British Drama

DEENG512

Edited by
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LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

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CONTENT

Unit 01: Christopher Marlowe- Doctor Faustus

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Elaborate the development of British drama
- Analyze the elements of British drama
- Enumeratethe source of Doctor Faustus
- Understand the features of medieval and renaissance drama
- Illustrate the merits and demerits of medieval and renaissance hero

Introduction

The roots of English drama are a little hazy. There is no conclusive proof of its genesis. It may, however, be traced back to the century following the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Many scholars claim that drama followed them to England. There was knowledge that while the Romans were in England, they built a large amphitheater to perform plays, but when they left, the amphitheater was destroyed.

The word drama comes from a Greek word that means "action," "to perform," or "to do." “Drama is an old tale told through the eye, a story put into motion by living performers,” writes William J. Long. As a result, drama is a type of theatre composition in which the actors play specific roles, perform specific actions, and deliver specific dialogues.

1.1 The Origin and Development of English Drama

Drama had a distinctly religious background in England, where it was used as part of church services. Apart from its origins, the Latin Church had a number of reasons for condemning Roman theatre. As a result, drama did not emerge until the tenth century, when the church started to incorporate dramatic elements into their services during a particular festival or rite. The reasons for the church's use of dramatic elements are uncertain. However, it was clear that the aim was didactic, i.e., to provide the believer with a thorough understanding of their religion's reality. The *Queen Quarritis* is the oldest extant church drama. If I talk about the dialogue, it was made up of Latin sentences that were then translated and executed by the clergy in a rather simple manner. This basic start evolved into something more complex. If we discuss about Liturgical drama, it is a

form of drama in which the story is taken directly from the Bible. Previously, the plays were performed within the church, with the story composed by the clergy and performed by them in Latin. Drama was not, however, performed in all churches; rather, it was confined to some cathedrals and monasteries with ample clergy to perform the plays. With the passage of time drama progressed from liturgical drama to Miracle and Mystery plays. Miracle was used to depict the lives of the saints in France, while Mystery was used to represent every scene from the Bible. In England, however, there was no difference between the two. Any tale taken from the bible or the scriptures, as well as the lives of the saints, was referred to as a miracle play.

Ludus Santa de Katherina which was performed in Dunstable around 11110, is the oldest Miracle play in England. The author of the original play is unknown, but the first version was written by Geoffrey, a French schoolteacher from St. Albans. The plays were either performed in Latin or in French. The Miracle play drew a large audience and boosted its success. The plays, which had previously been performed inside the church, started to be performed on the porch and then in the churchyards. However, when the plays started to interrupt church services and were too elaborate, the scandalised priest banned the play from being performed in the church. The Miracle Plays started to move beyond the church in the thirteenth century.

After the Miracle Play was relocated outside of the church, secular organisations, such as town guilds, started to take over the production. During this time, few changes were made. The plays were performed in vernacular or local languages by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The actors were no longer clergy, but amateur actors who had been carefully educated and chosen. The performances took place in a series of mansions in the town square. The plays were staged on a moving platform known as pageants, with an act region known as plea tea. Hell, earth, and heaven were divided into three sections on the stage. Hell is on the left, earth is in the centre, and heaven is on the right. Typically, props were used to identify the stages. The head of a dragon with red teeth or a monstrous mouth with fire breathing, for example, represents hell, where the devil characters would be pulled. This time gave rise to the notion of redemption and damnation, which was later accepted by Dr. Faustus. Heaven, earth, and hell were the three worlds in which the costumes were divided. Heavenly characters, such as God, angels, saints, and Biblical figures, wore church robes with unique accessories. The earthly characters wore the appropriate mediaeval garment for their rank at the time. Meanwhile, the devil dressed in black with wings, animal paws, beaks, horns, or tails.

The Council of Vienne resurrected the Corpus Christi feat in 1311. This annual festival takes place in June and lasts three to four days, with the possibility of extending to six days. The Miracle plays were performed in all of England's major cities. It was planned to tell the entire storey in a loop, from conception to the Day of Judgment. In England, there were four well-known periods. York, Chester, Wakefield, and Coventry each have 48 plays, while York has 25 plays, Chester has 25, Wakefield has 32, and Coventry has 42. Dramas were written according to the Bible during this religious time, and no deviations were accepted. Until the sixteenth century, religious performances were performed.

Morality plays were a later development of drama. It is a dramatization of personified abstraction, pitting sin against morality in general. Death, sin, good angels and bad angels, the seven deadly sins, and other allegorical characters were personified in these plays. The intention of this drama was didactic, and the audience used to learn moral lessons from the performances of the play. In most morality plays, the good was always victorious over the bad. This play was characterized by the inclusion of a mischievous, comic, and humorous character known as *vice*. Vice was the forerunner to clown or jester of today. Morality plays include *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance*. The beginning of the Morality Play also heralds the arrival of the so-called *interlude*. The interlude is a shortened version of the morality play. Interludes were usually performed during the scene's break. It was the forerunner of comedies and was a short stage entertainment with a sense of humour. John Heywood's *The Four P's*, performed about 1497, is an example of interlude.

The creative era was the final stage in the production of English drama. During this time, the object of the pay was to portray human life as it is, rather than to point out a moral. Classical drama inspired English drama during this period. Nicholas Udall wrote the first comedy titled *Ralph Roister* Doister, in 1556. The play was written in rhyming couplets and was divided into acts and scenes. This first comedy served as a blueprint and forerunner for English comedies. About 1562, Thomas Sackville and Thomas North on wrote the first tragedy titled Gorboduc. It was divided into acts and scenes and written in blank verse. Following this time, English drama evolved into a standard type of drama that flourished during Elizabeth's reign and is still known today.

As a result, English drama evolved from liturgical drama to Miracle and Mystery plays, then to Morality and Interlude, which was influenced by the classical model, and finally to the standard drama types that we know today.

Notes: The Quem Quarritis is the oldest extant church drama.

Liturgical drama is a form of drama in which the story is taken directly from the Bible.

Ludus Santa de Katherina is the oldest Miracle play in England.

Task: Answer the following Questions

What is a mystery play?

What are the characteristics of a miracle play?

Differentiate between a miracle and a morality play.

1.2 The Source of Doctor Faustus

Both the play and the protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's notorious Doctor Faustus present the audience with a labyrinth of inconsistencies that have divided critics since its first appearance. In Marlowe's play, *Dr Faustus* is a Renaissance scholar with the ambition of Icarus, whose waxen wings did mount beyond his reach. The plot, on the other hand, is not Marlowe's invention: the story was first published in a German work, the *Faustbuch*, in 1587, and Marlowe's play has been identified as a dramatization of this tradition. Marlowe transposed the legend into a startlingly different form by using a German tale as material for an English play, resulting in this popular play posing some uncomfortable questions to contemporary audiences, as it still does today.

Dr. Faustus

In spite of the disagreements of historians, the existence of a true Dr Faustus is now accepted as fact. The real Dr Faustus, who died around 1540 in Germany, is identified as well-traveled and knowledgeable in contemporary sources (such as University documents, letters, and diaries): some sources also say that he referred to the Devil as his 'Schwager,' which means 'crony.' While sources vary on different points. Contemporary writers make a point of mentioning Faust's evil reputation: for example, in a note written by a junior mayor of Ingolstadt, city officials are instructed to 'deny free passage to the great nigromancer and sodomite Doctor Faustus. The original text is kept by the Ingolstadt city archive and is dated 27 June 1528.

The legend of Faust

To fully comprehend the dynamics of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (1588-89), one must first examine his source: the *Faustbuch* (1587). Despite the fact that Marlowe first encountered the legend in an English translation (known as the Faust Book), the novel is German and a distinctive product of post-Reformation Germany, with its anxieties regarding magic and faith, wisdom and salvation. The Faust Book was primarily a religious treatise and a warning to the reader to follow God's commands. Marlowe's play is a product of post-Reformation England, but it was also written in the sense of Humanism, a movement that valued the human ability and perfectibility, and as a result, an aspiration to change was essential to this system of belief.

Surprisingly for a modern reader, the Faust Book rejects Faust's practise of mathematics, astronomy, and astrology as much as his *magic*. One explanation for this can be deduced from *The Baines note*, an informer's account of Marlowe's views that was submitted to the English authorities in an effort to have him arrested for his outlandish beliefs. It is hard to say if Marlowe ever held the opinions expressed in the note, but it does provide insight into what was contentious during the Elizabethan era. According to the note, "the Indians and many antiquity writers have assuredly written of above sixteen thousand years ago, whereas Adam is proven to have lived within six thousand years." An argument like this, which may be focused on math, astrology, or literature, contradicts the Genesis narrative and, by implication, the entire Bible: any area of research that challenged or had the potential to challenge the Christian story was not only controversial, but even evil.

Unlike Marlowe's novel, the Faust Book spends hundreds of words praising, describing, and defending Christianity: nothing is controversial, and every viewpoint expressed agrees with the ruling ideology - the book even ends with a prayer. The main goal of the Faust Book is to preach

and repeat the church's teachings. Marlowe, on the other hand, has a different agenda: by eliminating the overt moral instruction, he forces the audience to judge Faustus for themselves.

Desire to Learn

In both versions, Faustus' acts are motivated by a desire to learn more: 'Had I not wanted to learn so much, I would not have been in this situation'. 'Faust forgot the Lord his creator, and Christ his redeemer, became an enemy unto all man-kinde,' writes the author of the Faust Book. The Faust Book warns of the dangers of seeking wisdom too far, and instead recommends a life of obedience and prayer.

