitions and balances, or the addition or subtraction of 'and'. For example, the sentence, 'I would have stopped you from doing whatever it was you were doing' could have been more roughly expressed as 'I'd have stopped you doing whatever it was'; the lengthier version is better balanced and more symmetrical. Pozzo's unintentionally comic account of twilight mixes the prosaic and the lyrical, the learned and the vulgar, elaborate rhetoric and simple onomatopoeia, building to the climax when night bursts on us too, 'pop! Like that!' Tricks of rhetoric embellish the most ludicrously inappropriate situations. Vladimir and Estragon mourn softly and sympathetically over the fit of Estragon's boots, building up to the plangent 'Perhaps you'll have socks some day'. Estragon's lyrical musing by the struggling heap of the fallen is rudely interrupted: 'I've always wanted to wander in the Pyrennes – who farted?'

But the comic finds on the rubbish-dump of language can have a cutting edge. Rhetoric can be dangerous. Vladimir's speech on the nobility of humane action holds up the action it urges. In Lucky's speech, the display of the rotting fragments of cultural style turns everyone's stomach and drives them to murderous rage. What self-

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consciousness the characters have about their language develops in Act II, where the initial focus is on the art and the use of conversation. Two different kinds of conversation are set against each other.

The first is a demonstration of the emptiness of language, used not to probe a real problem but simply to fill the silence with elegantly structured sounds. Vladimir and Estragon are trying to talk 'calmly', to turn the panic of living and dying into manageable words, to ward off the fear of the silent, unspeakable unknown:

It's so we won't think....it's so we won't hear.

When they speak this way, what they summon up are 'dead voices', dry and sterile as sand and ashes, not communicating, only rustling like leaves in the wind. Such conversation brings more fear, insinuating the return of the insatiable dead. Possessed by that past that lives on through language, the conversation goes nowhere, turning round and round on itself, and has only one possible outcome:

Estragon: What do we do now?

Vladimir: Wait for Godot.

When they try again, immediately, they do better. 'That wasn't such a bad little canter', Estragon says complacently at the end. This time they don't plan to be calm. They simply want to start and so, the future of their conversation is wide open:

You can start from anything.

No doubt, what you hear are still the 'dead voices' of corrupt language and corrupt experience, but this time they brush that obstacle aside. Instead of circling on the old, dead, known terrain, they move forward, establishing the conditions of conversing:

Let's contradict each other...let's ask each other questions.

to which in a later exchange they add interruptions and insults. Vladimir brings the subject matter back to the unavoidable topic of the traces of death that corrupt all life ('A charnel house! A charnel house!), but this time Estragon manages politely to defeat him:

You don't have to look.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the language veers between two characteristic extremes: soliloquy, and the form of dialogue normally used by Vladimir and Estragon, which is constantly in danger of drying up for the lack of any real communication between them, but is kept going by in-built repetitive patterns which substitute for logic and even, at times, for sense. This is the more or less neutral mode of waiting itself, dispassionate, avoiding extremes of pessimism and optimism, mainly concerned with passing time. As an audience, we are entertained by the characters' rhetorical responses to the tragicomic dilemma of waiting: we are not involved in it as a personal experience. We appreciate the witty and elegant artificiality of the language, while half our attention is elsewhere – wondering what external resolution can be found to their perplexities, since it is increasingly self-evident that they cannot find one for themselves. Thus, we too are vicariously waiting for Godot. And it is within the frame of this act of waiting that the real subject of the play emerges: the unfolding of speech. Beckett transformed a stage where nothing happens into the fascinating place where the loneliness of language was revealed.

Silence is an integral part of Beckett's language and has a wide range of meanings of its own. Beckett uses silence in all the conventional ways. He illustrates, for example, the breakdown of speech with the mime Vladimir uses to get across his question about Lucky and his bags, or the frightened silence when the tramps confront the enigma of

their relationship to Godot, or in Vladimir's final lonely, despairing monologue over the sleeping Estragon. Beckett also offers a reinterpretation of the entire nature of silence. In Beckett's writing, silence expresses the sheer unknowableness of everything that is not ourselves, and our lack of power to pierce through to that unknown. Learning to discover and respect the meaning of this silence is an important part of the experience of watching any Beckett play.

The language of Beckett has purity, simplicity, a style which is a dimension away. In this theatre of style and language, Beckett approaches Eugene Ionesco. As the American dramatist, William Saroyan, has remarked:

> *It certainly took tired Europe to make them, an Irishman and a Romanian in Paris.*

Ionesco is entirely unlike Beckett, but together they may be said to be the exponents of antitheater. And *Waiting for Godot* is, as Eric Bentley says:

> *...not...a tombstone but a landmark. If the form of the dialogue is derivative, there is freshness and originality in the application of that dialogue to these purposes. Behind the mordant flippancy of the clowns we are made to hear – if in the distance – another voice: Beckett's own perhaps, or that of the lamentations of Jeremiah, desolate and dolorous, a voice of cosmic doom not untouched by human dignity.*

Check Your Progress

6. What does Hugh Kenner call Beckett in the context of his use of language?
7. How does 'silence' make an integral part of Beckett's language?

7.5 BECKETT'S DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

Modernism arrived in the British theatre with Beckett. In 1955, when *Waiting for Godot* reached the English stage, the standard drama of the time was Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan, or the later quasi-poetic comedies of T. S. Eliot. The common features of these plays were the naturalistic technique, drawing room dialogues, well-made plots and socially situated characters: a form of dramatic representation that had remained unchanged since the turn of the century. Beckett's play heralded a revolution and the impact was immense. Barely a decade later, its principles had become an accepted part of theatre language and *Godot* was soon acknowledged as a classic.

What makes Beckett one of the greatest dramatists, not only of our century but of all times, is that his contribution is fundamental and original in a way few others' have been. Like Moliere in the 17th century and Ibsen in the 19th century, he perceived instinctively the way things were going and helped them along. Few critics and theatre people would, therefore, be surprised if Beckett is considered by posterity to rank in importance with the three masters, Shakespeare, Moliere and Ibsen. Beckett has done much to extend and modify the resources of the stage, to adapt its millennial arts to the expression of the concerns and anxieties of the age. Just as Shakespeare explored the political and moral dilemmas of the Renaissance, or Moliere adjusted the anarchic world

of comedy to neo-classical and rationalistic norms, or Ibsen created and transformed patterns of naturalism to give perfect expression to the psychological ghosts that haunted the bourgeoisie in the age of imperialism and capitalism, so Beckett has found the means of setting out the metaphysical doubts that torment man in forms that, like all radical innovations, surprise at first and then in a short space of time begin to seem natural and inevitable.

Beckett was one of the main exponents of Absurd Drama. Hence in his plays, he flouted the conventions of conventional drama and the concepts of the well-made play. A well-made play is expected to have a beginning, a middle and a neatly tied-up ending; Beckett's plays often start at an arbitrary point and seem to end just as arbitrarily. By all the traditional standards of critical appreciation of drama, these plays are not only abominably bad, they do not even deserve the name of drama. But Beckett's drama aims to hold up a vision of the post-war world – a world devoid of all meaning, all spiritual coherence. The basis of the well-made play is the implicit assumption that the world does make sense, that reality is solid and secure, all outlines clear, all ends apparent. Beckett's plays, on the other hand, express a sense of shock at the absence, the loss of any such clear and well-defined systems of beliefs or values.

In *Waiting for Godot* there is no plot, in the sense of a narrative with a beginning, middle and end: exposition, twists and turns of intrigue, crisis and unraveling. Vladimir and Estragon do their best to invent a plot, 'waiting for Godot', but it hardly gets off the ground. There is simply a situation: two men loitering with intent, under a tree. But Godot, for whom they are waiting, continues to postpone his visit. The play ends as it began with the two tramps waiting in vain for Godot. 'Messy' and 'not well thought out' is what Beckett impatiently said of his own play that is now considered a model of form.

There is no structure, in the sense of a neat carving-up of the action into three or five acts, with scenes advancing in logical sequence, entrances and exits motivated and the whole wrapped up at the end and 'finished with a bow'. There is, as Jennifer Birkett says:

> *....a string of tableaux with gaps between them, that lurch into movement haphazardly, grind to a halt like rundown clockwork, and stop altogether when the light goes out.*

Ruby Cohn has in fact, listed the incidence of doubling in *Godot*. There are two acts, two days and two similar sets of incidents within them. There are two couples, one contrasting with the other. Within the acts, within the couples, symmetries and oppositions recur. A resume of either acts yields a parallel pattern. Two friends meet by a tree at twilight to wait for Godot. A burdened menial and his master arrive, dally a while and then leave. When the friends are alone again, a messenger arrives to inform them that Godot will not come that day but the next. The moon rises as the boy departs. Although the friends agree to go, they have not gone when the curtain falls.

Godot is a very carefully structured play though critics have assailed it as obscure and incoherent. Its fundamental mode is not revelation but repetition, or rather repetition-with-a-difference; asymmetry rather than symmetry. The play relies for its structural cohesion not on a forward movement but on the return of leitmotifs that weave in and out through the work. The most obvious of these is the phrase "We're waiting for Godot", which recurs in different guises a dozen times, but there are others like "Nothing to be done".

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Apart from the leitmotifs, Beckett also relies on an elaborate system of counterpoint between the two acts. Nearly everything in Act I has its echo or parallel somewhere in Act II. The spectator may not hear every note in a symphony, but there are so many of them that he will sense the unity of it before long.

The dynamics between Beckett's characters too help to give the play its underlying unity and its unique quality of equilibrium by which everything balances out. The characters interlock, in fact, with almost Racinian precision. At the extremes of the poised poles are Vladimir and Pozzo who are divided both by their name-lengths and their temperaments and the same applies to Estragon and Lucky, who even cause each other physical injury. Estragon's fear of 'being tied' is reflected by Lucky's being tied in real fact. This kind of balance is characteristic of the play. As Beckett once said, "It is the shape that matters". He is an artist for whom the shape is all important, and the 'shape' of the relationships in *Waiting for Godot* between the four main characters is of more interest to him than the characters themselves.

The most essential feature of Beckett's technique in *Waiting for Godot* is his use of symbols. Perhaps the clearest of the symbols is the road. It offers a clear alternative to the characters' condition. Hugh Kenner points out that the tree suggests not only crucifixion, but also the Tree of Life. There is a suggestion that because of its pronounced axial properties, it may also be related to the 'World tree' of Norse mythology. The tree likewise gives tentative evidence of chronological stability and, hence, links between one point in time and another. In Act II, the tree which was previously bare has produced leaves, a change which implies a refutation to the understood hypothesis of the play that "nothing happens". The rope and the whip with which Pozzo threatens, are symbols of authority, indispensable because custom, the normal bond of authority, seems to have broken down. The rope represents the symbiotic bond between Lucky and Pozzo. Hats and boots are two of the major symbols of the play. Vladimir, the 'thinker' of the two, is associated with the hat; the more prosaic Estragon is identified with the boots. The hat exchange is a shuttle and symbolically, demonstrates one of the key considerations of the play, pointless activity and the ultimate negation of movement. The assumptions of the game 'All Fall Down' are both tragic and comic: Pozzo down epitomizes all fallen men (he answers to both Cain and Abel, and Estragon remarks that he is "all humanity").

The core of the Beckett play is emptiness, a nucleic area of dead space at its absolute centre. It is this encapsulated space which is the basis of the theatre images most often associated with Becket. In *Godot*, it is seen in the recurring sequence of containers and circles – hats, boots, the low grave-like mound on which Estragon sits; in Lucky's dance, 'The Net'; and in the circular structure of the play itself. Echoing the thematic paradox of the play, the circle is simultaneously endless and constricting, infinity and a cage.

The crucifixion imagery is deeply embedded within the play. The bodies of Pozzo and Lucky after their fall lie in the shape of a cross. There are several tableaux of Lucky and Pozzo supported between the two friends – recalling, in Ruby Cohn's words, "the many paintings of a crucified Christ between two thieves". Estragon and Vladimir often stand on either side of the tree and Estragon, in particular, stretches out his arms – in John Donne's words, "mine own cross to be" – even passing through the cross, as he takes up the yoga position of the tree.

According to Peter Griffith, *Waiting for Godot* belongs to a unique category in that it not only uses discourse but is about discourse. He observes that–

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> *It explores a paradox at the heart of language: that this is something which generates meaning only through its abstract systematicity, but achieves thematic relevance through the strictly material means of printing or of acoustic events.*

He further goes on to add that much of the characters' dialogic interchange and stage business is derived from the conventions of the music hall and their speech is carnivalesque. In fact, *Waiting for Godot* owes a great deal to the circus. Pozzo is a kind of ringmaster who cracks his whip and commands the show and Estragon's dropping of his trousers is pure clowning. Other popular forms of entertainment, too, are affectionately alluded to in this play. The silent film comedy, which so delighted Beckett's generation, has bequeathed its bowler hats to the actors: that Laurel and Hardy lie to some extent behind Vladimir and Estragon is certain.

The stagecraft in *Waiting for Godot* enhances its position as a drama of technique. The setting must evoke a universe that offers very little. As Simpson says:

> *In Waiting for Godot the objective of the producer should be to create the feeling that these four characters are isolated in Eternity.....The vast emptiness about their world serves to emphasize their dependence on one another and their isolation within the enormity of the universe.*

The characters' costume is very important. Though their behaviour is clownish, they should not dress as clowns. Usually, Vladimir and Estragon appear as tramps in cast-off formal clothes. They are run-down versions of the conventional people who live at the centre of society, the same in kind, but tattered and living on the margins. The deceptive dignity of ordinary modern clothes leaves it to the play of words and action to disclose the man under the mask.

To call *Waiting for Godot* obscure and unintelligible is to underestimate Beckett's resources and unceasingly inventive technique which has enabled him to make art out of material that in the hands of someone less gifted would seem to have been wasted. Beckett's theatre has always startled and impressed by its barrenness but the final impression that the plays leave is not bare but rich; they spark off such a host of associations, images, echoes that it seems one would never come to the end of them. Beckett works within his 'modern' tradition as a great original and it would be difficult to name a single important playwright of the younger generation – from Albee to Stoppard – be it in Britain, America, France or Germany, who has not been deeply affected by Beckett's example or influenced by his practice. Whatever posterity's verdict about his intrinsic worth and stature as a dramatist is, there is no doubt that it will concede, at the very least, that he is one of the most important innovators in the history of the modern stage. This is to some extent because his contribution came at precisely the right moment; as one contemporary playwright, John Spurling, put it:

> *Samuel Beckett was waiting for the theatre as the theatre was waiting for Samuel Beckett.*

Check Your Progress

8. Do you agree that *Waiting for Godot* does not have a plot?
9. State one of the most unique features of Beckett's technique in *Waiting for Godot*?