The reader's reaction to Faustus is freely steered by the narrator in the prose version of the Faust Book, who rarely allows us to hear Faust's own words but often offers a critique afterwards. Marlowe's character, on the other hand, stands in front of the audience with no author visible. As in one of Faust's or Mephistopheles' own deceptions, an actor assumes the role of Faustus and convinces us that he is the real thing. We should take Faustus at his word when he says in Marlowe's play, "I do repent!" In the Faust Book, however, the same words from the same character lead to the narrator's explanation: 'In this perplexitie lay this wretched Doctor Faustus... never falling to repentance really, thus to attaine the grace and holy spirit of God againe'. When it comes to a topic as important as the Devil and damnation, there should be no space for confusion.

The Message

Marlowe encloses his play with a prologue and epilogue, imitating the fable form of the Faust Book, emphatically marking the boundaries between play and fact. The final lines elicit an unease that reverberates throughout the work: 'To practise more than heavenly power permits' could imply not a just and caring God, but an omnipotent tyrant veiled in anonymity. Despite Marlowe's adherence to the plot of the Faust Novel, his Doctor Faustus is seen to doubt, rather than reassert, the reigning ideology and also Faust/us' 'evil' existence, by eliminating the oppressive narrator.

Shakespeare and the Tragicall Historie of Doctor Faustus

The tragicall historie of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, as described on the original title page for Marlowe's play casts Faustus in the tragic protagonist role, transforming the *Faust Book's* 'evil' into a classic 'flaw.' Faustus is acutely aware of his position as a character, obsessively referring to himself in the third person. He sets out to create a spectacle, a drama befitting the tragic hero he imagines himself to be.

Shakespeare is Marlowe's most famous contemporary, and although Shakespeare never wrote a play based on the Faust legend, there are parallel figures strewn throughout his works. *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's final play, and its central character, Prospero, have some striking similarities to *Doctor Faustus*. Not only are both plays about sorcery and conjuring, but they also have core characters who are fascinated with spectacle. Both Prospero and Faustus try to use people as puppets to manipulate them. The story told in Marlowe's play, in truth, is well on its way to its 'degeneration' in the next two centuries into the mainstream media of ballads, farces, and puppet. Prospero can render himself invisible at will, and the play begins with a storm (the tempest of the title) whipped up by him. Prospero, like Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, has a mystical ally in the form of the spirit Ariel:

All hail great master! great sir, hail! I come

To answer thy best pleasure. Be't to fly,

To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride

On the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task

Ariel and all his quality. (Act 1, Scene 2, 189-93)

The most important distinction between the two strong enchanters is that there is no clear indication in *The Tempest* that the root of Prospero's forces is evil, while Faustus' powers are unmistakably derived from his association with the Devil. Prospero is never asked to confess, and he is never compelled to give up anything as precious as his soul in order to receive them; however, he does have to give them up at the end of the play in order to return to the world of regular humans. Prospero has a happier ending as a result of his renunciation, although neither Marlowe nor Faustus can escape their final tragedy.

Did you know?

Shakespeare is Marlowe's most famous contemporary.

Notes: The plot of *Doctor Faustus* is not Marlowe's invention.

The story of *Doctor Faustus* was first published in a German work, the *Faustbuch*, in 1587.

The tragicallhistorie of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus is the original title for Marlowe's play 'Doctor Faustus'.

1.3 Medieval or Renaissance Hero

Certain elements of the play may be used to endorse a Renaissance hero interpretation of Faustus, although others say he is a mediaeval hero. Man was put in his position by Heaven, according to the mediaeval view of the world, and should be content with his lot in life. Any effort or desire to rise above his assigned status was regarded as a major act of pride. One of the most serious sins a mediaeval person could commit was pride. This theory was founded on the idea that Lucifer's fall was caused by his ego during his rebellion against God. Aspiring pride thus became one of the cardinal sins for the mediaeval individual.

Faustus, according to mediaeval belief, has a need for forbidden knowledge. Faustus makes a deal with Lucifer in order to obtain more intelligence than he is entitled to, which contributes to his damnation. At the play's conclusion, Faustus discovers that mystical abilities are reserved for the gods, and that anyone who tries to handle or trade with magical powers will be damned for all eternity. When we look at the drama from this angle, we can see that Faustus is worthy of his punishment; as a result, the play is more of a morality play than a tragedy. The conclusion is a just act of justice, in which the man who has violated the universal laws of the world is justly punished. The chorus at the end of the play re-emphasizes this point by cautioning the audience to learn from Faustus' fate and not try to go beyond humanity's limitations.

Faustus' character may also be viewed through the prism of the Renaissance. Many people's minds, including Marlowe's, were split at the time of this play over whether to adopt the mediaeval or Renaissance viewpoint. Since many scholastic discussions were simply verbal nonsense, the Renaissance was unhappy with the usefulness of mediaeval expertise. Many mediaeval theses, for example, were dominated by debates about how many angels could fit on the head of a pin. Renaissance authors, on the other hand, reignited interest in Greek classical understanding and past humanism. They became engulfed in humanity's enormous potential and possibilities.

According to the Renaissance interpretation, Faustus protests against the limits of mediaeval experience and the constraint imposed on humanity, which allows him to acknowledge his place in the universe without doubt. Faustus makes a deal for wisdom and power based on his universal desire for enlightenment. According to the Renaissance, his ambition is to rise beyond humanity's limits and reach greater accomplishments and heights. In the purest sense, Faustus needs to show that he can develop into something greater than he is now. Faustus is willing to risk damnation in order to accomplish his goals because he desires to transcend human limits. When an individual is doomed to hell for noble attempts to overcome humanity's petty limits, tragedy ensues.

For many factors, Renaissance heroes vary from classical tragic heroes. To begin with, classical tragic heroes acted in a somewhat different religious sense than Renaissance heroes, necessitating variations in their personalities and behaviour. Even when Renaissance literature was set in a pagan past, the audience watching the play or reading the book was Christian, with Christian values and expectations—and Renaissance writers were well aware of this and wrote accordingly. Second, unlike classical tragic heroes, Renaissance heroes were not usually of noble birth or descended from higher forces. Furthermore, classical tragic heroes had only one fatal mistake and followed a fairly linear course to death; Renaissance heroes, on the other hand, were of mixed moral standing and their deaths were more complicated. Renaissance heroes include Antony from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Faustus from Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus.

The Renaissance was a period in which classical ideas were resurrected for the first time in decades, but it was not a rerun of the Greek and Roman eras. Of course, there are several explanations for this, but one of the most significant variations between the two periods is the disparity in faith. The Renaissance world was strongly Christian, despite the fact that the classical thinking that the

Renaissance sought to imitate took place in a polytheistic sense. The disparity between the portrayal of classical tragic heroes and Renaissance heroes is unavoidable due to this difference, as well as many other social and cultural differences. The archetypal characters are, of course, identical because Renaissance artists tried so hard to mimic their classical counterparts. Renaissance heroes, on the other hand, are not the same as classical tragic heroes.

Some argue that the moral and social disparities between a classical tragic hero and a Renaissance hero are due to the Renaissance hero's moral dominance. The classical hero was of noble descent, if not godlike, and he often suffered from fatal character flaws, as well as personal and selfish ambition. The mediaeval and Renaissance hero, on the other hand, may be a peasant; he lived within the Christian and feudal chivalric traditions, where allegiance was owed first and foremost to his lord and he had to be seen to be of good moral character. This study of the distinctions between a classical tragic hero and a Renaissance hero emphasizes the religious contexts in which the characters existed. It also emphasizes that Renaissance heroes did not have to be supernatural or socially significant, indicating the emergence of more liberal social thought during the Renaissance. Furthermore, the Renaissance hero's morality is stressed and contrasted with the immorality that leads to the classical tragic hero's tragic downfall.

Another explanation contrasts Renaissance theatre and its version of tragedy with classical literature and its version of tragedy, concentrating mostly on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. If *Antony and Cleopatra* is a non-tragic tragedy or a tragedy without a *true* tragic conclusion, it may very well be due to its mixture of neo-Aristotelian tragedy with the Christian dramatic tradition, whose transcendental moral outlook essentially annuls tragedy by incorporating it into a greater divine scheme. To put it another way, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a tragic not in the sense that its main characters die, but it is a tragedy in the sense that it does not leave the viewer with the same sorrow as a classical tragedy. Naturally, Antony, the protagonist in *Antony and Cleopatra*, is a different kind of hero than a tragic hero. This is due to the religious and social contexts in which the two dramatic practices arose.

The tragic hero in classical tragedies is a character of noble stature and greatness. The character must be in a position of high' status but he or she must also possess nobility and virtue as a natural trait. Though the tragic hero is supremely fine, he or she is not without flaws. In general, the tragic hero must be a decent guy who is flawed in some way. Thus, a tragic hero is a fictional character who makes a blunder or has a fatal mistake that when combined with fate and external powers, results in tragedy.

Shakespeare's character Antony on the other hand is a little more complicated. Throughout the play he undergoes a series of reversible metamorphoses, oscillating between morality, human greatness, and tragic myth. In spite of being moral, just for one fatal mistake a series of events leads to the hero's death. Antony is constantly shifting from moral to flawed and back. Because of this ambiguity, the Renaissance hero seems to be more plausible than the tragic hero. After all, people don't have just one mistake and if we talk about us, we have a variety of faults, which, in combination with our virtues, decide our acts and, as a result, our destiny. In a way that classical tragic heroes do not, Shakespeare's Antony, a Renaissance hero, embodies this human ambiguity.

On the other hand, drawing too many parallels between Antony and a classical tragic hero is difficult. Antony has a flaw. He is seduced by Cleopatra at the detriment of his military attention, and as a result, he battles against his own countrymen while following Cleopatra's whims. Antony is eventually defeated by his fellow Romans, who, unlike him, remained faithful to the empire. Antony's tragic mistake, then, could be called lust, and he could be considered a tragic hero in the classical tradition.

Antony, on the other hand, is a Renaissance hero. Antony had been portrayed in history as lustful and completely incapable of any sense of duty toward his country, which was a serious offence in those days. In his biography Life of Antony, Plutarch did not portray Antony in a favourable way. Shakespeare, on the other hand, adapted Antony's story into a play that examines the beauty of perdition and the personal greatness of the man who had become the very picture of corruption. In essence, Shakespeare produced a new Antony for the Renaissance, a real Renaissance hero.