3. The real subject of the play *Waiting for Godot* is the act of waiting.
4. In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett depicts a world without any divinity but a kind of malignant fate, a world in which man waits and hopes for something to give a meaning to his life, and relieve him of the absurdity of a death that irrevocably terminates all.
5. Godot is what his name implies: just another diminutive God like all the other little Gods – some divine, some political, some intellectual, some personal – for whom men wait, hopefully to solve their problems and bring point to their pointless lives, and for whose sake they sacrifice the only real gift they have, their free will.
6. Hugh Kenner has called Beckett 'the clearest, most limpid, most disciplined joiner of words in the English language'.
7. Silence is an integral part of Beckett's language. He uses silence in all the conventional ways. The dramatist illustrates, for example, the breakdown of speech with the mime Vladimir uses to get across his question about Lucky and his bags, or the frightened silence when the tramps confront the enigma of their relationship to Godot, or in Vladimir's final lonely, despairing monologue over the sleeping Estragon. Beckett also offers a reinterpretation of the entire nature of silence.
8. In *Waiting for Godot* there is no plot, in the sense of a narrative with a beginning, middle and end: exposition, twists and turns of intrigue, crisis and unraveling. Vladimir and Estragon do their best to invent a plot, 'waiting for Godot', but it hardly gets off the ground.
9. One of the most unique features of Beckett's technique in *Waiting for Godot* is his use of symbols.

7.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What did *Waiting for Godot* accomplish that had not been accomplished earlier?
2. Who were the two principal characters in *Waiting for Godot*?
3. In what forms is language used in the play?
4. Give an example of the use of symbols in the play.
5. How is silence used in the play?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write in detail about the Theatre of the Absurd with special reference to Samuel Beckett.
2. Discuss the appropriateness of the title *Waiting for Godot.*
3. How does Lucky's speech help in understanding Beckett's view on language?
4. Write a note on the two central characters in the play — Vladimir and Estragon — the two tramps who wait endlessly for Mr. Godot.
5. How has death as a theme been dealt with in *Waiting for Godot?*
6. Discuss Beckett's dramatic technique in *Waiting for Godot.*

7.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 8 LOOK BACK IN ANGER BY JOHN OSBORNE

Structure

8.0 Introduction
8.1 Unit Objectives
8.2 Biography of John Osborne
8.3 Historical Background
8.4 Appreciation and Synopsis
8.5 Imagery and Symbolism
  8.5.1 Dramatic Techniques
  8.5.2 Characters
  8.5.3 Themes
8.6 Summary
8.7 Key Terms
8.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
8.9 Questions and Exercises
8.10 Further Reading

8.0 INTRODUCTION

John Osborne was the original 'Angry Young Man' of the post war British literary scenario. His play *Look Back in Anger* brought a force and vigour to the British stage that was missing after the Second World War.

Look Back in Anger (1956) is a play about a love triangle involving an intelligent but estranged young man (Jimmy Porter), his upper-middle-class, impassive wife (Alison) and her arrogant best friend (Helena Charles). Cliff, a friendly Welsh resident, attempts to keep the peace. The play was a success on the London stage, and initiated the term 'Angry Young Men' to portray Osborne and those of his generation who used severity and practicality in the theatre as opposed to the more escapist works of the past.

The play was a strongly autobiographical piece based on Osborne's unhappy marriage to Pamela Lane, the first wife of the playwright, and their life in an overcrowded house in Derby, UK. While Osborne looked forward to a career in theatre, Lane was more practical and materialistic. She did not take Osborne's ambitions seriously. It also contains much of Osborne's earlier life–the wrenching speech of seeing a loved one die is a replay of the death of Thomas, Osborne's father. What it is best remembered for, though, is Jimmy's outbursts against the mediocrity of middle-class English life, which is characterized by his hated mother Nellie Beatrice. In the play, you also see Jimmy pining for his lost love, Madeline, who is based on Stella Linden, an older actress who first encouraged Osborne to write. After the first production in London, Osborne began a relationship with Mary Ure, who played Alison, and in 1957, he divorced his wife to marry Ure.

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8.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Recall important aspects of Osborne's biography
- Discuss Osborne's historical background
- Summarize the different acts of the play
- Identify and interpret the play's use of imagery and symbolism
- Explain the different dramatic techniques used in play
- Discuss the different themes used in the play

8.2 BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN OSBORNE

John James Osborne was a distinguished English playwright. He was also a screenwriter, actor as well as a vocal critic of the Establishment–the 'Angry Young Man' of British theatre. His play *Look Back in Anger* brought about a revolution in transforming English theatre and enthusing new dynamism in English drama.

John Osborne, in his literary life of more than forty years, dealt with several themes and genres, and wrote for stage, film and TV. His personal life was extravagant and iconoclastic. He used aggressive language to portray his feelings not only on behalf of the political causes he supported but also against his own family, including his wives and children. This made him highly disreputable.

John Osborne was one of the first writers who questioned and criticized Britain's position in the post-imperial age. He was also the first who questioned the point of the monarchy on an important public stage. Osborne's most productive years were from 1956 to 1966, during which he was successful in making contempt an acceptable and now even clichéd onstage emotions.

Osborne also argued about the cleansing wisdom of bad behaviour and bad taste, and combined generous truthfulness with devastating humour. Due to these reasons, his works are considered to be modern emblems and therefore post-War British theatre history owes much to them.

Osborne was born on 12th December 1929 in London. His parents were Thomas Godfrey Osborne, a commercial artist and an advertising copywriter of South Welsh extraction and Nellie Beatrice, a Cockney barmaid. Osborne loved his father but despised his mother, who he later wrote taught him, 'The fatality of hatred … She is my disease, an invitation to my sick room'.

Osborne described her as 'hypocritical, self-absorbed, calculating and indifferent' woman. When his father died in 1941, he left his young son an insurance settlement, which was utilized by him to finance a private education at Belmont College–a minor public school in Devon. In 1943, Osborne entered the school but was expelled in the summer term of 1945 as he had hit the headmaster, who had struck him for listening to an illegal broadcast by Frank Sinatra, the twentieth century American singer and actor.

After completing his school, Osborne went back to London to his mother where he took up trade journalism for some time. He was introduced to the world of theatre when he was tutoring a touring company of junior actors. Soon he got involved in theatre

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as a stage manager and started acting after joining Anthony Creighton's provincial touring company.

Osborne, along with his mentor Stella Linden, started off with writing plays, co-writing his first, *The Devil Inside Him*, which was then directed by Linden in 1950 at the Theatre Royal in Huddersfield. During this time, he tied his knot with Pamela Lane. Along with Anthony Creighton, a twentieth century British actor and writer, he wrote his second play *Personal Enemy*, which was staged in regional theatres before he submitted his most famous work *Look Back in Anger*. With Creighton, he also later wrote *Epitaph* for George Dillon, which staged at the Royal Court in 1958.

Osborne greatly admired Max Miller and saw parallels between him and Max Miller. He said the following about him:

I love him, (Max Miller) because he embodied a kind of theatre I admire most. '*Mary from the Dairy*' was an overture to the danger that (Max) might go too far. Whenever anyone tells me that a scene or a line in a play of mine goes too far in some way then I know my instinct has been functioning as it should; when such people tell you that a particular passage makes the audience uneasy or restless, then they seem (to me) as cautious and absurd as landladies and girls-who-won't.

Osborne made a significant contribution towards the revival of British theatre by making it more challenging, audacious and experimental. He helped throw off the formal constraints of the previous generation, and turned the attention towards language, theatrical rhetoric and emotional intensity.

Osborne saw theatre as a weapon, which would enable the ordinary people to break down the class barriers. He wanted his plays to be a remembrance of actual pleasures and pains. Osborne also brought about a significant change in the world of theatre, influencing playwrights such as Edward Albee and Mike Leigh. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Writer's Guild of Great Britain.

In 1959, he joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. However, he drifted to the libertarian, unorganized right, considering himself 'a radical who hates change'.

In his personal life, Osborne was equally rebellious and daring like he had been in his theatre. He had several affairs and was known as one who often ill-treated his wives and lovers. He got married five times, out of which four were unhappy unions, while the fifth is supposed to be his final happy marriage.

In Volume 1 of his autobiography *A Better Class of Person*, Osborne depicts his feeling of an immediate and intense attraction towards his first wife, Pamela Lane. Both of them were members of an acting troupe in Bridgwater.

She had just recently shorn her hair down to a defiant auburn stubble and I was impressed by the hostility she had created by this self-isolating act... her huge green eyes which mock or plead affection, preferably both, at least... She startled and confused me. There was no calculation in my instant obsession.

Although Alison Porter, the female protagonist in *Look Back in Anger* was based on Pamela, Osborne described her parents as 'much coarser'. He explained how at one point they appointed a private detective to follow him after a fellow actor was seen 'fumbling' with his knee in a teashop. However, he did accept the fact that the actor in question did have a homosexual crush on him.

I began to feel surrounded and outflanked by hostility... I had set off a crest of anger that had not been much more than drowsy before my arrival... It was scarcely important. Pamela was the battlement I was determined on.

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Osborne and Pamela got married secretly in nearby Wells and then left Bridgwater amidst an uneasy truce with Lane's parents (Osborne's hated mother was not aware of the union until the couple were divorcing). While spending their first night as a married couple together in the Cromwell Road in London Osborne said that:

> I was unable to take my eyes off her. I watched her eating, walking, bathing, making-up, dressing, undressing, my curiosity was insatiable. Seeing her clothes lying around the floor (she was hopelessly untidy, in contrast to my own spinsterish habits). There was little doubt in my otherwise apprehensive spirit that I had carried off a unique prize.... Perhaps I interpreted what might have been bland complacency for the complaisance of a generous and loving heart.

Initially, they had a happy married life with them living at several digs around London and finding work in London at first, touring then in Osborne's case Kidderminster and Lane's Derby. While Pamela's acting career flourished in Derby, Osborne's deteriorated. As a result, she started having an affair with a rich dentist. This was during 1955, and Osborne optimistically spent most of time in the next two years waiting for the possibility of reconciliation before their divorce. In 1956, after *Look Back in Anger* had opened, Osborne met her at the railway station in York. During this meeting, she told Osborne of her recent abortion and enquired after his relationship with Mary Ure, of which she was aware. In April 1957, Pamela gave a divorce to Osborne, on the grounds of his adultery.

Osborne started having a relationship with Mary Ure shortly after meeting her in 1956 when she was cast as Alison in *Look Back in Anger*. The affair progressed swiftly and the two moved in together in Woodfall Road, Chelsea.

> Mary was one of those unguarded souls who can make themselves understood by penguins or the wildest dervishes... I was not in love. There was fondness and pleasure, but no groping expectations, just a feeling of fleeting heart's ease. For the present, we were both content enough.

According to Osborne, contentment began to be replaced with jealousy and slight contempt for Ure's stable family background, the trivialities of her communication with them and a somewhat withering regard for her acting abilities.

> I had stopped concealing from myself, if I ever had, that Mary was not much of an actress. She had a rather harsh voice and a tiny range. Her appearance was pleasing but without any personal sweep to it.

Like most actors, she was hysterical when unemployed and resentful when appearing every night to full houses. She also entertained the common belief that a writer is only working when he can be seen head down at his desk. Why are you drinking/dreaming/farting/fornicating instead of making typewriter noises?

Both of them were not loyal towards each other, and following the beginning of an affair with Robert Webber, Mary Ure left Osborne finally.

> 'The fact that my coltish liaison with Francine had been pre-empted by Mary's conduct with Webber explained her oddly restrained behaviour in New York... Betrayal might end in the bedroom but I found it naive to assume it necessarily began there.'

After Mary Ure, Osborne met his third wife to be–writer Penelope Gilliatt–initially through social connections.

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In his autobiography *Almost a Gentleman*, Osborne says:

> It was not so much chastity that troubled me, but the withdrawal of feminine intimacy. And now, here I was, giving a routine interview to a young, animated woman, seemingly very informed and quick to laugh... I was already engaged in the prospect of mild and easy flirtation. I hadn't marked Penelope down in any appraising way as a future sportive fancy, but I had always been addicted to flirtation as a game worth playing for itself. One main attraction Penelope held for Osborne was her red hair I took red hair to be the mantle of goddesses.

Despite her being married and Osborne knowing her husband, Gilliatt; he set out to seduce Osborne and succeeded in doing so.

> Penelope's behaviour and my own during the weeks that followed were probably grotesquely indefensible.

Osborne and Gilliatt were married for five years, during which time she gave birth to his only natural daughter, Nolan. However, Osborne had an unpleasant relationship with his daughter. He threw her out of his house when she was seventeen and they never spoke again. According to Osborne, his marriage with Gilliatt suffered because of her unnecessary obsession with her work, which was writing film reviews for *The Observer*.

> I tried to point out that it seemed an inordinate amount of time and effort to expend on a thousand-word review to be read by a few thousand film addicts and forgotten almost at once.

He also observed in her a growing pretentiousness.

> 'She was to become increasingly obsessed with fripperies and titles ... She took to calling herself "Professor Gilliatt".'

The strains in their marriage were further worsened by Gilliatt's alcoholism and her spiteful behaviour, which was deeply felt by Osborne. This resulted in Osborne having an affair with Jill Bennett. This affair was also followed by a swift marriage.

Their marriage lasted in a unstable form for nine long years, which was reduced to mutual abuse and insult with Bennett provoking Osborne, calling him 'impotent' as well as 'homosexual' in public as early as 1971. This was cruelty which Osborne reciprocated, turning his feelings of bitterness and resentment about his declining career onto his wife.

Bennett's suicide in 1990 is generally believed to have been a result of Osborne's rejection of her. He said of Bennett 'She was the most evil woman I have come across', and showed open contempt for her suicide.

> ... she was a woman so demoniacally possessed by Avarice that she died of it. How many people have died in such a manner, of Avarice? .... This final, fumbled gesture, after a lifetime of glad-rags borrowings, theft and plagiarism, must have been one of the few original or spontaneous gestures in her loveless life... During the nine years I lived beneath the same roof with her, she spent half the day in bed. There was a short period when she took dressage lessons, that most intensive course in aids to severe narcissism.

Osborne seemed to relish in reading through obituaries of Bennett and disagreed with any points of merit, which were pointed out by journalists in her.

> ... sounding like a puppy with a mouthful of lavatory paper. I did everything I could to scrub up her diction, but it never improved. Indeed after we separated and she was consigned to lesser parts it became even worse. During a television series... even by the pier-end standards of sit-com, she was quite incomprehensive and cried out for sub-titles.

Osborne signed off the chapter on Bennett with perhaps some of his most damning prose committed to print.

> Adolf [Osborne's nickname for her] has left half a million to Battersea Dogs' Home. She never bought a bar of soap in all the time she lived with me. Always, she cried poverty... It is the most perfect act of misanthropy, judged with the tawdry, kindless theatricality she strove to achieve in life. She had no love in her heart for people and only a little more for dogs. Her brand of malignity, unlike Penelope's went beyond even the banality of ambition.... Her frigidity was almost total. She loathed men and pretended to love women, whom she hated even more. She was at ease only in the company of homosexuals, who she also despised but whose narcissism matched her own. I never heard her say an admiring thing of anyone... Everything about her life had been a pernicious confection, a sham.

He finally concluded with a detestable image stating that his only regret is that he was unable to defecate in her open coffin.

His fourth marriage was with Helen Dawson who was a former arts journalist and critic for *The Observer*. This final marriage of Osborne's lasted until his death, and seems to have been Osborne's first happy union. Until her death in 2004, Dawson worked carefully to preserve and promote Osborne's legacy. Osborne died deeply in debt, his final word to Dawson was: Sorry. After her death in 2004, Dawson was buried next to Osborne.

These details of Osborne's disturbing personal life are important as they are strongly reflected in his writings, particularly in the play *Look Back in Anger*. In this play, the character of Jimmy Porter seems autobiographically inspired with ranting, suspicion and general contempt for all.

Osborne suffered from a serious liver crisis in 1987, after which he became a diabetic. He needed to be injected twice every day. Due to major complications from his diabetes, he died in 1994 at the age of sixty-five at his home in Clunton, near Craven Arms, Shropshire. He is buried in St. George's churchyard, Clun, Shropshire, alongside his last wife–the critic Helen Dawson. She died in 2004.

Déjà vu is the sequel to *Look Back in Anger* and it was published in 1991. This was Osborne's last play. In it, Osborne visits the life of the Porters twenty years later. Jimmy's anger is still there, but like Osborne's own zeal the anger seems to have cooled off with age, Jimmy's anger is at best powerful in its nostalgic appeal.

Some of the important works of John Osborne were as follows:

- *The Entertainer* (1957)
- *The World of Paul Slickey* (1959)
- *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* (1960)
- *Luther* (1961)
- *Plays for England* (1962)
- *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964)
- *A Patriot for Me* (1965)

Check Your Progress

1. Who was John Osborne?
2. What contribution did Osborne make towards the revival of British theatre?
3. Name the sequel to *Look Back in Anger*.

8.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the times when John Osborne wrote *Look Back in Anger*, the following incidents were taking place in the outside world:

Cold war

Post World War II, the western world got divided into two major power blocks: the US and the USSR. The former was identified with the ideology of capitalism while the latter was a socialist state. Between these two blocks, England could at best manage to secure a secondary position as a pawn of the US. This proved harmful to the confidence of the nation's spirit and gave a blow to the English pride.

Independence of colonies

Following India's independence in 1947, many African nations also began to gain independence one after the other. Therefore, people like Colonel Redfern in the play found themselves in a peculiar situation with nowhere to go. The land they had ruled till then had forced them to leave, and the land they had left many years ago, seemed strange and different.

People like Colonel Redfern were people who felt out of place everywhere, and through the character of Alison's father, the playwright has drawn attention to such pitiable yet annoying characters.

Political situation of England in the 1950s

In all, the English nation was battling external blows and internal turmoil. The successive Conservative as well as Labour regimes could not do much to solve the problems of a nation that found itself powerless in the middle of the twentieth century.

The glorious dream of colonization was over and England had to wake up to an unpleasant reality. The problems of corruption, unemployment, class system and unequal development remained.

Angry young men

David Hare said about Osborne at his memorial service:

> It is, if you like, the final irony that John's governing love was for a country which is, to say the least, distrustful of those who seem to be both clever and passionate. There is in English public life an implicit assumption that the head and the heart are in some sort of opposition. If someone is clever, they get labelled cold. If they are emotional, they get labelled stupid. Nothing bewilders the English more than someone who exhibits great feeling and great intelligence. When, as in John's case, a person is abundant in both, the English response is to take in the washing and bolt the back door.

Post World War II British drama is characterized by what later came to be known as the generation of the Angry Young Men. John Osborne is one of the most important voices of this generation because the intensity of his anger reflected in his political commitment and a keen sense of social injustice.

The position of England was peculiar after the Second World War. In the international political scenario, where the 'sun had never set on the British Empire', it was beginning to lose colonies rapidly, India being one of the most recent one (1947). Following India was a series of erstwhile colonies coming onto their own.

The British common man soon realized where his country stood and a sense of betrayal began to set in. Moreover, England was faced with many internal crisis of its own. An unrelenting class divide was realized by writers like Osborne to be a residue of feudalism that still persisted in the minds of people. As much as Britain took pride in being a democracy, the divide between the elite and the working-class persisted.

In the education system, it was more apparent than in other places. This was the period when the white tiled institutions as they were referred to came up. These were the universities meant for the common people unlike the prestigious red brick institutions restricted to the elite few. For individuals graduating out of these colleges, life became even more difficult. In the first place, the state dared them to dream and then squashed that very dream for them. Having secured a degree, a common young boy or girl could aspire to white collar jobs, but at the time of reckoning, they had the 'red brick' graduates to compete against. Comfortable and rewarding jobs had always been the privilege of the aristocratic, and things still remained the same. These young man and women had to struggle against a monstrous class divide that often led to frustration and therefore pessimism.

Jimmy porter's anger is a result of this pessimism. He is a frustrated young man, who is educated, but runs a sweet shop. These are the men Osborne chose to represent in his writings.

The important characters in the play are as follows:

- Jimmy Porter
- Alison
- Cliff
- Helena
- Colonel Redfern

Check Your Progress

4. List the incidents that were taking place in the world during the time when the play *Look Back in Anger* was written.
5. How is Post World War II British drama characterized?

8.4 APPRECIATION AND SYNOPSIS

The story of this play concerns mainly Jimmy Porter and his wife Alison and their marriage. It is the story of a young unfortunate couple whose love is called upon to stand the test of class divide time and again.

The play opens with a fairly simple domestic scene with the wife at her ironing table and the men of the house reading the Sunday newspapers. However, Osborne introduces this impression of domestic peace only to challenge it immediately afterwards. From the first conversation between Jimmy and Alison, tension is apparent. The plot develops through marital tension to the entry of an outsider–Jimmy's second woman. Helena's entry into Jimmy's bed coincides with Alison's exit from the house. In the second act, Alison returns as a changed woman and Helena exits from the house.

The plot is centered on Jimmy, and it concerns all the people in his life who are affected to some or the other extent by his unyielding anger. The play ends with the union of Jimmy and Alison, and a suspect promise of peace between them. The conclusion is reached with Alison's return at which point structurally, the second woman is made to quit.

The other important character in Jimmy and Alison's life is Cliff, who acts as a counter to Jimmy with his warmth and friendship towards Alison. The plot involves action in the Porter household, with Jimmy as the centre and the two women entering and exiting it at different times. A central feature of the plot is domestic tension that involves all other characters such as Cliff, Helena and Colonel Redfern–Alison's father.

The sequence of events is linear with the plot maintaining causality. In the tradition of naturalistic theatre, characters are well defined and explained together with their physical features and behavioural traits. One event follows another and the movement of time is teleological. As in the play *Look Back in Anger*, the two acts begin as parallels to each structurally, with the same set of two men lounging in their chairs reading the papers and a woman engaged in domestic chores. In the plot, dramatic tension is introduced in the beginning and is heightened at the end of Act One and throughout Act Two. In the end, the dramatic tension is resolved, though the symbolism suggests it is probably short lived.

Check Your Progress

6. Who is the protagonist of the play *Look Back in Anger*?
7. Who is Cliff?

8.5 IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

Imagery is anything that appeals to any of the five senses, like touch, smell or vision. You might see the object or at times just imagine it whereas symbolism is representation of anything with the help of an example.

8.5.1 Dramatic Techniques

Dramatic techniques are used by the playwright for enhancing the meaning and understanding amongst the audience. Some of the dramatic techniques used in the play *Look Back in Anger* are as follows:

- **Animal imagery:** In their conversations, Jimmy and Alison refer to each other as bear and squirrel respectively. Bear stands for male strength and aggression while the squirrel represents female flightiness and charm. In their conversations, Jimmy and Alison often resort to this imagery, especially at the moments of dramatic tension. Jimmy's anger is associated with his masculine aggression and Alison's silence can be interpreted as her submission. The play reverberates with sexual violence that is also suggested by this imagery.
- **Symbolism:** There were many objects that were symbolic. Some of them were as follows:
  - **The ironing board:** The play opens with the scene of Alison at the ironing board and with Helena at the same in Act Two. The ironing board is representative of domestic space with the woman involved in chores.

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While Alison is seen to be ironing clothes at the opening, the men are seen as reading the newspapers. There is a clear demarcation of space between the genders that is also representative of conservatism of British society. The only scene where Alison appears to be at peace is when she is seen ironing clothes. Inhabiting female space gives her a sense of comfort and security in this set up of gender discord. Also, the difference between the papers and the iron is the contrast between male intellect and female domesticity.

- **Trumpet:** In the play, the playing of the trumpet is never seen but heard from another room. Jimmy's playing of the trumpet is symbolic of protest. When Jimmy is absent from the scene, his presence is asserted by the sound of the trumpet. When Alison and Helena are on stage, they discuss Jimmy whose absent presence is asserted by the sound of the trumpet from the adjoining room.

8.5.2 Characters

In this section the major characters of the play *Look Back in Anger* have been discussed in detail:

- **Jimmy Porter:** Jimmy Porter is the protagonist of the play. He is an angry young man who rails at everything from the upper class women to retired Colonels and homosexuals. He is dissatisfied with the political, social and cultural system around him and is critical of everything. Not a likeable character, Jimmy Porter has an important place in the history of post War British theatre. Osborne made Jimmy stand up for all the discontent of his generation, and made him into a peculiar and an unbearable character.

  Jimmy is capable of verbal and emotional violence that he inflicts almost constantly on his wife. He insults her parents, provokes her repeatedly but is somewhere dependent on her emotionally himself. He reveals his childhood experiences of being alone with his dying father and his mother's betrayal instills a sense of universal betrayal from the female sex into him. This Oedipal instinct can be seen to be manifested in his relationship with Alison as well as Helena. He checks Alison's personal belongings in her absence as he constantly suspects her of betraying him to her mother.

  Helena, the other woman in his life, emotionally satisfies him temporarily with her mothering. Jimmy appears to be a very unhappy and unfortunate man, and the audience feels pity towards him at times and disgust and anger at other times towards him. However, one may like or dislike Jimmy but one cannot ignore his anger, which is the heart of the play.

- **Alison:** Alison is Jimmy's wife who serves as the punching bag for Jimmy's anger throughout the play. From the opening scene to the last, Jimmy rants at Alison. His love and emotional attachment to her get affected by their difference of class and their relationship gets complicated in many ways. Alison stands in contrast to Jimmy's railings with her quiet yet stubborn resistance. Her silence is powerful and it hurts Jimmy who constantly tries to get some response from her by provoking her.

  Alison's silence can be read in many ways. It could be the silence of someone who is tired of yelling but has not given up, and therefore has chosen another medium of hitting back. From a woman's point of view, this seems a logical choice as an instrument of resistance when the man will not give up shouting

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even for a moment. For Jimmy, Alison's silence represents the indifference of the people of her class who are so caught up in their self-satisfied worlds that they refuse to acknowledge the trouble of others.

Alison's character undergoes much pain and suffering in the play as she loses her child in her womb. On her return after her miscarriage, Alison acknowledges to have felt what Jimmy always talks about–loss and suffering. In the end, Jimmy and Alison appear to unite at a deeper emotional level than before.

- **Cliff:** Cliff is Jimmy's friend and partner in running the sweet stall and lives with them in their house. He is close to Alison, and shows her sympathy and warmth when Jimmy hurts her. His position is peculiar in the Porter household as he acts like a foil to Jimmy and as a protector to Alison. He admits that he finds the menagerie unbearable but is unable to leave it because he loves Jimmy and Alison very much.

  Cliff is seen to be pulled into marital discord and is generally made to receive Jimmy's sarcastic punches, yet he seems to be happy in the middle of it all. Jimmy and Cliff engage in role playing and sing and dance together, also hit each other in a typical man to man friendly manner. His emotional closeness to these two is revealed at different points in the play.

  With Helena's entry into the household, Cliff becomes upset as he sees the unsuitability of it all in Alison's absence. His character is important as he is a counter to Jimmy's aggression with his friendliness and warmth. He is also the neutralizing factor in the Porter household that is filled with acidic anger because of Jimmy.

- **Helena:** Helena is Alison's friend in the play, who also becomes the second woman to Jimmy in her absence. Helena as a woman is different from Alison in many ways. While Alison belongs to the conservative upper class in society, Helena is an actress who is independent in her earnings and her thought.

  Helena is sexually more assertive than Alison and unlike her, rails back at Jimmy. Her personality is a counter to Alison's and perhaps explains her replacing Alison in Jimmy's bed. However, Jimmy's relationship with her is short-lived and with Alison's reappearance, Helena feels a heavy sense of moral guilt and leaves.

- **Colonel Redfern:** Colonel Redfern is Alison's father in the play. Jimmy refers to him as the leftover of the British Empire who cannot understand why the sun is not shining for the British Empire anymore. For him, Colonel Redfern represents futile reminiscence about a past that is dead forever.

As a post war young man, Jimmy is able to see what the old men like Colonel Redfern are not able to. Jimmy can see the end of the British Empire and the declining place of Britain in world politics. He can see the traces of colonialism and feudalism in modern English society, but his father-in-law cannot even relate to the present completely.

All his life, Colonel Redfern was posted in India where he and his people set up a mini England and ruled over the natives, and coming back to England after 1947 made everything unreal for him. He had left an England that was high on its rule over one-fourth of the world, and he came back defeated from India, an erstwhile colony of England.

The England the Colonel came back to was trying to come to terms with the loss of colonies and the destruction of the Empire. It was also no longer important in the Western international political scenario. Therefore, people like him were out of place

everywhere and chose to live in nostalgia. It was this class of people that Jimmy had no tolerance for and he says he pities people like him.

Colonel Redfern's character is important in the play for understanding the position of people like him who are the fallouts of imperialism. Also, his background explains Alison's difficulties in adjusting with Jimmy's class of people. Her upbringing had been narrow while Jimmy's life was out in the open. Colonel Redfern refers to his wife's interference in Alison's married life and shows himself as an understanding and sensitive father.

8.5.3 Themes

The basic themes discussed in the play Look Back in Anger are as follows:

- **Class divide:** Jimmy and Cliff are shown to be individuals who are very conscious of their class. Helena and Colonel Redfern are the other characters that represent a class of people different from Jimmy's. Helena is the new woman of liberalized west who chooses her own moral codes.

  The Redferns are the elite who seem to be indifferent towards Jimmy's class of people and their problems. The playwright has drawn in characters from different backgrounds and thrown them into situations of conflict and tension that reveal their essential differences. The web of human relationships is woven around 'class' in the play and the dramatic tension is sustained on these differences and incompatibilities. Through this play, Osborne is also commenting on the feudal mindsets of English people for whom class is a reality that cannot be erased from the society and the one that is instrumental in shaping the identities of people.

- **Anger:** Anger, as much as it is a mode of release for Jimmy is also an important theme of the play. Anger is important not just for the object it is directed against but in itself too. Anger is a negative emotion that feeds into the one possessing it.

  Look Back in Anger has mostly been interpreted for its title that reflects on past, nostalgia and reasons for resenting it. However, the character of Jimmy Porter cannot merely be seen as an instrument of anger at things social and political, but his is a psychologically complex and emotionally devastated character. Jimmy's anger is as important as the reasons for it. His anger makes him inflict violence of many kinds on the people around him: verbal, emotional and psychological.