Antony is a hero despite his flaws. This is particularly apparent in his final remarks, in which he advises the audience not to mourn his death and seems unconcerned with his own death. If we are to believe Antony's terms, he has no regrets or grievances – we hear no echo of the Greek tragic heroes' lamentations because he has enjoyed his part to the best of his ability and even secured

himself a worthy exit. Antony's lack of regrets is proof of a well-lived life, and it is perhaps one of the most noble feats possible.

Doctor Faustus, the title character of Christopher Marlowe's popular play, is another Renaissance hero. Faustus sells his soul to the devil in return for mystical powers and a demon servant to tend to his every whim for 24 years. Faustus has a lot of defects. Marlowe is careful to show us that in his egoism, Faustus believes that sorcery which implies power over nature is heavenly.For example, Helen's kiss—or, even worse, the kiss of a demon impersonating Helen confers immortality. Faustus is self-centered, brash, and arrogant.

Faustus, on the other hand is not a one-dimensional character. He practises medicine in order to heap up gold but he also wants to make men live forever. We occasionally hear the Renaissance humanist in him, a man rejuvenated by the glory of the pagan past and eager to live a fuller life than his father. The humanism, despite being wasted on a character who meets such a tragic end as Faustus, reveals that Faustus is not entirely bad—and that he belongs to the Renaissance, when humanism was the dominant school of thought. He does not match the modern vernacular meaning of hero, but he does have a heroic quality about him.

Renaissance heroes Faustus and Antony both are written with a Christian audience in mind. *Antony and Cleopatra*is a moral tragedy, a genre that was scorned during the classical period but was resurrected and glorified during the Renaissance. *Doctor Faustus* is a clearly Christian tale with a clear moral standpoint. Faustus, on the other hand, is not of noble descent, illustrating the Renaissance's evolving ideas about who might be a hero. Both Antony and Faustus are imperfect, to be sure, and their fates are eventually decided solely by their errors. They are, however, morally heterogeneous—each is deficient in many respects, but they both have redeeming qualities. Both are Renaissance heroes in this way.

Christopher Marlowe

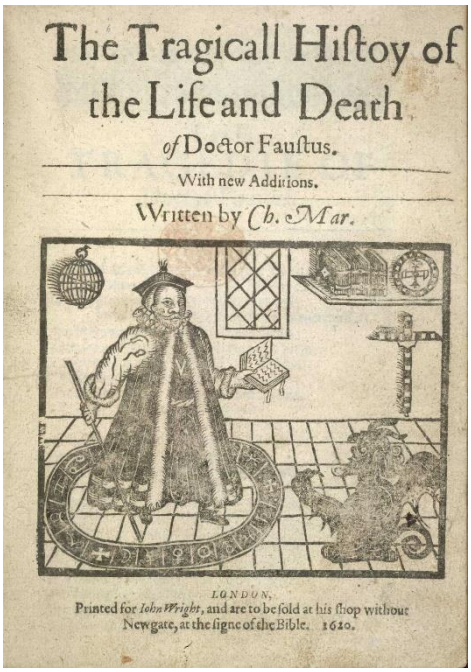
Christopher Marlowe (26 February 1564 – 30 May 1593) was an Elizabethan English playwright, poet, and translator. Marlowe was the most popular Elizabethan playwright of his time. After Marlowe's mysterious early death, William Shakespeare, who was born the same year as Marlowe and rose to become the preeminent Elizabethan playwright, was profoundly inspired by him. The use of blank verse in Marlowe's plays is well-known, as are his overbearing protagonists.

On May 18, 1593, a warrant was given for Marlowe's arrest. It was believed to be related to heresy claims, as a manuscript thought to have been written by Marlowe was said to contain vile heretical concepts. On the 20th of May, he was summoned to the court to face the Privy Council for questioning. However, there is no record of them meeting that day, and he was told to keep an eye on them every day before they were licenced to the contrary. Ingram Frizer stabbed him to death ten days later. It was never determined if the stabbing was related to his arrest.

Some important facts about his career

- *Dido, Queen of Carthage*is considered to be the first of the dramas credited to Marlowe.
- Between 1587 and 1593, the Children of the Chapel, a company of boy actors, performed it.
- The play was first published in 1594, and it is attributed to Marlowe and Thomas Nashe on the title page.

- *Tamburlaine the Great*, about the conqueror Tamburlaine, who rises from shepherd to war-lord, was Marlowe's first play performed on a regular stage in London in 1587.
- It is one of the first English blank verse plays, and, along with Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, is widely regarded as the start of the Elizabethan theatre's mature period.
- Tamburlaine was a hit, and the sequel, Tamburlaine the Great, was released soon after.
- Many of Marlowe's other works were written after his death, with the exception of the two parts of Tamburlaine, which were published in 1590.
- The order in which his other four plays were written is unknown; they all deal with controversial themes.
- *The Jew of Malta* (originally titled *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta*) has a prologue delivered by a character that represents Machiavelli, and is about a Maltese Jew's barbarous vengeance against the city authorities.
- It was most likely written in 1589 or 1590 and premiered in 1592.
- It was a hit, and it stayed in style for the next fifty years.
- *Edward the Second* is an English history play about King Edward II's deposition by his barons and the Queen, who object to the king's favourites having excessive power in court and state affairs.
- *The Massacre at Paris* is a brief and obscenely written work, the only surviving text of which was most likely reconstructed from memory of the original performance text, depicting the events of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, which English Protestants invoked as the most heinous example of Catholic treachery.
- It features the silent English Agent who has been associated with Marlowe and his links to the secret service by subsequent tradition. *The Massacre at Paris* is considered his most dangerous play, as it was used by agitators in London to call for the murder of refugees from the low countries, and it also alerts Elizabeth I of this possibility in the final scene.
- *Doctor Faustus* (or *The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*) was the first dramatized version of the Faust legend of a scholar's dealings with the devil, based on the German Faustbuch.
- Although there are versions of "The Devil's Pact" dating back to the 4th century, Marlowe deviates dramatically by having his hero unable to "burn his books" or repent to a merciful God in order to have his contract annulled at the play's conclusion.



- Instead, demons abduct Marlowe's protagonist, and his mangled body is discovered by several scholars in the 1616 quarto. Scholars have a textual problem with *Doctor Faustus* since there are two versions of the play: the 1604 quarto, also known as the A text, and the 1616 quarto, also known as the B text. After Marlowe's death, both works were published.

Doctor Faustus (or The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus)

Doctor Faustus, a well-respected German scholar, becomes frustrated with the limitations of conventional types of knowledge—logic, medicine,

law, and religion—and chooses to study sorcery. His friends Valdes and Cornelius teach him the dark arts, and he starts his new profession as a sorcerer by conjuring up the devil Mephastophilis. Despite Mephastophilis' warnings about the horrors of hell, Faustus instructs the devil to return to his master, Lucifer, with an offer of Faustus' soul in exchange for Mephastophilis' twenty-four years of service. Meanwhile, Faustus' servant, Wagner, has acquired some magical abilities and uses them to enlist the help of a clown called Robin.

Faustus receives news from Mephastophilis that Lucifer has accepted Faustus' request. Faustus has some doubts and considers whether he should confess and save his life, but in the end, he agrees to the contract and signs it with his blood. The words "Homo fuge," Latin for "O man, run," appear branded on his arm as soon as he does so. Faustus has second thoughts once more, but Mephastophilis lavishes him with gifts and a book of spells to study. Later, when Faustus asks who created the universe, Mephastophilis addresses all of his questions about the origin of the world, only refusing to respond when Faustus asks who made the universe. This rejection causes Faustus to have new doubts, but Mephastophilis and Lucifer bring in personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins to parade in front of him, and he is sufficiently impressed to put his doubts to rest.

Faustus sets out on his journey, armed with his new abilities and followed by Mephastophilis. He goes to the pope's court in Rome, disguises himself, and pulls off a series of ruses. By stealing food and boxing the pope's face, he disrupts the pope's banquet. Following this event, he travels across Europe's courts, spreading his fame as he goes. He is eventually invited to the court of Charles V, the German emperor (and papal foe), who requests that Faustus allow him to see Alexander the Great, the famous fourth-century b.c. Macedonian king and conqueror. Charles is suitably impressed when Faustus conjures up a picture of Alexander. Faustus chastises a knight who mocks Faustus's skill by sprouting antlers from his head. The knight is enraged and vows vengeance.

Meanwhile, Wagner's clown, Robin, has picked up some magic on his own and has a series of comedic misadventures with his fellow stable hand, Rafe. At one point, he summons Mephastophilis, who threatens to turn Robin and Rafe into animals as a punishment for their folly.

Faustus then continues on his journey, pulling a fast one on a horse-courser along the way. Faustus sells him a horse that, when ridden into a river, transforms into a heap of straw. Faustus is finally welcomed to the Duke of Vanholt's court, where he performs various feats. The horse-courser appears, as do Robin, a man called Dick and a number of others who have been duped by Faustus. To the amusement of the duke and duchess, Faustus casts spells on them and sends them on their way.

Faustus begins to fear his imminent death as his twenty-four-year contract with Lucifer draws to a close. He has Mephastophilis summon Helen of Troy, the ancient world's most famous beauty, and uses her presence to impress a group of scholars. Faustus is urged to repent by an elderly man, but Faustus dismisses him. Faustus summons Helen once more and extols her beauty rapturously. However, time is running out. As Faustus reveals his pact to the scholars, they are horrified and vow to pray for him. Faustus is overwhelmed by terror and guilt on the final night before the twenty-four years expire. He cries out for help, but it's too late. Around 12 a.m., a swarm of demons arrives and drags his soul to hell. The scholars discover Faustus' limbs the next morning and prepare to hold a funeral for him.