  Jimmy's character is powerful but repulsive because of his anger. Osborne has given the modern stage a character that can stand for his generation and times but has at the same time given a case study in psychology. Jimmy's childhood, his mother's leaving his father and his frustrations at securing a respectable job for himself are some of the reasons that make him an emotionally hurtful, vulnerable and selfish person.

  Osborne's play also explores the many facets of anger and the fact that anger can itself be an escapist route for frustrated people like Jimmy. In the end, the audience can ask the following questions:
  - o Does railing change things, or walking out into the streets?
  - o Isn't anger that does not translate into action impotent and wasted?

Therefore, in the end, the nature, strength and effects of the anger remain intriguing questions to be delved into.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. How do Jimmy and Alison refer to each other affectionately?
9. State the themes that are discussed in the play *Look Back in Anger*.

ACTIVITY

Watch the 1959 British adaptation of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger.* Pay close attention to the ways in which Jazz has been used in the film (to intensify Jimmy's angst).

DID YOU KNOW

Look Back in Anger was re-made as a film1989, directed by Judi Dench for Thames Television.

8.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- *Look Back in Anger* (1956) is a play about a love triangle involving an intelligent but estranged young man (Jimmy Porter), his upper-middle-class, impassive wife (Alison) and her arrogant best friend (Helena Charles). Cliff, a friendly Welsh resident, attempts to keep the peace. The play was a success on the London stage, and initiated the term 'Angry Young Men' to portray Osborne and those of his generation who used severity and practicality in the theatre as opposed to the more escapist works of the past.
- John James Osborne was a distinguished English playwright. He was also a screenwriter, actor as well as a vocal critic of the Establishment–the 'Angry Young Man' of British theatre. His play *Look Back in Anger* brought about a revolution in transforming English theatre and enthusing new dynamism in English drama.
- Osborne saw theatre as a weapon, which would enable the ordinary people to break down the class barriers. He wanted his plays to be a remembrance of actual pleasures and pains. Osborne also brought about a significant change in the world of theatre, influencing playwrights such as Edward Albee and Mike Leigh. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Writer's Guild of Great Britain.
- Details of Osborne's disturbing personal life are important as they are strongly reflected in his writings, particularly in the play *Look Back in Anger*. In this play, the character of Jimmy Porter seems autobiographically inspired with ranting, suspicion and general contempt for all.

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- The sequence of events is linear with the plot maintaining causality. In the tradition of naturalistic theatre, characters are well defined and explained together with their physical features and behavioural traits. One event follows another and the movement of time is teleological.

8.7 KEY TERMS

- **Distinguish:** Make oneself prominent and worthy of respect through one's behaviour or achievements
- **Clichéd:** Showing a lack of originality
- **Libertarian:** A person who believes in the doctrine of free will
- **Reconciliation:** The action of making one view or belief compatible with another
- **Turbulent:** Characterized by conflict
- **Misanthropy:** A disposition to dislike and mistrust other people
- **Detrimental:** Tending to cause harm
- **Prerogative:** A right or privilege exclusive to a particular individual or class
- **Semblance:** The outwards appearance or apparent form of something, esp. when the reality is different
- **Demarcation:** The action of fixing the boundary or limits of something
- **Complacent:** Showing smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements
- **Liberalize:** The act of making less strict
- **Facet:** A particular aspect or feature of something
- **Rant:** Speak or shout at length in a wild and impassioned way
- **Lament:** A passionate expression of grief or sorrow
- **Zeal:** Great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective

8.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. John James Osborne was a distinguished English playwright, screenwriter, actor and a vocal critic of the Establishment–the 'Angry Young Man' of the British theatre. His play *Look Back in Anger* brought about a revolution in transforming English theatre and enthusing new dynamism in English drama.
2. Osborne made a significant contribution towards the revival of British theatre by making it more challenging, audacious and experimental. He helped throw off the formal constraints of the previous generation, and turned the attention towards language, theatrical rhetoric and emotional intensity.

   Osborne saw theatre as a weapon, which would enable the ordinary people to break down the class barriers. He wanted his plays to be a remembrance of actual pleasures and pains. Osborne also brought about a significant change in the world of theatre, influencing playwrights such as Edward Albee and Mike Leigh. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Writer's Guild of Great Britain.

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3. *Dejavu* is the sequel to *Look Back in Anger* and it was published in 1991. This was Osborne's last play. In it, Osborne visits the life of the Porters twenty years later. Jimmy's anger is still there, but like Osborne's own zeal that seems to have cooled off with age, Jimmy's anger is at best powerful in its nostalgic appeal.
4. During the times when John Osborne wrote Look Back in Anger, the following incidents were taking place in the outside world:
   - Cold war
   - Independence of colonies
   - England going through internal turmoil
5. Post World War II British drama was characterized by what later came to be known as the generation of Angry Young Men. John Osborne is one of the most important voices of this generation because the intensity of his anger reflected his political commitment and a keen sense of social injustice. The position of England was peculiar after the Second World War. In the international political scenario, where the 'sun had never set on the British Empire', it was beginning to lose colonies rapidly, India being one of the most recent (1947).
6. The plot of the play *Look Back in Anger* unfolds around Jimmy, and concerns all other people in his life who are affected to some or the other extent by his unyielding anger. The play ends with the union of Jimmy and Alison, and a suspect promise of peace between them. The end is reached with Alison's return at which point structurally, the second woman is made to quit.
7. Cliff is the character who acts as a counter to Jimmy with his warmth and friendship towards Alison. The plot involves action in the Porter household, with Jimmy as the centre and the two women entering and exiting it at different times. A central feature of the plot is domestic tension that involves all other characters such as Cliff, Helena and Colonel Redfern, Alison's father.
8. With affection, Jimmy and Alison refer to each other as bear and squirrel. Bear stands for male strength and aggression while the squirrel represents female flightiness and charm. In their conversations, Jimmy and Alison often resort to this imagery, especially at moments of dramatic tension. Jimmy's anger is associated with his masculine aggression and Alison's silence can be interpreted as her submission. The play resonates with sexual violence that is also suggested by this imagery.
9. The themes that are discussed in the play *Look Back in Anger* are as follows:
   - Class divide
   - Anger

8.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What questions did Osborne raise through his works?
2. Write a short note on the concept of 'Angry Young Man'.
3. Give a brief overview of the play's historical backdrop.
4. Discuss the character of Jimmy Porter.
5. Give a character sketch of Colonel Redfern as a man emblematic of England's past.

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the dramatic techniques used in the play *Look Back in Anger*.
2. Discuss the role of Colonel Redfern–Alison's father.
3. Comment on the play's autobiographical element.
4. Discuss the importance of the play's historical setting with special emphasis on the Cold War period coterminous with the waning English pride.
5. Discuss the animal imagery and the significance of the game with which the play ends.
6. Comment on Jimmy Porter's tag as 'the Angry Young Man'.

8.10 FURTHER READING

Heilpern, J.; *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2006.

Osborne, J.; *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography*. UK: Faber & Faber, 1991.

NOTES

UNIT 9 THE BIRTHDAY PARTY BY HAROLD PINTER

Structure

9.0 Introduction
9.1 Unit Objectives
9.2 Background of the Author
  9.2.1 Important Events
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9.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
9.10 Questions and Exercises
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9.0 INTRODUCTION

The Birthday Party was Harold Pinter's first commercial production as a playwright. It was a full-length play. He started to write this after his work as an actor, in a theatrical tour. Those were the times during which, his lifestyle was in 'filthy insane digs' (as described by him). Later, he described his acquaintance with 'a great bulging scrag of a woman' and a man who lived in the sordid place. This cheap place of living became a prototype for a shabby boarding house for the play, the woman and her tenant, the models. It also housed the characters of Meg Boles and Stanley Webber.

His previous piece of work, *The Room*, was a play that had a single act. In *The Room*, Pinter's work was based on themes and motifs that he had also planned to use for *The Birthday Party*, in addition to a few of his subsequent plays. Part of these themes are the failure of language to function as a satisfactory tool of communication, the use of place in the form of a sanctum that is desecrated by intimidating impostors and strange uncertainties that shroud or warp fact.

This complete full-length play was also directed by Pinter. Its premier show was launched in Cambridge, England, at the Arts Theatre, on 28 April 1958. It achieved a lot of success there and also in its tour to Oxford. However, when Peter Wood ordered for it be moved to London and then be opened at the Lyric Opera House in Hammersmith, it was reviewed harshly. This resulted in it closing down within a week. Of all the reviewers, Harold Hobson of the Sunday Times was the only one who felt that the play was promising. In his view, Pinter's work was very original and was 'the most disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London.' However, the timing of his review was not

sufficiently quick to benefit the production in any way. The show had already stopped due to feeble spectatorship, which comprised one matinee audience of six and continuously aggressive reviews. A large number of critics were of the opinion that Pinter was struggling in darkness and was negatively affected of Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*), Eugene Ionesco (*The Bald Prima Donna*) and other avant-garde writers.

Soon after, Pinter was awestruck when in London the play was given a thoroughly ruthless treatment by critics. However, he was aware that this was the first instance when he had received negative reviews and it failed to dim his passion for writing. Actually, his work became the dramatist's first full-length 'comedy of menace'. A group of protagonists held Pinter's status as a leading playwright who thought ahead of his time. The productions that followed were reviewed more positively. These included the play's 1964 revival at London's Aldwych Theatre and its 1968 Broadway premier at the Booth Theatre in New York. By the mid-1960s, the growing admiration of drama and the success of other plays by Pinter, including *The Dumbwaiter* (1959) and *The Caretaker* (1960), had made up for negativity directed at *The Birthday Party*. Then, *The Birthday Party* gained repute as a classic in the genre of drama, a genre that was defined as Theatre of the Absurd by literary critic Martin Esslin.

9.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life of Harold Pinter
- Comment on the works of Harold Pinter
- Summarize and critically comment on Acts I, II and III of *The Birthday Party*
- Discuss the theme of protest and subversion

9.2 BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR

Harold Pinter was born in Hackney, in a neighborhood of working people in the east end of London. His father was a tailor. His parents were Jews, who were born in England.

During his childhood, Pinter was close to his mother. However, he was not comfortable with his father, who was a domineering person. When World War II broke out, Pinter was moved from the city to Cornwall; he suffered a great deal of trauma when he was separated from his parents. His literary works comprised twenty-nine plays, which included: *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming* and *Betrayal*. He had twenty-one screenplays to his credit. These comprised *The Servant*, *The Go-Between*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, etc.

Pinter also directed twenty-seven theatre productions, which included *James Joyce's Exiles*, *David Mamet's Oleanna*, seven plays by Simon Gray and many of his own plays including his latest, *Celebration*, paired with his first, *The Room at The Almeida Theatre*, *London in the spring of 2000*. Pinter began to write plays in 1957. He had spoken about his idea about a play to a friend who was an employee of the drama department at Bristol University. This friend found the idea to be so good that he asked Pinter to send him the play. The only hurdle was that for the university to perform the play, the script had to be prepared in one week. Pinter replied to his friend's letter asking him to reject the whole idea. Later, he sat down and wrote the play in four days.

His hard work resulted in a one-act play which was titled *The Room*. This play had a large number of constituents that would portray Pinter's subsequent works, namely routine circumstances which progressively featured menace and mystery. These circumstances deliberately omitted the justification or motive for action. Further, in the same year, Pinter built his style in another one-act, *The Dumb Waiter*. This was about two contract killers who worked for a secret organization. They are assigned to kill an unknown person. In this second play, Pinter introduced humour, generally in the form of vibrant trivial conversation. The increasing nervousness of both the men is concealed within this humour. Their conversation on whether it would be correct to say 'light the kettle' or 'light the gas' is full of crazy humour and terrific absurdity. The debut performance of *The Dumb Waiter* was at the Hampstead Theatre Club in London, in 1960. Pinter continued writing many absurdist works of art. These comprised *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming*, *Betrayal*, *Old Times* and *Ashes to Ashes*. He even composed several radio plays and many books of poetry. His screenplays comprise *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Last Tycoon* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Many awards were conferred upon him. These awards included the *Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear*, *BAFTA* awards, the *Hamburg Shakespeare Prize*, the *Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or*, the *Commonwealth Award* and the *Nobel Prize for Literature*. His rare approach and knack for building suspense and thrill without being flamboyant earned him utmost respect among the playwrights of his day. Harold Pinter passed away on 24 December 2008, when he was 78. He had been battling cancer since a long time. He is survived by his wife, Lady Antonia Fraser.

9.2.1 Important Events

Harold Pinter was born on 10 October 1930. His father's name was Jack and that of his mother was Frances. He first experienced war in 1939. This was World War II. The early times spent by him at Hackney Downs Grammar School are significant because:

- He came in contact with an English teacher, Joe Brearley.
- He portrayed the character of Macbeth in an amateur school production, which attracted reviews in the *News Chronicle*.

These events took place from 1944 to 1947, which was the most receptive age for Pinter. Thereafter, he enrolled himself in the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, during the autumn of 1948. In the early years of his life two incidents stood out distinctly, his deep interest in English as a language and drama as an art and his power of resistance. When Pinter was selected for National Service, he refused to enlist and declared himself as a conscientious objector. This incident took place in October 1948. As a result of this, in 1949 he was summoned before the military tribunal and arrested and fined twice.

Following this, he quit the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and focused completely on reading and writing. His career got boosted with small roles on BBC radio. In 1950, his first professional performance came in the form of *Focus on Football Pools* and two of his poems also got published in the August number of *Poetry London*. At one point of time Harold Pinter got completely pre-occupied with learning the art of speech. He attended two terms at the Central School of Speech and Drama, from January to July 1951. This was the time that gave Pinter the break that his career was in need of. Anew Mc Masterto engaged him to play Shakespeare and other classical drama in Ireland. For six months Pinter was engaged in acting, writing, reading and consolidating his position in the world of literature and drama. He launched on his first book, *Dwarf*, with simultaneously shifting between dramatic companies. His stage name became David

Baron and he married Vivien Merchant, who was his costar in *Bournemouth*. This was on 14 September 1956. Since 1957, after the production of Pinter's '*The Room*' at Bristol University Drama Department, he never looked behind. Since this production, Pinter has been played all over Europe, in the United States and in Russia too. Pinter was the actor, director and producer for his own plays and also for those written by others. Films were made, based on his plays and his association with production and acting on BBC, Radio as well as television, had been a close one. His was astoundingly versatile.

9.3 WORKS BY HAROLD PINTER

Pinter's complete collection that includes Radio, TV and stage plays is available in the four Play Collections, published by Faber and Faber. A list of their publications sufficiently contains all his works. The only play, which is not part of this list, is *Celebrations of the Year 2002*. The publications also comprise his poetry and prose, *Celebration and the Room* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), *Collected Screenplays I* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), *Collected Screenplays II* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), *Collected Screenplays III* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001) and *The Dwarfs* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990).