Doctor Faustus As a Middle Ages or Renaissance Hero

Marlowe based his play Doctor Faustus on legends about Johann Faust, a scholar and magician who allegedly sold his soul to the devil in exchange for incredible abilities. The era in which Marlowe wrote was one of exploration, mission for knowledge, passion for life, advancement of science and invention, emerging renaissance, and political change.

Over all, the period when literature shifted from being heavily religiously influenced, such as medievalism's hidden and morality plays, to works that concentrated more on the divisive issues of the day, such as power struggles, the celebration of the completely free person, and clinical discovery of nature, the new renaissance ideals. Faith was recognized as "the queen of the sciences" in the mediaeval academy, while nonreligious matters had begun to take centre stage in Marlowe's Renaissance culture.

In most of Marlowe's plays, the protagonist is a renaissance man seeking strength or wisdom. For eg, Barabbas appears in Malta's Jew, Tamburlaine appears in Tamburlaine the Excellent, and

Faustus appears in Dr. Faustus. For several years, Marlovian scholars have anticipated opposing views of Dr. Faustus. Some say it's the story of a man in the Middle Ages whose "aspirations and meddling satanic art" are judged and rejected by Christian doctrine.

Doctor Faustus is absolutely Christian in conception where Faustus is himself responsible for his fall as he deliberately transgresses moral limits by dedicating sin, does not repent, and deals with eternal damnation, which were the orthodox ideals of the middle ages.Individual accomplishment, quest for knowledge, and individual aspiration were the emerging ideals in the Renaissance, unlike in mediaeval times. Holding this in mind, other critics emphasize the play's humanism, interpreting Faustus' character as a Promethean image reflecting Renaissance hopes and Doctor Faustus is described as the ultimate renaissance man.Doctor Faustus is a renaissance guy who had to pay the mediaeval price to be one. Doctor Faustus is neither purely middle ages nor fully renaissance, but it is a play of both mediaeval and renaissance elements. Doctor Faustus after acquiring knowledge of medicine, faith, and excellent astronomical ability, becomes dissatisfied with the shortcomings of this traditional knowledge in the play's opening scene.

When he says, "These metaphysics of magicians,/ And necromantic books are heavenly;/ Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters;/ Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires./ O, what a paradise of revenue and enjoyment," he is referring to the forbidden art of necromancy.

The renaissance humanists believed in the new idea of individualism and clinical discoveries, an ideal that the Renaissance spirit celebrated but that mediaeval Christianity rejected as an expression of immoral human ego. Similarly, in keeping with mediaeval philosophy, God placed Man in a specific position and expected him to remain happy in that position throughout his life. Faustus' desire for more wisdom, as well as his desires "of wealth, glory, and omnipotence," are regarded as a source of pride, as "omnipotence" is a quality that can only be attributed to God.

For a mediaeval person, pride was a primary sin that continuously led to a man's fall and damnation. The church also preached that Lucifer's fall was caused by his ego as he rebelled against God, a belief echoed in John Milton's Paradise Lost. As a consequence, the chorus's lines "paradise conspired his topple" may be a reference to Lucifer and his rebellious attempt to overthrow Heaven. As a result, it's possible that the chorus was referring to Faustus, like Lucifer, attempting to outsmart God while blinded by his ego.

This highlights the stark contrast between Medieval and Renaissance values. God was placed at the core of life in the Middle Ages, and anything that was not Christian was avoided. Transgression and disobedience were considered sins, while the Renaissance was a renaissance of discovery in which people freely challenged divinity, among other things. Dr. Faustus seeks the role of God in order to gain limitless power, which reflects the renaissance aspect of a humanist working out freedom of expression and challenging the Supreme Authority, as seen in these lines spoken by Faustus in his voice.

Everything that moves between the peaceful poles/Shall be under my command: emperors and kings are only obeyed in their different provinces;/ However, his law that extends beyond this reaches as far as man's mind; A demigod is a sound magician: My minds are tired of trying to attain a supernatural being. The act or thought is unholy in and of itself, and open disobedience to God's word, which is why it can be defined as a renaissance male's transgression of a mediaeval belief. In the mediaeval era, disobedience to God was another cardinal sin.

The chorus makes a distinction between Icarus and Faustus at the start of the prologue.

" Until his waxen wings rose beyond his reach, swoll'n with cunning, of self-conceit,/ And melting, paradises conspired his overthrow!

(Beginning on pages 19-21.) The playwright ignores a Greek storey in which Icarus' father made wings for both of them so that they could fly from Crete's island. Icarus, on the other hand, soared so close to the sun that the wax holding the plumes of his wings melted, and he drowned in the sea.

The myth portrays a well-known moral from the Middle Ages: crossing boundaries leads to damnation. As a result of this allusion, the chorus implies that Faustus is a "sinner" because he seeks out the forbidden information. This helps the play to be based on Christian moral principles from the Middle Ages. Later in the play, Marlowe introduces two angels as Faustus' conscience and desires: the good angel and the bad angel. In the play, the Good Angel represents virtues, while the Bad Angel represents vices.

Faustus is urged by the Good Angel to act righteously and not to go beyond the set limits. “O Faustus, lay that damned book aside/ And look not on it lest it lure thy soul/ And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!” says the angel. “Read, checked out the Scriptures– that is blasphemy!” 67-69 (1. 1.). By declaring that these books of magic are "damned" and would put "God's strong rage" upon Faustus, this Angel is avoiding Medieval suitables. Another recommendation for books that are not of God is, "That is blasphemy." Faustus' redemption is dependent on the Great Angel.

The Bad Angel, on the other hand, tempts Faustus by telling him that his books contain "all nature's treasure." “Move on, Faustus, in that famous art/ In which all nature's treasure is made up of/ Lord and commander of these elements! 71-74 (1. 1.) Furthermore, the Angel deceives Faustus into believing that by doing so, he will be elevated to the rank of god, prompting him to make his own decision and seek influence, as seen by the renaissance suitables. On one hand, Faustus is confronted by his conscience, and on the other, he is confronted by his intense desire to obtain forbidden information.

This conflict between his conscience and his desires is also a conflict between religious mediaeval values and the new renaissance's individualism and questioning of belief systems. Faustus may also be said to represent the Renaissance man who was trapped between two worlds. The mediaeval Christian world, where a collection of rules were blindly followed, was no longer open to him. On the other hand, he had yet to discover the stability and protection for his life in a world of scientific expedition and mission for greater knowledge as well as influence. This represents the "duality" of society in Marlowe's time.

To put it another way, a Renaissance man in Marlowe's time may have found himself caught between faith and reason, with half of him drawn to exemplary mediaeval morality and the other to liberated Renaissance ideals. Faustus disregards the good angel's warnings in favour of the red angel's. He continues on his never-ending search for knowledge and takes the most important decision of his life. He agrees to surrender his soul to Lucifer in exchange for twenty-four years of total power. As a result, Faustus embraces his Renaissance identity by not only accepting but also embracing his life choices.

Morality plays were a mediaeval practice, but they were seldom published during the Elizabethan period. The characters in these plays were personified abstractions of virtue and vice, a feature that is also present in Dr. Faustus. The angels of salvation and damnation, one leading to salvation and the other to damnation. Then the old man appears, telling Faustus that he exists "to guide' thy acts unto the lifestyle," and the seven deadly sins appear in a grand phenomenon to cheer up Faustus's despondent soul.

Both of these may be interpreted as allegorical abstractions of virtue and vice, a trait not only of Renaissance literature but also of Middle Ages literature. Another important characteristic of these plays was that they were didactic in nature, often ending with a moral: “Whoever abandons the path of righteousness and faith in God and Christ is condemned to anguish and eternal damnation.” When the play's final hour approaches, Faustus, on the verge of eternal damnation, sobs out in agony: “My God, my God, look not so intense to me!” The play's chorus also laments the tragic death of "the branch that would have grown complete directly," who is punished for going beyond what "incredible force permits." Marlowe endorses the mediaeval principle of not crossing moral limits and respect for the supreme divine being through this and teaches the lesson that he who wishes to be God is doomed to eternal damnation, highlighting the play's mediaeval aspect once more. Many critics have pointed to Dr. Faustus as a morality play because of these considerations. “No better preaching than Marlowe's Dr. Faustus ever came from the pulpit,” according to Stephen Hudson.

After gaining worldly knowledge, Faustus compares himself to the most well-known authorities of the Middle Ages, such as Aristotle, Galen, and Justinian. He believes he has attained all of their wisdom that human tools might have, and he wishes to leave the world of nature and strike out on his own. This agitated spirit of the renaissance was a secular spirit of the dawning new age, a thirst for more understanding. Faustus' fundamental motivation for obtaining absolute intelligence is his identification of it with a desire for physical fulfilment, as shown by his desire for Helen of Troy.

He believes that by grasping this awareness, he will not only gain control, but will also be able to fulfil his physical and sensual desires. Faustus' insight into the workings of his mind is revealed when he asks Mephistopheles for an especially beautiful German maid as a spouse for this purpose. Faustus' desire for physical fulfilment can be seen in his yearning for Helen and kissing her, as he

says, "Was this the face that introduced a thousand ships/ And burned the topless towers of Ilium." Faustus' passion for charm can also be seen in his statement, "Was this the face that introduced a thousand ships/ And burned the topless towers of Ilium."

This is a manifestation of the renaissance love and reverence for classical beauty. Faustus is presented with several chances to repent. He wants to repent on occasion but is either talked out of it or actually decides not to. As a result, he refuses to apologize and instead tries to embrace and hang on to what he has done in his life, and he continues to act in his Renaissance persona. When the promised years of dominance and glory come to an end near the end of the play, Faustus fears his eternal damnation and seems to feel remorse and turn around, but it is too late.