Plays 1: *The Birthday Party, The Room, The Dumb Waiter, A slight Head Ache, The Hothouse, A Night Out, The Black And White* (short story), *The Examination* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991)

Plays 2: *The Caretaker, The Dwarfs, The Collection, The Lover, Night School, Trouble in the Works, The Black and White, Request Stop, Last To Go, Special Offer* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996)

Plays 3: *The Homecoming, Tea Party, The Basement, Landscape, Silence Night, That's your Trouble, That's All, Applicant, Interview, Dialogue for Three, Tea Party* (short story), *Old Times, No Man's Land* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997)

Plays 4: *Betrayal, Monologue, One For The Road, Mountain Language, Family Voices, A Kind of Alaska, Victoria Station, Precisely, The New World Order, Party Time, Moonlight, Ashes to Ashes* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998) *Poems and Prose, 1949-1977* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), *The Proust Screenplay (*London: Eyre Methuen, 1978) *The Trial* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) *Various Voices: Poetry, Prose and Politics 1948 – 1998* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998)

9.3.1 The Theme of Pinter's Early Plays

The Caretaker gave Pinter the break his career needed. After this play, Pinter got serious attention, which a playwright of his stature deserved. Pinter could present his theme in a more distinct way. Batty found a theme that was common in all his plays. He says; *The Caretaker* was a refined form of the thematic concerns that was the driving force behind most of Pinter's writing. It was possible to precisely examine human impulse to dominate, to define areas of territory and the ability to intercede in such things. All Pinter's early work, his plays, *The Birthday Party*, *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter*, as well work of prose, *Kullus* and *The Examination* are all different expressions of his fascination for violating presence and an intruding force. All these works, space and environment have prominent marks of his identity. Similar to all his previous plays, *The Birthday Party,* rotates around this simple premise. This premise involves a tug of war for superiority, between inhabitants and intruders of the territory. Goldberg and McCann have invaded Meg's and Petey's territory as they have come to keep them away from Stanley. Similarly, they are also invaders for Stanley, since they have come to take away his refuge. The main highlight of the tug of war between the individual and society is the manipulation of space and violation of territory.

9.3.2 Reception

When *The Birthday Party* came to fore in 1958, all critics united against it. The play shocked reviewers, when they first saw it in London. 'What all this means only Mr Pinter knows' (Manchester *Guardian Review*, 29/5/1958). The majority of senior critics inclusive of Kenneth Tynan spoke on the play. Tynan defined it as 'a clever fragment grown dropsically, with symbolic content, a piece…. full of those paranoid overtures that seem inseparable from much of the avant-garde drama'. This observation featured in *The Observer* of 5/6/1960. After two years, Tynan, accepted his failure to recognize the quality and promise of Pinter's *The Birthday Party*.

Harold Hobson stood out against the flow of opposing criticism; he acknowledged the dramatic power of Pinter, announcing, 'Mr Pinter, on the evidence of his work, possesses the most original, disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London'. Herber spotted a unique vagueness and unconformity in Pinter's plots. The feature which people regarded as ambiguity was the highlight of Pinter's success and charm. Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler, who worked in close association with Pinter, as directors of the production of his play recollect their first response to Pinter, 'Michael Godron sent me *The Birthday Party* when it was first going to be done. I didn't know who Harold Pinter was but I liked the play immensely'.

Peter Raby has traced change in the reactions of the public and the critics towards Pinter. To begin with the response of the academia, Raby says, 'If Pinter was embraced warmly and relatively early by the academia, he had been treated a little more erratically by theatric critics. *The Birthday Party* foxed them in the 1950s with the striking exception of Harold Hobson, who had the benefit of seeing *The Room* in Bristol. *The Birthday Party* was a new type of theatrical literature that was a challenge for the director, actors and the audience. Audience at Cambridge and Oxford were not affected by any critical lead and their response was positive. As years passed by, the reviewer's response got adjusted to both, early Pinter and successive shifts and developments in his work.

Batty remembers that *The Caretaker*, received later in 1960s, was received very positively. It was portrayed as a fascinating and uncompromising work of art and was an indication of a kind of masterpiece. He says that the reason that responses to *The Birthday Party* earlier were negative was the shock with which it was received. The shocks stemmed from its allegorical structure and enigmatic characteristics. He also remembers that *The Birthday Party*, which signified Pinter's first major entry into the theatres of London West Ends, was a recipient of critical backing and snobbishness.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name any two plays written by Harold Pinter.
2. How was '*The Birthday Party*' treated, when it appeared in 1958?

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9.4 SUMMARY AND CRITICAL COMMENTS

9.4.1 Act I

The play opens in a living room set-up of a house, in a seaside town. The room is almost without any furniture or any artificial look. As seen by us, the room has a table and chairs and opens into the kitchen. The kitchen has a hatch, which Meg, the lady of the house, uses not only for transferring things but also to converse. The first scene introduces the following two characters, Petey, the husband and Meg, his wife. She talks to Petey through the hatch, as he comes into the room, sits on the chair and starts read the paper that he has got with him. The start of talks between Meg and Petey is about cornflakes, fried bread and the news in the paper. This conversation is pretty dull and routine. They live in harmony and are not persistent in their thinking. The blending of the difference between the awful food they have and the silence of serving it, is funny. Questions from Meg like, 'Are you back?' and 'You got your paper?' indicate that she is willing to start a conversation. She has seen Petey walk in and read the paper, still she begins questioning, although aware that he will not be answering them; the conversation is as routine as cornflakes and bread. Petey's answers to Meg are generally in the form of 'yes, the cornflakes is nice; outside is nice'. The next question from Meg asking if Stanley was up, also lacks relevance as she is aware that Petey has not seen him, since, he had just walked in: Meg tries to catch Petey's attention, she desires his appreciation of the breakfast served by her and shows no hesitation in appreciating him for having read some nice bits from the paper, yesterday.

Her ignorance in comparison to Petey is evident with her 'Oh!', when he tells her that 'it gets light later in winter'. When she picks up socks to mend them and other simple chores carried out by both of them confirms how simple the family is. The first scene shows some of the methods that Pinter uses for creating the atmosphere of his choice. According to John Russell Brown, the play had succeeded because of the language and silence used by Pinter. 'The play starts with silence and the twice repeated question of Meg, who is far behind the stage is answered by Petey only in line 6.' Meg's initial three questions sounded repetitive at firsts. However, progressive changes to the tone disclose their actual motive.

Meg shows that she is curious about the name of the girl, who has given birth to a baby. She also exhibits her immature worry at her having a baby girl. Her wish to have a little boy is also evident. Her way of conversing makes her an amiable comic character. In the meanwhile, Meg and Petey have talked about Stanley, who lives with them and whom Meg is concerned about. It is worthy to consider Nigel Alexander's observations about their simple household:

'The opening sequence opens a gap between the aspirations of the characters and their behaviour that is maintained in increasingly painful fashion until the end of the play.... What it establishes is a domestic routine of almost killing boredom yet Meg's enquiries about the cornflakes and her interest in the girl baby that the newspaper announces has been born to Lady Mary Splatt indicate great expectations that have somehow with stood the withering of age and the staling of custom. One of the reasons that she sounds like a silly old woman is that her vocabulary is still that of a bride enjoying providing breakfast for her husband and looking forward to the baby that she hopes will be a boy. Her unquenchable folly and Petey's resigned acceptance of her good intentions have a quality of heroism, which survives even the laughter of the audience.'

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Petey says that two men came to him on the beach, the night before, to ask if they could stay in their house for two days. When Meg's asks what he had told them, he says that he said nothing and that they will be coming again to find out. The repetitive questions and short answers indicate Pinter's manipulation of language as he wills. Meg's anxiety and avid desire to be socially approved are evident in the conversation that follows:

Meg: Are they coming?

Petey: Well, they said they would

Meg: Had they heard about us, Petey?

Petey: They must have done.

Meg: Yes, they must have done. They must have heard this was a very good boarding house. It is. This house is on the list.

Irrespective of the fact, it is obvious that Meg wants the house to be on the list. She also fantasizes of succeeding as an enterprising boarding house owner. The irony is visible when it is known that there is no one besides Stanley Webber who is staying at the guest house. 'The house on the list' also has other implications. Meg is prepared for visitors. She has room ready for them. This was not expected because earlier, there were no guests at the boarding house and Meg had no clue of them either. Her willingness for Goldberg and McCann also shows that the house is destined for what follows. Meg than says, that she was going to wake Stanley. Her words show her concern for him. When Petey talks about a show, coming to the town, she immediately thinks of Stanley. She reacts that Stanley could have been in it, had it been on the pier. When Petey tells her that Stanley had no role to play in it because it was a show without dancing or singing, she is completely shocked. How could a show be without singing or dancing?

Meg had liked to hear Stanley playing the Piano. As she remembers Stanley, she decides to call him down. Petey's asks if she had taken him a cup of tea and if he had drunk. This shows that this is Meg's daily routine, so is her routing of waking him up. Her style of calling and warning sufficiently establish a deeper affection in Meg for Stanley, than a landlady would generally have.

Petey: Did he drink it?

Meg: I made him. I stood there till he did. I am going to call him. Stan! Stanny! Stan! I'm coming up to fetch you if you don't come down! I'm coming up! I'm going to count three! One! Two! Three! I'm coming to get you.

Finally, when Meg reaches Stanley's room, she exhibits no formality. Stanley's shouts and Meg's laughter inform us of her being informally physical. (When she returns, she is breathless and arranges her hair). Petey has a quiet disposition and would never rebuke Meg; he greets Stanley with a good morning and remains calm all the while. The character of Stanley is unsuccessful, unshaven, undisciplined and shabbily dressed. He is wearing a pyjama jacket and glasses. It is not easy to judge Meg's feelings for Stanley. She reproaches him all the while and he is impudent with his negative responses.

Meg: So he has come down at last, has he? He's come down at last for his breakfast. But he doesn't deserve any, does he Petey? Did you sleep well?

Stanley: I didn't sleep at all.

Meg: You did not sleep at all? Did you hear that Petey? Too tired to eat your breakfast, I suppose? Now you eat up those cornflakes like a good boy. Go on.

Meg reprimands him like a child. Stanley teases her like a friend.

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Meg: What are the cornflakes like, Stan?

Stanley: Horrible.

Meg is disgusted. Petey had praised the same flakes some time back. Even the advertisement said that they were revitalizing.

When Stanley recommends that he go to the second course, Meg instantly responds. Noted that when Meg criticizes Stanley, she always addresses him in the third person, as 'he', even when she is talking to him. The dialogue between Stanley and Meg has a very delicate comedy, griping you though the situations and the characters are dull.

Stanley: No breakfast. All night long I have been dreaming about this breakfast.

Meg: I thought you said you didn't sleep.

Stanley: Day dreaming. All night long.

He cautions Meg that he would go and have breakfast at one of the elegant hotels on the front. Her instant response is that he wouldn't get a better breakfast there.

Petey gives no opinion about food, weather or people. When Stanley questions him about the weather, his simple response is that there was a good breeze blowing, without calling it cold or warm. He supports Stanley when Meg refuses to give him breakfast and goes back to work, without tea or any word of complaint. Stanley criticizes sour milk and holds Meg responsible for Petey going away without having tea.

The conversation between Stanley and Meg is pleasant and affectionate.

The scene where Stanley and Meg are alone reveals a bit of their relationship. Nigel Alexander describes it as normal concern assorted with Meg's sexual awareness of him as a man.

'What is unusual is the use of this comedy to provide information. This information helps the audience to predict the relationship between Meg and Stanley before his appearance. Her frustrated maternal sexuality is clear, dangerously unstable and likely to explode. Stanley's frantic flare-up has been predicted although its form will be unexpected'.

Stanley carries on rebuking Meg. He even taunts her about the boarding house.

Stanley: Visitors! Do you know how many visitors you have had since I have been here? **Meg:** How many?

Stanley: One.

Meg: Who?

Stanley: Me! I'm your visitor.

The sentence from Meg is a significant repetition of the house being 'on the list.' Meg's does not have to try to draw Stanley's attention to her. It is natural. Her objection to Stanley using the word 'succulent' for the bread, suggests her own physical properties, conveying that he could not reach for her. She was married and Stanley had to speak discreetly; yet her remark 'you're bad' sounded more loving and indicative.

The following conversation discloses a clandestine nearness, not seen before. Meg ruffles Stanley's hair as she passes, while Stanley throws her arm away. However, immediately after rebuking her, Stanley admits his dependence on her by saying, '*I don't know what I'd do without you Meg. You don't deserve it though.*' Then he says '*Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag.*'

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Meg: I'm not! And it isn't your place to tell me if I am!

Stanley: And it isn't your place to come into a man's bedroom and wake him up.

These lines show how Stanley was woken up by Meg. Meg's is not satisfied with only her housekeeping and cooking being praised. She desires to be courted and pursued too. She wants Stanley to praise the cup of tea and also say that she was desirable. She ignores Stanley's attempts to oppose her and she tries to get him to respond. Try to get the hidden meaning of the following conversation.

Meg: Stanley! Don't you like your cup of tea of the morning- the one I bring you?

(and later)

Meg: (shyly) Am I really succulent?

When Stanley says that he would prefer her to a cold in the nose, she dares him to do that.

Meg: You're just saying that.

Stanley's declining patience and Meg's increasing sensuality ultimately ends with Stanley's eruption of disgust. He discards Meg's tea as horrible. Obviously, he is tired with Meg's overtures. He suddenly becomes a formal guest and reminds her that he was only a boarder.

Stanley: (violently) Look why don't you get this place cleared up! It's a pigsty. And another thing, what about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room.

Meg: (Sensual, stroking his arm) Oh! Stan, that's a lovely room. I've had some lovely afternoons there.

Stanley irritatingly recoils from her. He goes out and quickly comes back with a cigarette. Meg continuously pursues Stanley erotically. Stanley's anger is clear when she asks for a cigarette and tickles the back of his neck. The sinister inclination of the guests, whom Meg refers to, is clear as she announces their chances of coming. Stanley's fear of being found and hunted down is clear when he does not want to believe Meg. He is also anxious to know their names and more about them. Stanley seems to know them when he wants to keep them away from the house. His nervousness is extreme when he asks, 'why didn't they come last night, if they were coming?' It was possible that he was temporarily relieved thinking that they may not come at all.

When he addresses Meg as Mrs Boles his breakdown is evident. He becomes weak and all his responses are grunts. He groans, falls forward and holds his head with his hands.

Meg is kind and skillful with Stanley. She commends his Piano skills and coaxes him to play it again. She tries comic, when he is depressed and sad. Mark Batty believes that Stanley's fears are related to some guilt of his past life, which he is evading. As Meg and Stanley talk about his past, we know about his career as a pianist and about an aborted concert. Surprisingly during this conversation,

Stanley is so much affected by the fear of the two mysterious men coming to his safe haven.

As Stanley is intrigued by the new visitors, we wonder what was troubling him. Meg fears Stanley going away.

Meg: But you wouldn't have to go away if you got a job, would you? You could play the piano on the pier.