This example may be considered a renaissance man, but he did not completely reject orthodox Christian values. In her critical analysis of the play, Marilyn Michaud notes that Renaissance men would sympathize with Faustus but would agree that he went too far. The desire for fresh, practical knowledge, as well as the desire for wealth and appeal, did not imply a complete rejection of salvation and heaven. Orthodox Christianity continued to hold sway. Faustus represented a danger to both social and religious structures; despite his evident willingness to repent, he had already reached the point of no return.

Faustus refutes the reality of heaven and hell at another point in his encounter with an arch devil, and after several warnings about the heinousness of hell, he continues down the road of damnation. This contradicts the notion of Faustus as a nonreligious Renaissance man who despises traditional Middle Ages faith and depicts Faustus as a nonreligious Renaissance man who despises traditional Middle Ages faith. Faustus is mocking the orthodox practice by calling hell a "myth," despite the fact that he is dealing with Lucifer, the Devil, who was born in Hell.

As Faustus is lavishing Helen with applause in one of the play's final scenes, he asks her to suck his soul out of him. The characteristic of "sucking the soul out" is only associated with God. As a result, when Faustus asks Helen to do so, he is once again dedicating heresy, which is one of the defining characteristics of the Renaissance. Marlowe exposes Faustus' tragic end by chorus in the play's final lines. Throughout the play, Marlowe serves as a defender of accepted religious (mediaeval) ideals, reminding us of the horrible repercussions that Faustus had to face as a result of denying God and committing blasphemy.

It could be argued that by using Faustus as an example, the playwright is demonstrating to his audience the terrible fate that awaits the Renaissance male who refuses God and strives for power. According to some commentators, by imbuing Faustus with such tragic grandeur, Marlowe may be implying a different lesson. Perhaps the cost of denying God is justifiable, or perhaps Faustus represents all of Western civilization, allowing it to enter a modern, more secular era. As a result, *Doctor Faustus* was written by a renaissance man in a period when medievalism was breaking down and the values of the middle ages and the new renaissance were colliding. While Faustus is neither a morality play nor purely renaissance in nature, it could be said that Marlowe's hero, Doctor Faustus, is the quintessential Renaissance man; a lover of wisdom, beauty, and strength, running in a society that had not yet released its hold on the middle ages' disdain for the world.

Summary

- Liturgical Drama in the beginning had three forms, Mystery, Miracle and Morality.
- The morality plays are a type of allegory in which the protagonist is met by personification of various moral attributes, who try to prompt him to choose a godly life over one of evil.
- Morality play flourished in the Middle Ages, was at its height in the first half of the 15 centuries, disappeared after the second half, but reappeared in Eliza be than drama.
- In the play, Doctor Faustus, the characters were personified abstractions of vice or virtues such as good deeds, Faith, Mercy, Anger, Truth, Pride, etc.
- Thegeneralthemeofthemoralitieswastheologicalandthemainonewasthestrugglebetweenthegoodandevilpowersforcapturingtheman'ssoulandgoodalwayswon.
- The story of whole morality plays centers round the single to wearing figure.
- The seven deadly sins were found engaged in physical and verbal battle with cardinal virtues. The antics of vices and devils, etc. offered a considerable opportunity for low

comedy or buffoonery. The morality plays of ten ended with a solemn moral.

- The main theme of the morality play is Man begins in innocence, man falls into temptation, man repents and is saved or killed.
- Morality plays help the audience understand the greater concepts of sin and virtue.
- There are many ways in which Doctor Faustus resembles medieval morality plays.
- In the story of Doctor Faustus, we see how his trend with his sin of excessive pride, which led him to become a greedy person, obsess with knowing everything about life. In this story we also see how ago dangle, a bad angel and an old man try to tell Doctor Faustus what type of decision to make.
- In the light of the theme and characteristics of morality play, we may call "*Doctor Faustus*" a belated morality plays in spite of its tragic ending.
- Faustus follows the path told by evil angel and ultimately is ruined. He cannot repent and devil is successful in getting hold of his soul. This moral is negative which is not in accordance with morality plays.
- Faustus is a character ideal to be the hero of a tragedy where man alone is the maker of his fate, good or bad.
- We conclude that how Doctor Faustus came from a respected and admired person by society to a corrupted person. He embarked on this path due to his temptations.
- Doctor Faustus has many features of a morality play: the conflict between good and evil, the conflict between medieval and renaissance values, power as a corrupting influence, magic and the supernatural, the creation of good and bad angels, the old man as good counsel, the pageant of the seven deadly sins and the appearance of Faustus' enemies to ambush and kill him.

Self Assessment

1. In the Middle Ages, type of play acted within or near the church and relating stories from the Bible.

A. Morality Plays
B. Liturgical drama
C. Commedia Dell'Arte
D. Elizabethan Theatre

2. A Renaissance Form of Theatre focused on simple characters with masks.

A. Morality Plays
B. Cycle Plays
C. Commedia Dell'Arte
D. Elizabethan Theatre

3. A medieval style of theatre that taught Morals and Lessons through a contemporary lens.

A. Morality Plays
B. Cycle Plays
C. Commedia Dell'Arte
D. Elizabethan Theatre

4. A Renaissance form of Theatre that happened in England, started by Elizabeth I.

A. Morality Plays
B. Cycle Plays
C. Commedia Dell'Arte
D. Elizabethan Theatre

5. The word for a low-class person who paid only a penny to see an Elizabethan Play.

A. Penny Dreadfuls
B. Groundlings
C. Mud Toilers
D. Elizabeth I

6. The most remarkable achievement during the Elizabethan Period in English literature was in the field of:

A. poetry
B. prose
C. drama
D. fiction

7. Who tries to persuade Faustus to repent just before he reveals his pact with Lucifer?

A. An old man
B. Wagner
C. Mephastophilis
D. The knight

8. What happens to the horse that Faustus sells to the horse-courser?

A. It turns into a dragon
B. It dies immediately
C. It lives a long and healthy life
D. It turns into a heap of straw when it goes in the water

9. What does the horse-courser think he is removing from Faustus's body after Faustus wakes?

A. His shirt
B. His leg
C. His cloak
D. His hand

10. What does Faustus fetch for the Duchess of Vanholt?

A. A male slave
B. A griffin
C. A dish of grapes
D. A horse

11. Where, according to Mephastophilis, is hell?

A. Everywhere that heaven is not
B. Deep below the earth's surface
C. Inside Faustus's soul
D. Directly beneath heaven

12. What famous beauty does Mephastophilis present to Faustus in scene 12?

A. Joan of Arc
B. Eleanor of Aquitaine
C. Catherine the Great
D. Helen of Troy

13. What happens to Faustus at the end of the play?

A. He repents and is saved

B. He kills himself
C. He becomes emperor of Germany
D. He is carried off to hell

14. Why does Mephastophilis refuse to answer the question asked by Doctor Faustus?

A. He says that the answer is "against our kingdom"
B. He does not know the answer
C. He thinks that the answer is too terrifying for Faustus to hear
D. He thinks that God will strike him down if he answers the question

15. Which city does Faustus visit extensively in scene 7?
A. Amsterdam
B. Berlin
C. Rome
D. Jerusalem

16. What trick does Faustus, while invisible, play on the pope?
A. He makes a Bible burn in the pope's hands
B. He exposes the pope's baldness
C. He fools the pope into believing a statue is talking to him
D. He steals dishes of food and disrupts the pope's banquet

17. Which historical figure does Faustus conjure up for the emperor to see?
A. Helen of Troy
B. Jesus Christ
C. Joan of Arc
D. Alexander the Great

18. Which character is publicly skeptical of Faustus's powers?
A. Charles V
B. The knight (also known as Benvolio)
C. The horse-courser
D. The ostler

19. How does Faustus humiliate this skeptic?
A. He turns his skin green
B. He makes him unable to speak
C. He makes antlers sprout from the skeptic's head
D. He hypnotizes him and makes him strip naked

20. What is the meaning of the words that appear on Faustus's arm in Latin?
A. "Satan's own"
B. "Prince of Darkness"
C. "Fly, man"
D. "You are doomed"

21. Who agrees, under duress, to become Wagner's servant?
A. Faustus
B. The clown
C. Belzebub
D. Helen of Troy

22. What does Mephastophilis refuse to tell Faustus?
A. If Faustus will be damned
B. How many planets there are
C. Where hell is located
D. Who made the world

Answers for Self Assessment

1.	B	2.	C	3.	A	4.	D	5.	B
6.	C	7.	D	8.	A	9.	B	10.	C
11.	A	12.	D	13.	D	14.	A	15.	C
16.	D	17.	D	18.	B	19.	C	20.	C
21.	B	22.	D						

Review Question

1. What is the original title of the play *Doctor Faustus*?
2. What is the source of the play *Doctor Faustus*?
3. Who is Marlowe's most famous contemporary?

Further Readings

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Unit 02: Mephistopheles, concepts of heaven and hell, master servant dichotomy, fall motif

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- examine the characters of Doctor Faustus
- analyze the mixed motives of Mephistopheles
- understand how Mephistopheles was a sympathetic literary devil
- analyze the fall motif
- examine the hubris
- analyze the master-servant dichotomy

Introduction

Doctor Faustus, also known as *The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, is a play by Christopher Marlowe based on the Faust myth, in which a man sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and wisdom. Doctor Faustus was first written in 1604, eleven years after the death of Marlowe and at least twelve years after the play's first appearance.

Doctor Faustus has sparked more discussion than any other Elizabethan play outside of Shakespeare's canon. There is no consensus on the existence of the text or its composition date... and the centrality of the Faust legend in Western culture precludes any conclusive agreement on the play's interpretation. The play is a morality play, according to a careful study and interpretation.

This unit delves extensively into the characters of the play *Doctor Faustus*. The stress has been laid upon the concept of heaven and hell to show that it is a morality play. This unit has also covered the fall motif and master- servant dichotomy.