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His past success and failure are connected with his piano skills. Stanley's reference to his career as a pianist is both, comic and pathetic. The drama lies in the sequence in which Stanley makes these statements. Later Meg, says that she enjoyed watching him play the piano, she repeats his story about the concert and is funny in getting the details wrong. She dents status still further when she gives him a toy drum for his birthday.

Stanley's daydream of his success in the past can be considered tragic, because now it is lost. Nigel Alexander finds Stanley's frenzied outburst logical to Meg and his relationship with his own parents.' His relationship with his parents has been uneasy. As he talks of his 'great success' (the concert at Lower Edmonton). 'My father nearly came down to hear me. Well I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it, No I lost the address that was it.'

Surely, he does not want to recognize himself as the son and lover of Meg's desire. His fury has always been part of his history. Stanley has no precise answers to Meg's questions. He has no specific reply about the place and payment. 'At Berlin, it is a fabulous salary and all found. Then to Constantinople, Zagreb, Vladivostok, it is world tour with flying visits to what's its name. What is the name is the question.' Stanley keeps Meg spell bound by the narration his concert at Lower Edmonton. Everyone had champagne that night, the whole lot of them. So far, Stanley's ascension suggests a rise, towards a throne, but this is immediately followed by a fall. Stanley talks of being crowned the King of Artists and then, a victim of a conspiracy. Stanley's father could not see the great splendour and adoration. Was it because the father did not turn up? Was there any impact of his father's absence? Why did Stanley initially say that he had sent him a card when he had lost his address? Did he even have the address or was there no contact between them, before the concert. There are no answers to these questions, still the play is enjoyed.

Stanley now confides in Meg. He wants to talk about their bad treatment. He was appointed to play in another concert, of which he does not remember the location. The space is now vague and unidentified. When he went to play, the place was deserted. They wanted to subdue Stanley. He hates the whole thing; he wants to know their identity to settle his score with them. He tells Jack that he can collect that information, but we are not told who that Jack is.

Stanley's coarse words to Meg, 'You're just an old piece of rock cake.' and her cracking words of fear suggest a threat. Meg's entreating words 'Don't you go away, Stan. You stay here, you'll be better off. You stay with your old Meg', are words of concern as well as fear for Stanley. Stanley stubbornly rejects his fear, about the visitors who were supposed to arrive, or any enemies of the past.

His joke about their arrival today, with a wheel barrow is strange. It diverts our attention away from the men who are coming. The suspense persists though Stanley has tried to nullify Meg's fear.

Lulu comes when Meg is getting ready for her shopping. Lulu is a neighbour and part of the extended family of Meg and Petey. We find out that she had bought something that was kept a secret. All through Mrs Boles and Lulu's conversation, Stanley sidles to the door, trying to listen to what they say.

The conversation between Lulu and Stanley after Meg's departure is informal but not simple. Lulu's remark that the room was stifling gets an absurd response from Stanley when he says that he had sanitized it that morning. Stanley carries on cheating and baffling people with small lies. His story to Lulu about being at the sea at half-past

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six in the morning, before his breakfast, was a lie. Stanley knows that Lulu knows about his lies and Lulu knows that Stanley was aware of it.

Lulu's nearness with the Boles family is ascertained when she enters the play. She tells Stanley that he should shave and change. She indirectly tells us that Stanley never goes out.

'Don't you ever go out?— I mean what do you do, just sit around the house all day long— hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?

Stanley shows his presence of mind as well as a turn of phrase. The second retort, after ' I ——in the room this very morning, I always stand on the table—when she sweeps the floor is followed by the 'where' and 'no-where game of words between them.

When Lulu goes out, Stanley inspects himself in the mirror. When he looks at himself and washes his face, it shows that he was affected, though he does not show it.

McCann and Goldberg arrive when Stanley is all alone. He sidles behind the door and avoids as far as possible. Goldberg and McCann come in through the rear door. Goldberg has a briefcase while McCann has two suitcases. Stanley has by now sneaked out. Mystery and suspense rise when McCann asks Goldberg if they were in the right house for he saw no number on the gate. 'I wasn't looking for a number', says Goldberg, which means that he had found what he was looking for. Goldberg's clearly commands McCann, which is evident from his speech. He has brought McCann for a holiday. He tells McCann how to relax, 'The secret is breathing. Take my tip. It's a well-known fact. Breathe in, breathe out, take a chance, let yourself go, what can you lose?'

Goldberg knows that McCann's is uneasy tries to restore his confidence. He remembers Uncle Barney, who is his ideal. He nostalgically recollects his visits to the sea-side resorts, Brighton, Canvey Islands, Rottingan where he went with his uncle, every second Friday of the month, Goldberg finds words insufficient to describe the enormity of the man and adds, 'he was a cosmopolitan'.

Three things emerge in the scene between Goldberg and McCann. The first, that Goldberg had a son 'who used to carry a few coppers, for a newspaper, probably, to see how the M.C.C was getting on overseas'. He himself never carried any money; he only carried a good name, as per the advice of his grand uncle Barney. The second thing we learn about Goldberg is the enormity and power of his position. We also learn about the trust between McCann and Goldberg. Goldberg has done a lot for McCann and McCann has proved his trustworthiness.

Goldberg's formal attitude and address in the nature of their present occupation gives a professional look to the entire situation.

Goldberg points out the similarities and differences between his current and previous businesses. Goldberg continues to speak when Meg walks in. He is polite and well-mannered with her. Goldberg asks Meg what her husband did. The question seems irrelevant since Goldberg has met Petey earlier and asked him about staying in their boarding house.

Meg: Very pleased to meet you.

Goldberg: We are pleased to meet you too.

Meg: That's very nice.

Goldberg: You are right. How often do you meet someone its pleasure to meet?

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advantage of Mr and Mrs Boles. He is persistent in defending himself, telling them that there was nothing for them in that house from any angle and that as for him they were just a dirty joke, they did not matter to him.

Stanley's defiance of them and his attempt to get an advantageous position fail. Stanley is first graciously asked to sit, when he declines; McCann and Goldberg turn slightly firm till he finally gives in to McCann and sits. Their attitude gradually turns more intimidating, infecting the viewers with Stanley's nervousness. An interesting thing in Pinter's novel method of portraying characters is the concern it can gather for the non-hero protagonist, despite all his flaws. Stanley can neither be trusted, nor be hated and yet no one wants to see him harmed. Everyone wants him to be safe.

Stanley does not get intimidated by Goldberg and McCann. He is daring and does not hesitate to reject Goldberg's authority when Goldberg tries to dominate him. Stanley tries everything to frustrate them. But Goldberg and McCann are unyielding; they are determined and use every tactic to control Stanley.

Stanley's test begins on the most chimerical base. He is blamed with getting on everybody's wick; he is accused of treating the young lady Lulu, like a leper. He is asked to explain why he forced Petey to go out to play chess and drive Meg crazy. Irrelevant questions, such as where had he gone yesterday and the day before? What did he wear last week? And where did he keep his suits? Follow. These are meant to intimidate and weaken him. The comedy gradually transforms into a crime thriller. Why did Stanley abandon their organization? Goldberg's mention of the 'old mum' and a 'personal hurt' hint that he may have known Stanley more closely, or may be related to him. However, Stanley's response indicates his carelessness. After a ridiculous exchange of words, meant to keep ridiculousness of the play intact, the dialogue is restricted to short sentences as in the case of a pursuit. They are hunting Stanley and the words are like darts to injure and weaken him.

Stanley is accused of his wife's murder, then of escaping from the wedding itself. The beginning of the conversation looks like a hide and seek of words:

Goldberg: Where did you come from?

Stanley: Somewhere else

Goldberg: Why did you come here?

Stanley: My feet hurt

Goldberg: Why did you stay?

Stanley: I had a headache

Goldberg: Did you take anything for it?

Stanley: Yes

Goldberg: What?

Stanley: Fruit Salts

Goldberg: Enos or Andrews?

Stanley: En-AN—

Goldberg: Did you stir properly? Did they fuzz?

Stanley: Now-now, wait you

Goldberg: Did they fuzz? Did they fuzz or didn't they fuzz?

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All questions end with the verdict that Stanley had been disloyal to the organization. Goldberg asks one last question which confirms that Stanley was part of their group. Stanley is caught, when McCann takes his glasses away. More questions evoke memories and confirm the places Stanley is linked to. Stanley had washed the last cup at Lyon's Corner house at Marble Arch on the Christmas before last and his old mom was at the sanatorium.

What was the reason for Stanley leaving the girl he was about to marry, why did he not come to the Church? Goldberg and McCann try to trap Stanley with their words. Staley is being victimized by words that are weakening his will. They are targeting his sensory nervous system and diminishing his power to resist.

What was the reason for Stanley to change his name? They do not find Stanley's answer to be funny. He had changed his name because he did not remember the other one. The answer sounds like a lie. Joe Soap is his new name, which he gives them. Goldberg calls him a sinner.

The most critical question asked is if Stanley recognized 'the external force' qualifying the external force with 'responsible for you', 'suffering for you'. When Stanley breaks down, Goldberg and McCann consistently bog him by strange and confusing possibilities and ask him to solve problems that have no solution. One such weird question was whether number 846 was a possibility or a necessity, or both.

McCann's job is to contain and force people to toe Goldberg's line and to endorse Goldberg's ruling as well as implement it. Goldberg's ultimate declaration of what he has been trying to assert is revealed by his words, 'Right! We are right! And you are wrong, Webber, all along the line. McCann supports him with an endnote, 'all along the line.'

Stanley is now being morally accused; he is called the root of contamination of womankind and also a lecher. He will be avenged for this. The following questions increase Stanley's nervousness to the level of incoherence. The continuous questions: 'Why don't you pay the rent? Why do you pick your nose and what's your trade?', become rapid and more frantic. He is questioned about history, cricket and gossips and end up with the typical riddle about whether the chicken came first or the egg.

Goldberg and McCann bank on Stanley's failing senses and nerves with expletives of 'he doesn't understand! He doesn't understand! He was a traitor to the cloth (the one he uses as pyjamas) and that he had manipulated his birth sheet (sin of incest). Stanley 's punishment was due for betraying the country, deserting or killing his wife, sins with women, etc. Stanley's seems helpless, at utter loss and in extreme need of help.

Stanley's abrupt outbreak when he kicks Goldberg in the stomach is followed by his running with a chair on his head to protect himself, with McCann on his heels. Goldberg remains calm. They try to look normal only when Meg arrives. She looks ridiculous when she asks McCann how she looked in her party dress. Her enthusiasm looks imbecile. Goldberg's words reflect his culture; he praises her superficially. He is equally well-mannered to Petey and Lulu and is rude to Stanley only when needed and inevitable. Goldberg's naughtiness in admiring Meg reflects his hypocrisy. Initially, Meg was a tulip, now she seems a gladioli. Meg's has astounding appetite for admiration and the experienced Goldberg knew it immediately. He asks for every light to be turned out and tells McCann to switch his torch on, to create an aura like that of a dream.

Goldberg's mesmerizing voice and kind words, though a deception, are effective. He is able to comfort people and make them confident. He coaxes Meg to raise a toast and when she is nervous, he tells her to speak from the heart. He overcomes her to

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reveal her real feelings when she looks at Stanley. Goldberg also deals with the stage. Just as Meg is about to start her speech, he tells McCann to shine the light on the birthday boy, instead of Meg.

Though there is simplicity in Meg's speech, it not only reveals her feelings for Stanley but also shows her womanliness. As her speech is spontaneous, the words are liberal and sincere. She describes her long connection with Stanley. She openly praises him, 'he is a good boy, although sometimes he is bad'. Her affection for Stanley is undivided and no one in the world knows Stanley better than her, although Stanley does not believe it. She publicly announces her absolute love for him; she could do everything for him. Meg's emotional sobs, when Stanley is there on his birthday reveal her gentle feelings for him.

She shows that she is glad because of everyone's (Goldberg and McCann) presence there that night. This is an irony in context with the incidents that follow. When Lulu's comes to the party, enthusiasm is added to it. Stanley is made to sit as Goldberg speaks on how valuable true feelings are in the life of a man. He exhibits regret on missing the age when he could express love, feeling of cheerful friendship and affection without being ashamed or self-conscious. He shows that he is happy at having heard Meg's toast to Stanley, which was not common in today's world, with its sincerity and deep sentiments. He was happy to see that love is still alive in a few hidden corners. He again speaks about the things he cherished in life. Goldberg believed that life should have quality and not just be long. His belief is in living close to everything offered by nature and enjoying the plain joys of man's labor and toil. His definition of recreation is good humour, a day of fishing and some gardening. He had even constructed a greenhouse. Goldberg abruptly moves to the other joys of life in a town. Although by chance but deeply linked to the theme of the play, Goldberg talks about the same places that Stanley had earlier talked about to McCann. He had also asked him whether he was aware of these places. The two places spoken about by Stanley are Tea in Fullers and Boots Library. When Goldberg refers to the same places, it casts suspicion on Stanley's credentials. Then, Goldberg begins to speak about Meg's speech again. Her speech was really sentimental and heart renting for him.

Goldberg is awestruck by Meg's complete commitment to Stanley and congratulates Stanley for it. Lulu focuses her attention on Goldberg, whose speech, she says, was superb. Meg returns to Stanley kissing and patronizing him.

When Lulu asks Goldberg from where he had learnt to speak so well, He tells them that his first speech was at the Ethical hall in Bays water and the speech was on 'The necessary and the possible'. The reader would remember that previously when Goldberg was interrogating Stanley, he had asked him the same question about 'Necessary and Possible'. Lulu and Goldberg paired with each other. Meg and McCann can be seen drinking together. The event that follows can be visualized a drunken revelry, almost close to an orgy. There are simultaneous overtures between Meg and McCann. Lulu perches herself on Goldberg's lap after he has praised her for being a bouncy girl. She says that she could bounce up to the ceiling and indeed does so. Lulu's physical closeness to Goldberg is evident when Goldberg's remarks, 'Mind how you go, you're cracking a rib'. Lulu is captivated, she responds with the same compliment in her eyes. She is happy that Goldberg's has appeared out of nowhere and soon after meeting him, surrenders herself to him. When Lulu's questions him about his wife his answer is the same as was about his mother. The adaptation has been altered to some extent; instead of the canal, it is the park and the young girl he had kissed in the first episode is missing. He also

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remembers to mention the little boys and girls clarifying that he has not differentiated between them. Although Nat is his real name, his wife also addressed him as Simey. She always served the nicest food to him and urged him to eat it while it was hot. Lulu's asks Goldberg if he knew her when she was a girl. This hints at an identity crisis, knowing links and a telepathic quest. Identity is lost as a result of missing roots. Meg speaks of her father, who had promised to take her to Ireland, but had finally left alone.

Meg and McCann are now talking about their childhood memories. Their retreat to childhood is a refuge into the peace and comfort of the past, into a world of fantasy. Half of the things they talk about are either overstated or completely invented.