Notes

2.1 A Brief Synopsis of the Play

Doctor Faustus, a brilliant German scholar at Wittenburg, rails against human knowledge's limitations. From traditional academic disciplines, he feels he has learned everything there is to know. All of this has left him dissatisfied, so he's turned to sorcery. Faustus must choose between Christian conscience and the road to damnation, as represented by a Good Angel and an Evil Angel. The former urges him to abandon his magical pursuits, while the latter tempts him to continue. Faustus picks up the foundations of the black arts from two fellow authors, Valdes and Cornelius. He's ecstatic at the prospect of his newfound strength and the incredible feats he'll be able to accomplish. The devil Mephistophilis is summoned by him. Mephistophilis represents Lucifer, and they flesh out the details of their agreement. Faustus would sell his soul for twenty-four years of power, with Mephistophilis as his slave.

2.2 Plot Construction

Doctor Faustus is a well-crafted piece of theatre. The audience is given the exposition at the start of the play: an explanation of the tragedy's subject matter. The chorus introduces Faustus the man. Faustus surveys various fields of expertise in the first act before choosing to practice the black arts. Faustus gets a taste of what magic can do for him in this part of the play as he orders Mephistopheles to perform some magical feats, which brings the action to a climax.

In Act II, Scene 1, Faustus forms a pact with Lucifer, which brings the play to a close. Following this pact, the viewer is treated to a series of mystical displays by Faustus. The action takes place in Act IV, in which Benvolio, Robin, Dick, the horse dealer, and other plebeians challenge Faustus as a magician.

Act V depicts the outcome of the protagonist's contract with the devil. The devils appear in this act and drag Faustus to hell. Faustus is doomed forever. The play's moral is presented in the epilogue. Men should refrain from venturing into forbidden territory. They can only go where "heaven allows" them to.

2.3 Character List

Faustus

A smart man who seems to have exceeded natural knowledge's boundaries. Faustus is a scholar from the early sixteenth century who lived in Wittenburg, Germany. He is arrogant, fiery, and has a voracious appetite for knowledge. As an intellectual, Faustus is well-versed in subjects (such as demon summoning and astrology) that aren't usually considered academic by today's universities.

Notes

Faustus makes the decision to sell his soul to the devil in return for worldly power and wisdom, as well as an extra 24 years of life. He then wastes this time on self-indulgence and low-level deception.

Faustus is a man who is unhappy with his studies in dialectics, law, medicine, and divinity when we first encounter him. Despite becoming the world's most brilliant scholar, his studies have left him unsatisfied, and he is depressed about the limits of human understanding. He attempts to experiment with necromancy in order to quench his hunger for knowledge. He aspires to break free from the confines of everyday life and reach new heights. One might argue that he aspires to be godlike.

Faustus is able to sell his soul to the devil under the terms of a contract in which he will serve Mephistopheles for twenty-four years and then relinquish his soul to Lucifer at the end of that time. He appears to be a great man who wishes to do good for mankind at first, but his ability to trade his soul for a few years of happiness causes him to descend into ruin. He causes his talents to be whittled down to performing nonsense tricks and fulfilling his physical desires.

At different points in the play, Faustus pauses to contemplate his predicament and comes close to repentance. He considers repentance frequently, but he remains consciously aligned with Mephistopheles and Lucifer, never taking the first steps toward forgiveness.

He rationalizes his reluctance to convert to God by the end of the drama, as he is waiting for his damnation. Internal and external influences indicate that Faustus may have turned to God and been forgiven in the play. The scholars want Faustus to seek God's forgiveness in the final scene, but Faustus rationalizes that he has lived against God's dictates, and he makes no effort to seek God's forgiveness until the arrival of the devils. By then, all he can do is scream in pain and terror at his impending doom.

Mephistopheles

Mephistopheles, also known as Mephistophiles or Mephistopheles is a fictional character originating from German folklore and introduced into English literature by Christopher Marlow. Mephistopheles was a demon in German mythology, but Marlow portrays him as Lucifer's assistant. However, Mephistopheles' personality and character are very peculiar, as no one before Marlow has given the character of the devil such a rich and deep personality. Mephistopheles has been endowed with such great abilities that only the forces of good can stand in his way. Mephistopheles, a character created by Marlow, is a special and imaginative function of the devil, an assistant to Satan, who reminds Faustus of hell and the pangs of that dark place while also casting the net of evil for Dr. Faustus. Dr. Faustus is appointed Mephistopheles, Lucifer's personal assistant, for the purpose of serving him and satisfying all of his evil wishes for a period of 24 years. Mephistopheles appears as a sly and deceiving demon who leads Faustus to hell, the abode of everlasting torment. He, like Lucifer, represents the ongoing fight between the forces of good and evil. "I do confess it, Faustus, and rejoice: 'Twas I who, when thou wert i'the way to heaven, Damm'd up thy passage; when thou took'st the book," Mephistopheles, a devil and Lucifer's partaker, reveals to Faustus that it was he who: "'Twas I that, when thou wert i'the way to heaven, Damm Then I turned the leaves and led thine eye to the Scriptures. Mephistopheles is a demon who aids in the propagation of evil. It deceives and seeks to obliterate the light of influence. Despite his strength and magical prowess, he is unable to overpower even a single man against his own free will. When Faustus is on the verge of finding salvation, we discover that Lucifer is left with nothing but threats. Since Lucifer cannot punish a man after he has set his foot on the right path, it is curious that Faustus is rewarded with newer gifts each time he returns to the devilish ways. Mephistopheles is a powerful evil who only has control over those who bow down to him and are preoccupied with evil deeds; he admits to Faustus that he cannot defeat the old man due to his strong faith.

Notes

Wagner

Wagner is the servant to Faustus. He steals Faustus' books and learns how to summon demons. At the end of the play, he seems concerned about his master's fate.

Good Angel and Evil Angel

Personifications of Faustus' inner turmoil, who give differing advice to him at key points. Their characters also reflect Christian belief that humans are assigned guardian angels, and that devils can influence human thoughts.

Cornelius

Friend to Faustus, who teaches him the dark arts. He appears only in Act One.

Lucifer

Satan. Lucifer originally meant Venus, referring to the planet's brilliance. In Christian lore, Lucifer is sometimes thought to be another name of Satan. Some traditions say that Lucifer was Satan's name before the fall, while the Fathers of the Catholic Church held that Lucifer was not Satan's proper name but a word showing the brilliance and beauty of his station before the fall. He appears at a few choice moments in Doctor Faustus, and Marlowe uses Lucifer as Satan's proper name.

Belzebub

One of Lucifer's officers. A powerful demon.

Clown / Robin

Robin learns demon summoning by stealing one of Faustus' books. He is the chief character in a number of scenes that provide comic relief from the main story.

Dick

A friend of Robin's. He is one of the characters peopling the few comic relief scenes.

Rafe

A horse ostler, or groomer, and friend to Robin. With the Clown, he summons Mephistopheles, who is none too pleased to be called.

Vintner

A wine merchant or a wine maker. This Vintner chases down Robin and Rafe after they steal a silver goblet from him.

2.4 Act-wise Summary of the Play

Scene 1 of Act 1

Faustus sits alone in his study, pondering which line of scholarship he will seek. He has a master's degree in theology, but he believes his interests have changed. He starts with the study of logic, or reasoning, which is based on Aristotle's Analytics, a Greek philosopher's work. However, it appears

that the primary goal of logic is to master the art of effective debating. Faustus, who has already mastered the skill, is impatiently dismissive of this course of study.

He then turns his attention to medicine, quoting Aristotle: "Where philosophy ends, medicine starts." Galen, an ancient Roman physician who was regarded as the most renowned of famous doctors, is mentioned by Faustus. Faustus is well aware that practicing medicine pays well and that fame can be gained by finding some miraculous cure. Despite the fact that he is an accomplished physician, he finds no satisfaction in his accomplishments—he is still Faustus.

In the field of law, the doctor looks to Roman Emperor Justinian, whose works served as the foundation for the Renaissance study of law. Faustus, on the other hand, dismisses this as well. He decides that law is a profession that is too boring and limited in scope, with only minor goals. Rejecting it, he comes full circle, deciding that formal religious study is the best fit for his goals. He reads a line of verse from St. Jerome's Bible translation: "The reward of sin is death." He realises that humanity is doomed to sin and, as a result, to die an eternal death. In light of this, studying theology appears futile and incapable of satisfying his desires.

Faustus turns to metaphysics of magicians (the study of what is considered beyond the known world) and necromancy after eliminating the three major subjects studied at a Renaissance university. Money, joy, authority, respect, and influence are all promised by this unconventional line of scholarship. Faustus observes that a skilled magician is a mighty god and he fantasizes about becoming omnipotent, or all-powerful, and surpassing emperors and kings. Faustus chooses magic and sends his servant, Wagner, to invite two of his friends, Valdes and Cornelius, to visit. They may be able to assist him with his research.

Faustus is faced by the Good Angel and the Evil Angel when he is alone once more. The Good Angel implores Faustus to abandon his blasphemous book of magic and instead read the Bible. The Evil Angel encourages Faustus to pursue his ambitious academic goals. Once they've left, Faustus declares aloud all the advantages of pursuing magic, as well as all the wonderful things he'll be able to do with its power.

Faustus informs Valdes and Cornelius that he has been possessed by the desire to practice magic. Valdes tells Faustus that his wisdom, aided by their knowledge and books, will bring them all fame and fortune. Cornelius goes on to say that once Faustus sees what magic is capable of, he will want to learn nothing else. They agree to assist Faustus in learning the fundamentals of the art, confident that he will soon outshine them. Faustus invites his friends to dine with him first, despite his eagerness to begin that night.

The Renaissance inherited knowledge and wisdom from men like Aristotle for philosophy, Galen for medicine, and Justinian for law, and the Bible for theology. The works of Aristotle have ravished Faustus, but he is convinced that there is still more to learn. He believes that the ancient authorities on medicine and law are similarly limited. Faustus rejects further theological research based on faulty logic based on an incomplete reading of a Bible verse.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord says Romans. The rest of the sentence which focuses on the gift of eternal life through Christ is left out by Faustus, who concentrates only on "the wages of sin is death." Faustus, on the other hand, is only concerned with everlasting death. This is a very pessimistic and hopeless interpretation. Faustus, as a specialist in theology, should have learned better. He is, however, adamant about learning magic and is willing to deceive himself and to do so basing his decision.

This makes Faustus to dismiss religious studies in the same way that he dismisses philosophy, medicine, and law. He dismisses the concept of sin, saying, "We must sin, and thus must die." It is a rather clinical view of the process, one that ignores sin's damning nature. "Ay, we must die an everlasting death," he says calmly, as if this has no personal significance for him. This foreshadows Faustus's downfall, when he succumbs to sin and ignores its spiritual implications.

The doctor's desire to learn about magic appears to be admirable. He aspires to push the boundaries of human knowledge and to use his authority to do great things. His list of objectives is impressive, and his persona exudes idealistic grandeur. He also fantasizes about the vast wealth and fame he will amass, as well as the earthly pleasures he will discover. His more noble goals will be harmed by these less worthy wishes. In time, he will only use his authority and knowledge for self-serving pleasure and profit, hilarious tricks, and petty vengeance. Faustus has failed to assimilate the wisdom—a gift he could glean from many works in the past—that greed for power never ends well, despite his

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scholarship. He might have accepted and guarded against the corrupting influence of unrestricted power if he had thought about it. Faustus seeks the assistance of Valdes and Cornelius in his studies. He is impatient with the notion of self-conducted research, as he is eager to get started. This means that the pursuit of knowledge is secondary to Faustus's goals of power and wealth. He's willing to cheat to get them, just as he's willing to delude himself with his erroneous interpretation of the biblical verse.

This scene also introduces the Good Angel and the Evil Angel. They seem to be both physical manifestations of true spirits and representatives of Faustus's conflicted conscience. They create the universal conflict between good and evil within the play. They then go on to work as a team, speaking in a call-and-response pattern. The Good Angel is the first to speak in the beginning. When they appear for the final time near the end of Act 2, Scene 3, the Evil Angel speaks first, implying that Faustus has crossed a line, slipping closer to damnation and away from salvation. Nonetheless, the Good Angel insists, as he did in the first scene, that Faustus can be saved if he refuses magic and repents by expressing his grief and guilt for his sins.

Scene 2 of Act 1

Two nosy academics arrive at Faustus' house in search of him. Before telling them, his master is at dinner with Valdes and Cornelius, Wagner engages them in some verbal sparring. Because the doctor's guests are well-known practitioners of that damned art, the scientists interpret this as bad news. They are concerned that Faustus is also a magician. They go off to notify the university's president, gloomily hoping that he will be able to save Faustus from this grave error before it is too late.

Faustus' esteemed status at the university, where knowledge and mental agility are valued, is reflected in the two scholars' concern. They seem to miss him most at debates, where he would begin his arguments with the academic phrase sic probo, which means "Here is my evidence."

By addressing Faustus's servant Wagner as "sirrah," an address reserved for inferiors, the two scientists demonstrate a personal sense of intellectual superiority. When they demand to know where Faustus is, Wagner questions their right to expect him to know. The following exchange gives us a better understanding of Wagner's personality.

Wagner possesses the intellect and education necessary to engage the scholars in a logical debate. He doesn't like being treated as a second-class citizen, so he takes the scholars for fools, using wordplay to hide the truth about Faustus' current location. His impatience with these two traditional educators echoes Faustus's impatience in this arena, which he expressed in the previous scene. Wagner's logic is flawed, but it is smart enough to perplex academics. He's not only having a good time, but he's also defending Faustus. He understands his master's visitors will not be well received by the scholars. This establishes Wagner's role as Faustus's cunning, loyal, and protective servant. In some ways, he serves as a stand-in for Faustus, albeit as a servant. As in this scene, his outlook and actions will often mirror those of his master. On occasion, he will also take on the role of chorus.

Scene 3 of Act 1

Faustus has mastered the art of conjuring to summon a demon on a cold winter evening. He draws circles, signs, and symbols after consulting a book of spells. He reverses the letters of Jehovah's name and rearranges them to form new phrases. He abbreviates the saints' names. Then, chanting in Latin, he summons the demons of Hades, the Holy Trinity, the spirits of fire, air, water, and Earth, Belzebub, and Demogorgon, to name a few (a demon). He orders Mephistophilis to appear.

When a devil appears, Faustus dismisses him as "too ugly to attend to me" and orders him to change his shape into something more appealing. He sarcastically proposes assuming the guise of an elderly Franciscan friar. He is overjoyed when the devil flees right away, and he expects Mephistophilis to be a devout, humble servant.

Faustus is approached by Mephistophilis, who asks him what he wants from him. When Faustus asks that the devil serve him, Mephistophilis explains that he cannot unless his master, Lucifer, gives him permission. He has arrived on his own, not in response to Faustus' summons. He is interested

in determining the state of Faustus's soul, which he hopes to acquire. Conjuring by the doctor is a sure sign of a man on the verge of being damned.

Mephistophilis explains Lucifer's nature as a fallen angel, his status as prince of devils, and how God cast him out of heaven for pride and insolence in response to Faustus's questions. Mephistophilis says that he was cursed with Lucifer because he was one of his disciples. Mephistophilis warns Faustus to turn back from the path he has chosen, reflecting on the eternal torment he suffers because of his separation from God. Faustus dismisses him, telling him to return to Lucifer and offers his soul in exchange for 24 years of service from Mephistophilis, who must do whatever he requests. Faustus also mentions that he wishes to live a life of *voluptuousness*, a life of pleasure and luxury, during this period. He expects a response by midnight. After the devil has left, Faustus mulls over what he will do with his newfound authority. He will be the world's emperor, capable of great feats such as connecting Africa's continental coastline to Spain's.

After some time has passed, Faustus has been studying the art of conjuring with zeal. In the Latin spell he quotes, he invokes the gods of Acheron (Hades) and the threefold spirit of Jehovah (the Holy Trinity) to assist him. Coming from a theologian, this blasphemy is more startling. Faustus' daring use of it puts into question the depth of his previous religious convictions once more. The doctor finishes his incantation by sprinkling holy water around him and making the sign of the cross. Holy water is a powerful spiritual weapon that is used in Catholic religious ceremonies such as baptism and last rites after being blessed by a priest.

Mephistophilis appears in response to the incantation, and his startling appearance proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is a devil and a product of hell. As a result, he convinces the audience that hell is real and horrible. Faustus takes a cheap shot at Catholicism when he sends Mephistophilis off to assume a more pleasing form, suggesting that the devil return as an old Franciscan friar—a shape that suits a devil best. St. Francis of Assisi founded the Franciscans, a Catholic Christian religious order. They promote preaching, penance, and poverty as a way of life. Because all things Catholic were unpopular, English Renaissance audiences found this mockery of the Franciscans amusing. It also shows Faustus' distaste for a religious order whose ideals and practices are diametrically opposed to his own. While other members of the order share their expertise, Faustus gathers it for himself. Faustus, on the other hand, wants to damn his soul through sinfulness, while the others seek to redeem their souls through penance. While the others are happy to live in poverty, Faustus wishes to amass enormous fortunes.

Mephistophilis quickly clarifies that he responded to Faustus' summons as a soul collector, not as a servant. This establishes Mephistophilis as a strong individual in his own right, despite his servitude to Lucifer. Mephistophilis fits the classical religious notion of devils and demons corrupting goodness and luring souls to hell as a soul collector. When Mephistophilis describes himself as one of the *unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer*, this conventional perception is thrown into disarray. He declares that his alienation from God is tormenting him. This capacity for pain comes as a surprise. His hellish existence is so bad that he advises Faustus to abandon his quest for magic. In a devil, the desire to do a good deed for a damned soul is equally surprising. As a result, we have a complex character who is both powerful and tormented, with evil intentions but also capable of fleeting sympathy.

Faustus cannot or will not admit that he is in danger, blinded by pride and ambition. Until Mephistophilis corrects him, he believes that his conjuring abilities were so powerful that they attracted the demon to him. Mephistophilis has appeared due to Faustus's vulnerability of his soul, not his authority. Faustus accepts the concept of demons and hell, but only in a detached, impartial way. Faustus claims that he would sacrifice *as many souls as there are stars* to obtain the knowledge and power he desires after sending Mephistophilis with his message to Lucifer. He continues to fantasise about becoming a *great emperor of the world*, powerful enough to reshape Earth's geography as he pleases.

Scene 4 of Act 1

By calling a clown, or peasant, *boy*, Wagner engages in some banter. Indignant, the man inquires how many *boys* he has seen with beards like his. Wagner goes on to say that the man appears to be unemployed and hungry enough to sell his soul to the devil in exchange for some meat. He tries to persuade him to join him as his servant, but the clown refuses. Wagner then threatens him with

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magic, threatening to transform all the clown's lice into evil spirits who will tear him apart. When that fails, he forces money on the man who is trying to return it. In a fit of rage, Wagner summons Baliol and Belcher, two devils who pursue the frightened clown. Wagner sends the angels away after a few minutes. Now, impressed by Wagner's demonstration, the clown agrees to serve Wagner in exchange for Wagner teaching him how to summon devils and other magical feats.

As the play progresses, a pattern of serious and comic scenes emerges, with the comic scenes serving as a parody by imitating the preceding serious scene in a mocking manner. These scenes mock Faustus's supposed greatness as he masters black magic at the cost of his soul. Wagner shows that even the unschooled can summon devils in this scene.

Wagner's actions, in a bit of comic relief, mirror the past events involving Faustus. Wagner, imitating his master, hires a clown (a rustic fellow or peasant) as his servant. Wagner uses insults, crude logic, and bribery to persuade the fellow to serve him. Traditional methods of persuasion have proven ineffective. Wagner, like his master, decides that magic is the only way to get what he wants.