Meg talks about a pink room, with pink curtains and a pink carpet and musical boxes all over the room. She never fell sick because her father was a doctor. Meg's magical world is not yet over. Her nanny sung for her. All of them appear completely drunk now. Meg compliments McCann about his voice. When he is asked by Goldberg to give them a love song, he begins to sing a folk song about the lovers, Paddy Reilly and Bally-James-Duff. After the song Lulu suddenly says that she wants to play a game. They agree to play blind man's bluff. Meg plays blind first, since McCann shows that he does not know the game. Lulu explains it to him. In the middle of the game, Goldberg is seen patting Lulu and

Meg is seen touching McCann.

When Stanley plays the blind man, McCann breaks his glasses and puts the drum in his way. Stanley's foot is caught in the drum and he falls. Stanley tries to throttle Meg and vitiate Lulu. As the lights go out and McCann loses his torch Stanley tries to get even with the women. He also dislikes men who are self-indulging with other men and drinks. This shows Stanley's increased annoyance about Meg's pleasure-seeking attitude towards him. Stanley is seen bending over Lulu whom he has placed on the table. When McCann and Goldberg see him in the torchlight, he simply chuckles. He chuckles louder as McCann and Goldberg come closer to him.

9.4.3 ActIII

The following morning, Petey as usual, walks in with a newspaper. Meg's question from the hatch indicates that it was Stanley and not Petey who she was expecting. Once she is aware that it is Petey, at once she tells him that she has nothing for breakfast. She pours some tea for Petey and informs him that she was going to shop for something nice for the two men. She says that she has a bad headache and Petey tells her that her sleep was deep.

Meg's behaviour shows that she was so drunk last night that she noticed nothing. Meg's speech that follows later reveals the risk to Stanley, although she herself does not understand what she had seen. In the morning, when Meg had taken a cup of tea to Stanley's room, the door was opened by McCann, who said that he had already made tea for Stanley. She is astonished that they were awake and wonders why Stanley was awake so early. She feels strange and slightly uncomfortable. Did Stanley know them? Since Stanley had many friends, his acquaintance with Goldberg and McCann does not surprise her. She wonders why Goldberg and McCann had come down for breakfast in the morning. Why did Stanley not come? However, she consoles herself with the thought that he must have slept again.

As Meg gets ready to go shopping, she hears the sound of a door being slammed upstairs and stops, wondering whether Stanley was coming down. She is concerned

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about his breakfast because there were no cornflakes. To Meg's surprise, it is Goldberg who comes down. When Meg asks if Stanley was coming down and his reply hints at Stanley's fate.

Goldberg: Down? Of course he's coming down. On a lovely sunny day like this he shouldn't come down? He'll be up and about in next to no time.

Goldberg's comment indicates that he does not consider Stanley better than himself.

Now Meg is in love with by Goldberg's car. She goes for shopping with a slightly uncertain state of mind, concerned about Stanley's breakfast. Petey enquires about Stanley, which Goldberg does not give a clear indication about. He again talks about his reluctance to comment on Stanley's state. He had doubted the authenticity of his diagnosis since he had no certificate. We know now that Stanley was being attended on by Dermot, because he had a nervous breakdown.

To answer Petey on the reason for the sudden nervous breakdown, Goldberg replies judiciously. He refers to Stanley's nervous breakdown as a foregone conclusion.

The previous night's incidents are a perplexing mystery for Petey. When he reached the house, there were no lights. This was weird. It was even stranger that the lights came back as soon as he inserted a shilling in the slot. Goldberg rejected the whole incident as a minor breakdown of fuse.

Petey's concern about Stanley increases and he says that he would have to call a doctor in case there was no improvement in Stanley's condition. However, McCann tells him that everything has been taken of and he did not need to worry about Stanley because he had been 'treated' by him. When McCann said that 'Stanley was absolutely quiet now' creates a morbid atmosphere. Things that were grotesque have now turned completely horrific.

Dermot is not known to anyone. No one besides Petey has met him. His power is compared to that of a demon: hideous and unspoken. McCann has prepared the suitcases and is awaiting Goldberg's signal. He enquires if Stanley was ready and is told to go and see for himself. Eventually, McCann tells Goldberg that he has returned Stanley's spectacles. Goldberg asks him if Stanley was glad to have them back. Goldberg and McCann succeed in tricking Petey and promise him that if Stanley's condition does not improve, they will take him to Monty.

Petey is still not completely aware of their motives. Goldberg does not want him to interfere. Goldberg informs Petey that they will not come back for lunch and forces him to go back to the seaside. Petey leaves them alone. Goldberg turns serious now. His distress can be clearly seen, he shouts at McCann for his tendency of tearing the paper into strips and for asking too many irritating questions.

Goldberg admits to his restlessness, in the operation of the present 'thing', in his words. He surprises himself, because rarely did he lose his calm. Goldberg's conversation with McCann discloses a new angle about them. McCann is curious about Goldberg's reality and uses his name, 'Simey', to find the facts. Goldberg warns McCann, not to use that name and gets violent when McCann goes up. Is Goldberg is emotionally disturbed because he doesn't want Stanley to suffer?

When he talks to McCann about life and his principles, he says that he has followed 'the line'. Goldberg repeatedly speaks about his parents. Goldberg was a self made man. In school, he was good in every subject and he learnt everything by heart. More importantly his physical fitness was at its peak. Goldberg recalls his father's words before his death. Note that his father called him Benny and not Simey. Two of the many

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principles that he learnt from his father were: to forgive and let live and to go home to the wife. Goldberg's father told him that all his life he had served others. He taught Goldberg to perform his duty and avoid being judgmental. He had also told him to look after people who were socially backward. The courtesy of wishing 'good morning' to the neighbors was also considered significant. Nevertheless, the most important principle was to keep the family united. The family is the base of one's existence and should never be ignored. Goldberg's disperses his thoughts into the past in an attempt to trace his family tree. His thinking goes out of control for a while but later, regains control after a short silence. He again admires his fitness. He expresses the importance of his motto, 'work hard and play hard— and respect thy father and they mother.' The irony is that immediately after he declares fit, he is breathless and asks McCann to give him mouth-to-mouth respiration.

Lulu enters as soon as McCann has helped Goldberg to breathe normally. McCann is shrewd to leave them alone.

When Goldberg and Lulu are left alone, they blame each other for being taken in. Lulu accuses him of ravishing her innocence. She expresses doubt at his intention of walking into her room at night, with his briefcase. Goldberg remarks that she too was not innocent. Pinter's use of repartee is at its best when Goldberg and Lulu are talking.

Goldberg: A girl like you, at your age, at your time of health and you don't take to games?

Lulu: You're very smart

Goldberg: Anyway, who says you don't take to them

Lulu: Do you think I'm like all other girls?

Goldberg: Are all the other girls like that too?

When Lulu accuses Goldberg of using her, he straight away refutes her by asking 'who used who?' Lulu replies that a boy 'Eddie' was her first love. She forgets to say that he was the last one too.

Her complaint turns funny and hilarious indeed. 'You quenched your ugly thirst. You taught me things a girl shouldn't know before she's been married at least three times.' Goldberg's calling her Schumulu and Lullalu shows his contempt for her. The implications of McCann, being attached to the Church is necessary for understanding Pinter's view on the Church and the Clergy. When he dismisses Lulu by accusing her kind of spending 'too much time in bed', he preaches what everyone does but no one practices. He advocates Goldberg's attitude because Lulu herself had asked for it.

McCann catches hold of Lulu and starts terrorizing her with a torrent of questions. Lulu is not able to comprehend all this at first, but when she does, she quits the room. Stanley is now wearing a dark well-cut suit. He has shaved and is holding his broken spectacles. Goldberg and McCann seem satisfied in the way they have changed Stanley. He not only looks better, but is 'a new man.'

In the last scene Stanley is totally submissive. He does not react to Goldberg and McCann's 'relish' in their victory. Their savage misbehaviour and festivity of Stanley's trampled spirit enlivens the demon within them. Their delight with their win on Stanley frightens the audience. They tell Stanley that they have saved him. He had many ailments and was cockeyed. He was in a mess and had turned from bad to worse. He looked pale and rheumatic. He was also shortsighted epileptic. They had saved him from falling over the edge.

They had a way to cure him, a place for him to recuperate. They would give him a new pair of spectacles, season tickets and discount on inflammable goods. In short,

they will care and treat him. The advantages and perks promised by them are usually identified with the life of a successful man. 'Club Bar' reserved table, a free pass. They promised to care for his spiritual as well as physical well-being. Stanley will conform to the physical, socio-economical and religious pattern of society. They will be proud of him.

Stanley is unable to control his body as well as his mind. This can be seen in his response to Goldberg's and McCann's last questions. He is not able to talk and he only makes incoherent sounds; he clenches and unclenches his fists till they start to tremble.

In the end, he is completely paralysed. Goldberg and McCann consider him fit to be taken away now. When Petey enters the house, Stanley is completely defenseless. He has now turned into a vegetable in the hands of Goldberg and McCann, who will control him the way they want.

They ignore Petey's protests and Goldberg threatens Petey that if he tries to stop them, they may take him along with Stanley.

Petey is not strong enough to fight them but he does not want Stanley to surrender. Finally he tells Stanley, 'Stan, don't let them tell you what to do.'

The play ends with many questions and controversies. Meg is not aware that Stanley has been taken away. Even, Petey does not tell her about it.

Check Your Progress

3. Which two important events does Act II comprise?
4. How does Pinter make his comedy successfully comic and menacing at the same time?

9.5 THE THEME OF PROTEST AND SUBVERSION

Pinter's introduced protest and subversion in his plays. In his interview to BBC, in the programme 'Omnibus', Pinter reiterated the importance of protest and subversion in his drama. He repeated the same to Mel Gussow after two months, in 1988.

'The Birthday Party' can be visualized as a drama full of protest and subversion from different angles. Although outwardly, Goldberg and McCann seem like intruders, but Stanley is also one of them. Goldberg and McCann blame him of depravity, violation and sabotaging their organization to which he too belonged.

Stanley protests as the key protagonist, who is afflicted, exploited and finally destroyed by oppressors. It does not matter what these oppressors stand for, which is a bigger problem. The play is a show of angry reaction and physical assault by Stanley. Stanley kicks Goldberg in the stomach and his patience ends in a comic but evasive manner.

According to Batty, the reason for man's weak position is his uncertain future and his lack of knowledge of external forces, social or other. Though the play criticizes organizations and social arrangements that symbolize submission and obedience, yet it is not geared for communicating such a message.

The resistance within the play presides over the dramatic energies of Pinter's early plays. They successfully convey both, existent and implicit political suggestions. Irving Wardle used the 'comedy of menace' to describe Pinter's works.

Other writers like Michael Scott, perceive in Pinter's plays, a deeper focus on the victim than the invader. However, in 'The Birthday Party', Goldberg and McCann are the dominating characters. According to Michael, the play showcases Stanley's existence and his vulnerability. Both, the language and the characters of the play are dislocated. Stanley the victim becomes the aggressor when it comes to Meg. Take the following as an example:

Look at her. You're just an old piece of rock cake, aren't you?) That's what you are, aren't you? When there is no centre of stability, no foundation for one's existence, a victim can be an aggressor, an aggressor a victim, and words such as 'good' and 'evil' become meaningless These divisions don't exist in Pinter's characters: "It's rather ridiculous to try to understand people in those kinds of terms. Evil people. What the hell does that mean? Or bad people. And who are you then if you say that, and what are you?"

The point of focus is not morality but relationships among people and how people deal with each other within 'a territorial struggle'? In this context, Francesca Coppa discusses three chief issues in his essay— 'The Sacred joke: comedy and politics in Pinter's early Plays'. These issues are political concerns of Pinter, responses of the audiences and Freud's joke theory in context of Pinter's plays. The fact that the characters of Pinter cannot be forgiven and Pinter tries to create sympathy for them, makes it difficult to decide how audiences would respond in such situations.

Pinter creates such situations in which the audiences are almost forced to support either the victim or the joke teller. If the audiences choose to laugh, it would be equivalent to take the aggressor's side and not to laugh would mean that they are supporting the victim. Thus, the comedy of Pinter works as a test to find out whom the audiences support.

According to Francesca Coppa, Freud's joke theory is a valuable key to understand Pinter's plays which he wrote in the beginning of his career as a playwright. In this context, Christopher Innes says that the plays written by Pinter are 'variations on the subject of dominance, control, exploitation, subjugation and victimization. They are models of power structures.' It is also said that the jokes used in Pinter plays are capable of creating moments which can cause dramatic crisis.

9.5.1 Language, Silence and Pause

In 1962, while delivering a speech at Bristol University, Pinter said, 'A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, can do all these things. The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression'. This statement is enough to understand how Pinter uses language in his plays. Pinter does not like to use language that is dead and stale. The quote given below shows what kind of words and language pleases him or saddens him:

'I have mixed feelings about words myself. Moving among them, sorting them out, watching them appear on the page, from this I derive a considerable pleasure. But at the same time I have another strong feeling about words, which amounts to nothing less than nausea. Such a weight of words confronts us day in, day out, words spoken in a context such as this, words written by me and by others; the bulk of it a stale dead terminology, ideas endlessly repeated and permutated become platitudinous, trite, and meaningless. Given this nausea, it's very easy to be overcome by it and step back into

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paralysis. But if it is possible to confront this nausea, to follow it to its hilt, to move through it and out of it, then it is possible to say that something has occurred, that something has even been achieved…'

The language arises when we are not able to express ourselves, when we are trying to hide something or when we are not willing to express ourselves. In the characters created by Pinter, silence speaks louder than the spoken word. In order to express this point of view, Pinter says, 'There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen that keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer nakedness.'

He also says, 'I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility.'

9.5.2 Language and Structure: Dashes and Pauses

The most striking feature of Pinter's comedy is that his comedy is successful as well as menacing. In order to achieve both these opposite effects, he uses a high-level comic technique. To create the specific effect as per his wishes, he uses a structured and cut-to-size language. The use of this kind of language is appreciated even by Pinter's critics. Questions asked by Goldberg-McCann from stressed Stanley Webber 'Is the number 846 possible or necessary?' and 'why did the Chicken cross the road?' is able to maintain comic facade of his play as well as complicate Stanley's life.

The fact that these questions are not reasonable creates laughter among the audiences and at the same time makes them worrisome as they are not aware of the intention of the speaker in posing these questions from Stanley. Francesco Coppa says, 'Behind Pinter's comedy one can perceive something more serious, alarming and disturbing, yet not fully exposed in the words that have been used.' Another comic device used by Pinter is that of repetition. For instance, repetitive use of the word 'nice' by Meg in the play titled,

'The Birthday Party'.

The reason behind Pinter's comedy is not only to create pleasurable situations but to map the themes of the play.

The tendentious joke structure, used by Pinter, works at macro level as well as micro level. If the audiences do not laugh during the final event, it does not mean that his work is not funny. It means that the audiences have taken the side of victim and not the victimizer.

The form of communication used in Pinter's plays is that of absence of direct explanation. The drama in his plays is created not by the apparent meaning of the words used in the play but by the subtext of the play. There are two layers in Pinter's subtexts. These layers are the hidden meaning/intention behind the words and meaning of words when a character does not utter any word. According to Michael Scott, Pinter, within the subtext, uses 'the strategy of pause and silence which in Pinter's plays are as important as the tense dialogue or the comic repartee or the long monologue.'

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Another peculiar feature of Pinter's writings is 'Pinter pause'. Under this feature, he uses three trail dots, silence and indication pause, all at a time when the audiences are waiting to hear the dialogues of character. Some critics feel that Pinter uses these pauses for his convenience. To this, he answered, these pauses are 'not formal conveniences or stresses but part of the body of the action'. He adds that if actors play his characters properly, they would realize that all the pauses given in his plays are inevitable.

To justify his point of view, he also says, 'The pause is a pause because of what has just happened in the minds and guts of the characters and a silence equally means that something has happened to create the impossibility of anyone speaking for a certain amount of time- until they can recover from whatever happened before that silence.'

Thus, these pauses are an important part of his play which guides the actors and director about the tempo and rhythm that they have to follow while enacting his plays.

While talking about the use of dots and dashes in his plays, Pinter ironically says,

'I've had two full-length plays produced in London. The first ran a week and the second ran a year. Of course, there are differences between the two plays. In 'The Birthday Party' I employed a certain amount of dashes in the text, between phrases. In 'The Caretaker' I cut down the dashes and used dots instead. So that instead of 'Look, dash, who, dash, I, dash, dash, dash," the text would read: 'Look, dot, dot, dot, who, dot, dot, dot, I, dot, dot, dot, dot.' So it's possible to deduce from this that dots are more popular than dashes and that's why 'The Caretaker' had a longer run than 'The Birthday party'. The fact that in neither case could you hear the dots and dashes in performance is besides the point. You can't fool the critics for long. They can tell a dot from a dash a mile off, even if they can hear nothing.'

In addition to 'Pinter pause', he also uses sounds like caahhs and uh-gug to express love, coquette, domesticity, external danger, solace, threat and internal fear.

What words say and beyond

Pinter is popular not only for his use of language but also for his great sense of timing. He creates climax and tension at appropriate places in his play. His use of language at the appropriate time is capable of revealing more than the apparent meaning of the words. For instance, he says:

Yes, he's….still asleep

Let him…sleep

These lines are spoken perhaps to hide Stanley's regression in a foetal position as if he is in a womb. Thus, we are not sure what the speaker intends to speak by using the word 'sleep'. Thus, this word speaks more than its apparent meaning.

The way Pinter manipulates rhythms is rather difficult to describe. Speeches follow a particular kind of phrasing till there is lengthening of subtextual pressure, shortening or quickening of utterance. Therefore, the sound itself gives a clue about the change of engagement.

An example of this is seen in the last episode of *The Birthday Party*:

(Meg comes past the window and enters by the back door. Petey studies the front page of the paper) Meg (coming downstage): The car's gone.

Petey: Yes.

Meg: Have they gone?

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Petey: Yes.

Meg: Won't they be in for lunch?

Petey : No.

Meg : Oh, what a shame. (she put her bag on the table,) It's hot out. (She hangs her coat on a hook) What are you doing?

Petey:Reading.

Meg: Is it good?

Petey: All right.

(She sits by the table) Meg: Where's Stan? (pause) is Stan down yet, Petey?

Petey: No….he's ..

Meg: Is he still in bed?

Petey: Yes, he's….still asleep.

Meg: Still? He will be late for his breakfast.

Petey: Let him ….sleep.

9.6 SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Let us look at Goldberg, McCann and Stanley Webber in 'The Birthday Party'. Each one of the four plays by Harold Pinter ends in the virtual annihilation of a person. In 'The Birthday Party', it is Stanley who is virtually annihilated. He is taken for special treatment from where he had taken refuge. Pinter is not able to properly define the system that he is trying to personify through the two characters of Goldberg and McCann. How Pinter asserts humanity is quite puzzling since he makes the very institutions that are responsible for structuring human morality and welfare, the agents of immorality and destruction.

The hero, who is also the victim, is not free from blame either because it is not easy to link him with humanity. Although he manages to gain the readers' sympathy, he does not really get our approval.

Stanley

Pinter portrays Stanley as an obese, shambling and unpreventable individual who is residing in a rundown boarding house near the sea. He is the lone guest in that dilapidated house and get the opportunity to boss over the adoring lady who owns the properly. He is recognized as an accomplished pianist.

However, even this convenient and protected atmosphere is intruded upon. He is unable to forget the memory of him arriving for a recital only to discover the hall all locked up. He is surrounded by foes, who when they actually land, they seem to be in the form of a fluent Jew accompanied by an Irish henchman. They appear to be the characters from Stanley's nightmares.

He falls fast. At the end he is taken away in a state of trance, all scrubbed, and cleaned and bundled into shapeless trousers. It is not easy to describe the tragic-comedy of his characters in the existing pattern of society. Stanley's life at the boarding house and the visit by Goldberg and McCann on holiday is far from realistic although all of it seems socially recognizable.

Goldberg

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This character is definitely ruthless in showing and exerting his power. However, he does not use his power to please himself. He acts as the crusader and is there to confront Stanley who has betrayed the organization they all worked for and vanished after committing fraud. Goldberg is said to represent threat to the individual's freedom in the name of care and social responsibility. He is a semi-educated Jew who is able to flannel well. However, the pattern and the total effect of his speeches that the play is dominated by, reflect the culture of a person who is successfully heading a family and a business.

In Act II, Goldberg's speeches clearly praise the pleasures associated with boyhood, how the fit man enjoys his walk in the sunshine, etc. all of which tantamount to verbal torture for Stanley. However, by the time we reach Act III Goldberg's patterned loquacity becomes more arbitrary. Goldberg's speeches, in particular, when he is alone with McCann have no role to play other than 'creating a scene' and drawing attention to the lack of culture in Goldberg by forcing him to utter slogans.

At this point, we do not respond to the parody of institutionalized caring. The description of the same is quite a farce, restricted only to the image of the helpless victim and how he is rendered speechless.

The way Goldberg seduces Lulu by engaging her emotionally is characteristic of any man of position in society. It also contradicts Goldberg's claim of self-control.

The gap between what he preaches and practices is clear in the contrast between the Sunday school teacher, whom he only kissed and his present behaviour.

His speech about how the youth of his day and age whose hallmark was temperance differed from today's youth who are perverted appears jarring.

"When I was a youngster, of a Friday, I used to go for a walk down the canal with a girl who lived down my road. A beautiful girl. What a voice that bird had! A nightingale, my word of honour. Good? Pure? She wasn't a Sunday school teacher for nothing. Anyway, I'd leave her with a little kiss on the cheek — I never took liberties—we weren't like the young men these days in those days. We knew the meaning of respect."

This speech is in contrast with his dialogues with Meg and Lulu where he is at his flirtatious best and proves what a rascal he is.

"Walk up the boulevard. Let's have a look at you. What a carriage. What's your opinion, McCann? Like a Countess, nothing less. Madam, now turn about and promenade to the kitchen. What deportment!"

Goldberg is a shrewd man who can identify the weakness of a woman the moment he meets them. He is able to gauge Meg's liking for good clothes, simple pleasures, partying and of course her love for Stanley.

Goldberg is capable of satisfying all of Meg's desires without letting her doubt his intentions even once. He also knows that Lulu is not only younger but far more vulnerable as compared with Meg. Lulu has less inhibition than Meg and is completely knocked down by Goldberg. She falls for him in a short span of time and trusts him completely within minutes of meeting him.

She expects seriousness from Goldberg when she meets him in the last Act but is hurt by his casual demeanour. She ends up accusing him of taking advantage of her.

Goldberg's off-hand manner with Lulu, in this scene reflects how capable he is of relaxing in even the most critical or serious circumstances.

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Goldberg: Who opened the briefcase, me or you? Lulu, schmulu, let bygones be bygones, do me a turn. Kiss and make up.

Lulu: I wouldn't touch you.

Goldberg: And today I am leaving.

Lulu: You are leaving?

Goldberg: Today.

Lulu: (with growing anger) You used me for a night. A passing fancy.

Goldberg: Who used who?

Lulu: You made use of me by cunning when my defences were down.

Goldberg: Who took them down?

Lulu: That's what you did. You quenched your ugly thirst. You taught me things girl shouldn't know before she has been married at least three times!

Goldberg: Now you are a jump ahead! What are you complaining about?

Enter McCann quickly.

Lulu: You didn't appreciate me for myself. You took all those liberties only to satisfy your appetite. Oh Nat, why did you do it?

Goldberg: You wanted me to do it, Lulula, so I did it.

Goldberg draws the blue print, commands as well as commissions and McCann carries it out. They are the culprits and they have assigned different roles to themselves. Goldberg keeps his civility as well as good manners while McCann does his dirty jobs.

In the previous scene with Lulu, it is McCann who gets her going. Other than Stanley, she is the only other person in the play who gets subjected to interrogation by McCann. It is done to keep her out of their way.

McCann: Your sort, you spend too much time in bed.

Lulu: What do you mean?

McCann: Have you got nothing to confess?

Lulu: What?

McCann: (savagely) Confess!

Lulu: Confess what?

McCann: Down on your knees and confess!

Lulu: What does he mean?

Goldberg: Confess. What can you lose?

Lulu: What, to him?

Goldberg: He's only been unfrocked six months.

McCann: Kneel down woman and tell me the latest!

Lulu: (retreating to the back door) I've seen everything that's happened. I know what's going on. I've got a pretty shrewd idea.

McCann: (advancing) I've seen you hanging about the Rock of Cashel, profaning the soil with your goings on. Out of my sight!

Lulu: I'm going. Goldberg is like almost all of Pinter's characters, a liar. So are McCann, Stanley and Lulu. It is difficult to count the lies they tell, they not only revert to them, and they plan them for calculated ends and purposes.

Stanley, McCann and Goldberg studied in the light of Guido Almansi's essay *Pinter's Idiom of Lies* emerge as confirmed liars, perverted humanized animals who have no grain of truth left in them.

'But although the Pinterian hero is often as hesitant as a pig, stumbling pitifully on every word, covering a pitifully narrow area of meaning with his utterances, blathering through his life he does not, like any honest animal seem to complain or grunt or giggle or grumble to give an outlet to his instincts, desires, passions of fears.

He mumbles in order to hide something else. Even when he grunts, his grunt is a lie. Pinter's characters are often hopeless, stupid, vile and aggressive, but they are always intelligent enough in their capacity as careful and persistent liars, whether lying to others or to themselves, to hide the truth if they know truth's truthful abode. They are too cunning in their cowardice to be compared to noble animals. They are perverted in their actions and speech: hence human.

He rejects Pinter's language as it is based on a policy of reciprocal misunderstanding and misinformation. It spurns sincerity, honesty; linguistic generosity and openness in favour of the diabolical game of hide and seek.

It is true of the language used by all the characters in *The Birthday Party* except Petey. Their sojourns into the past are lies, lies and only lies. Stanley's success story as a pianist, Goldberg's as an orator, a beloved son and husband and Meg's pink room in her father's house have been woven on the spot. None of the characters except Petey is trustworthy.

The presence of uncertainty in the language of the characters is not due to the indeterminacy of their thoughts or intentions; it is elusive and disruptive by intention, as a weapon of attack and exploitation. The rhythms of words are used for enhancing the effect of ritual and litany. The cross-examination of Stanley Webber is held in the manner of a ritual with the speech that is completely dehumanized: resulting into an incoherence of the logic of the exercise. Matter has already been settled, the ritual serves only as a catalyst to the final catastrophe.

Check Your Progress

5. How can *The Birthday Party* be visualized from different angles?
6. What do you learn about Goldberg's character from his interaction with Lulu and Meg?

ACTIVITY

Read another play by Harold Pinter and draw a contrastive analysis with *The Birthday Party*.

DID YOU KNOW

In 2005, Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

9.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Pinter's complete collection that includes Radio, TV and stage plays is available in the four Play Collections, published by Faber and Faber. A list of their publications sufficiently contains all his works. The only play, which is not part of this list, is *Celebrations of the Year 2002*. The publications also comprise his poetry and prose, *Celebration and the Room* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), *Collected Screenplays I* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), *Collected Screenplays II* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), *Collected Screenplays III* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001) and *The Dwarfs* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990).
- *The Caretaker* gave Pinter the break his career needed. After this play, Pinter got serious attention, which a playwright of his stature deserved. Pinter could present his theme in a more distinct way. Batty found a theme that was common in all his plays. He says; *The Caretaker* was a refined form of the thematic concerns that was the driving force behind most of Pinter's writing.
- Harold Pinter's dramatic piece, *The Birthday Party* was dedicated to cinema in 1968 by prospective Exorcist director, William Friedkin. It is showcased in a squalid British beach-resort rooming house.
- The property-owner (Meg) holds a cheerless birthday party for Stanley (her tenant), which is invaded by two shady characters named Goldberg and McCann. No one knows why they're there except for Stanley. Stanley, after being continually disgraced by the appalling pair is taken away by them to an unknown destination. *The Birthday Party* culminates with 30 seconds of a totally blank screen.

9.8 KEY TERMS

- **Playwright:** A person who writes plays for the theater, television, or radio
- **Spectators:** People who are watching an event, especially a sports event
- **Awestruck:** Impressed by something
- **One-act play:** Having only a single act
- **Criticism:** The act of expressing disapproval of someone or something and opinions about their faults or bad qualities
- **Impudent:** Having no showing respect for other people
- **Daydream:** Pleasant thoughts that make you forget about the present
- **Menacing:** Likely to cause you harm or danger
- **Misgivings:** Feelings of doubt or anxiety about what might happen, or about whether or not something is the right thing to do
- **Overhauling:** An examination of a machine or system, including doing repairs on it or making changes to it

9.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. *The Dumbwaiter* (1959) and *The Caretaker* (1960) are two of the plays written by Pinter.
2. *The Birthday Party* was treated with almost unanimous critical hostility, when it appeared in 1958.
3. Act two comprises the interrogation and the birthday party.
4. Pinter makes his comedy successfully comic and menacing at the same time with a high-level comedic technique.
5. The Birthday Party' can be visualized as a drama full of protest and subversion from different angles.
6. Goldberg is clearly a charmer who is able to give a woman exactly what she wants. He knows what every woman's weakness is and is able to behave with them in the manner that appeals to them. This is evident in the manner in which he treats Lulu and Meg who have very different personalities. He is also capable of making serious situations appear casual.

9.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the important events in Pinter's life?
2. List some of the works of Harold Pinter.
3. What are the two key events in Act II of the play *The Birthday Party*?
4. Who is Goldberg?

Long-Answer Questions

1. How was *The Birthday Party* received?
2. Explain the use of language, silence and pause in *The Birthday Party*.
3. Write a detailed note on: the theme of protest and subversion.
4. Discuss how society and the individual are depicted in the play.

9.11 FURTHER READING

Burkman, Katherine H.; *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual,* University of Ohio Press, 1971.

Dukore, Bernard F.; *Where Laughter Stops: Pinter's Tragicomedy,* University of Missouri Press, 1976.