Faustus summoned a demon in the previous scene (Scene 3). Wagner summons Baliol and Belcher to frighten the clown in this scene. Wagner hopes to enlist the services of the clown through intimidation, just as Faustus hopes to enlist the services of Mephistophilis through sorcery. Wagner also imitates the two scientists from Act 1, Scene 2 who are intellectual snobs. While he objected to the two nosy scholars' pomposity, he now adopts a superior attitude and speaks down to the clown, evoking Faustus' arrogance and sense of entitled superiority once more.

The clown is identified as Robin, a character who first appears in Act 2, Scene 2.

Scene 1 of Act 2

Faustus awaits Mephistophilis' return in his study. He is troubled by his doubts about his decision. On the one hand, he understands he will be damned if he dabbles in magic. On the other hand, it may be too late to turn back to God—it appears that God could not love him. He suddenly realizes that he would rather fulfil his own ambitious ambitions than serve Belzebub, so he may as well continue to serve him. Once again, the Good Angel and Evil Angel appear to argue for and against repentance. It is not too late for Faustus to give up magic, repent, and enter heaven, according to the Good Angel. This, according to the Evil Angel, is an illusion that should not be trusted. He advises Faustus to remember the honor and fortune he will achieve by using magic.

Faustus resolves to pursue his goals, believing that no god can harm him if Mephistophilis is by his side. At that moment, the devil appears with the news that Lucifer has agreed to Faustus's proposal: for the price of his soul, he can buy 24 years of service from Mephistophilis as well as a life of luxury and enjoyment. There is one caveat. Faustus must write and sign the contract in his own blood to show his commitment to the agreement. When Faustus inquires about the value of his soul to Lucifer, Mephistophilis responds that it will contribute to Lucifer's expanding kingdom. When asked if he feels pain as a devil torturing damned souls, Mephistophilis admits that he does, just like those human souls. The devil then reminds Faustus of the great rewards tied to a pact with Lucifer to distract him from any doubts.

Faustus slashes his arm and begins writing the contract in blood, but the blood quickly congeals, making it impossible for him to continue. In a nutshell, he wonders what this means. Mephistophilis then adds hot coals to liquefy the blood once more, allowing Faustus to finish the contract. "It is completed," he says in Latin as he signs it. The words Homo fuge! (Fly, O man!) appear on his arm almost instantly. Though it appears to be a dire warning, Faustus is at a loss for where to flee. God, without a doubt, would not provide him with a safe haven.

As a diversion, Mephistophilis lavishes crowns and fine clothes on Faustus, swearing that the doctor will have everything he desires *by hell and Lucifer*. Faustus confirms the contract, which Mephistophilis approves on Lucifer's behalf. Mephistophilis then describes the dreadful nature of hell at Faustus's first command. Despite this, Faustus declares, "I believe hell is a fable," and that he has no fear of punishment.

Faustus orders Mephistophilis to *fetch* him a woman, changing the subject. The devil reappears, accompanied by another devil dressed as a terrifying woman. Mephistophilis begs Faustus to abandon all thoughts of marriage when he rejects her. Instead, he can have as many lovely mistresses as he wants. The devil then gives Faustus an all-encompassing book of knowledge to study about

spells and incantations, astronomy and astrology, and natural sciences to quench his thirst for knowledge.

Faustus exposes the corruption that has already tainted his soul in his opening soliloquy. The doctor is having second thoughts about his course of action. Desperation overshadows his initial desire to return to God. God can't possibly adore him. He concedes, in a moment of self-awareness, that he is ruled by his desire for the dark magic has to offer. He wants to worship this "god." For Belzebub's love, he would build "an altar and a church" and ritually slaughter newborn babies in his honor. Faustus embraces evil and rejects the divine goodness and mercy he once embraced as a theologian by turning his back on God in this way. When the Good Angel and Evil Angel return, the battle for Faustus' soul resumes. Faustus joins in the call-and-response but refuses to be convinced that repentance and redemption are possible. He is adamant about exchanging heaven's spiritual gifts for earthly honor and wealth. Faustus is emotionally and spiritually prepared to enter into the pact with Lucifer by the time Mephistophilis arrives.

When it comes time to forfeit his soul, Lucifer takes no chances that a scholar like Faustus will discover a loophole in their agreement. He demands that the pact be written and signed in the blood of Faustus. The soul is represented by blood, the body's source of life. It becomes a link between Faustus and Lucifer and binds Faustus's soul to hell when used in a blood oath. The doctor's blood, as his soul's representative, seems hell-bent on preventing him from fulfilling the contract. It hardens to the point where he can't write. Faustus is so keen on making the dark deal that he only has a fleeting concern that this is a warning sign worth paying attention to. His blood is wiser than he is, in yet another case of Faustus misinterpreting the information in front of him when it contradicts his wishes.

The doctor's final words as he signs the pact are eerily like those uttered by Jesus Christ as he died on the cross. "It is completed," says the Latin phrase *consummatum est*. The sentence meant that Christ had fulfilled ancient prophecy and completed the job that God, his father, had assigned to him; salvation was guaranteed to those who believed. However, when spoken by Faustus, the sentence has a completely different meaning: his salvation is now in jeopardy, and his damnation is certain.

Faustus engages Mephistophilis in a round of questions after the pact is completed. The subject is hell, as it was during their first meeting. Faustus appears enthralled by the subject, despite his scepticism about the existence of hell. Mephistophilis explained in Act 1 that because he is damned, hell surrounds him. It can be found wherever he is. Instead of describing hell as a psychological state, Mephistophilis describes it as a place "under the sky... where we are tortured and remain forever." Faustus says, "I think hell is a fable," even though he is conversing with a demon and has signed his soul over to Lucifer. This assertion by a scholar who has investigated the nature of God and religious belief raises the question of whether Faustus ever believed or lost faith along the way. Is his desire for power so strong that it has rendered him. Faustus will struggle to deny the reality of hell and the danger to his soul as the play progresses. He will fight a desperate but losing battle to find or rekindle his faith and save himself through repentance as the certainty of hell grows.

Scene 2 of Act 2

Robin, an ostler (a person who works with horses), has stolen one of Doctor Faustus' spell books and plans to practise conjuring with it. Robin shoos away a fellow ostler named Rafe who comes to tell him that a gentleman needs their services, but he warns him that he is about to do something dangerous. Rafe observes Robin's inability to read after seeing the book. Robin responds that he hopes to be able to read well enough to seduce his mistress with luck. Rafe discovers that Robin has been practising minor magic and is using a powerful book of spells. Robin promises him a spell to beguile Nan Spit, the kitchen maid, whenever he wants. Rafe offers to help Robin with his conjuring because he is ecstatic at the prospect.

The seriousness of the preceding scene, in which Faustus deeds his soul to Lucifer in exchange for power and knowledge, is juxtaposed with comic relief once more. In the realm of sorcery, Robin is as uneducated as Faustus. He hasn't investigated it, but he has taken a book from Faustus about it. He is unable to read, but he wants to try conjuring regardless. His aspirations aren't as lofty as Faustus's, but rather obnoxious and vulgar. A lout reduces magic from an exalted subject worthy of serious study to something trivial and low. Once again, the actions of a minor character appear to suggest that anyone with

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the right book can perform magic of some sort without gaining unlimited knowledge or losing his soul.

Scene 3 of Act 2

Faustus is hesitating once more in his decision to pursue magic, fearful of damnation. Mephistophilis declares that the doctor's imagined heaven is not as magnificent as the man for whom it was created. Faustus, contrary to the devil's intent, interprets this assertion as a reason to give up magic and repent.

The Good Angel and Evil Angel appear when repentance is mentioned. The Good Angel tells Faustus that even though he repents, God will still have mercy on him, while the Evil Angel asserts that God cannot. *Ay, but Faustus never shall repent*, the Evil Angel responds to Faustus' assertion that God will pity him if he repents.

The angels leave, and Faustus concedes that repentance is impossible for him because *his heart has become so hardened.* He laments the fact that whenever he mentions salvation, faith, or heaven, the refrain *Faustus, thou art damned* resounds like thunder in his ears. He believes he would have committed suicide by now if magic hadn't brought him *sweet pleasure* and *conquered deep desperation.* Faustus resolves to never repent once more and summons Mephistophilis to discuss the nature of the universe. The conversation is going well when Faustus asks who created the universe. Mephistophilis is deafeningly silent. He reminds Faustus that, in his fallen state, he should think more about hell, which he refers to as "our kingdom," and that he is unable to tell him anything that contradicts it.

Faustus is shaken, and he wonders if his soul is too late. The Evil Angel appears and declares it to be so. Following that, the Good Angel assures us that it's never too late. If Faustus repents, the Evil Angel promises that demons will tear him apart, while the Good Angel promises that they will never cut his skin. Faustus, befuddled and horrified, pleads with Christ the Savior to save his wretched soul.

Lucifer, Belzebub, and Mephistophilis appear in response to Faustus's appeal to Christ. Lucifer tells Faustus that despite Christ's intervention, he is beyond redemption. He then warns Faustus not to mention Christ's name or think of God ever again. This would be in violation of the pact Faustus made with him. Faustus begs Lucifer's forgiveness and swears to obey. Lucifer parades personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins in front of the doctor to strengthen his resolve: Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery. *Oh, this feeds my soul!* exclaims Faustus as the exhibit appeals to his baser appetites. Lucifer promises that hell is full of all kinds of pleasures. He then hands Faustus a new book of spells, which he gratefully accepts, and tells him to *think on the devil.*

Faustus is trying to rekindle his faith; he's looking for reasons to give up magic and repent. The mere sight of the physical heavens convinces him that there is a genuine heaven, which must be too beautiful to pass up. The doctor, on the other hand, needs to be persuaded otherwise. He does not seek advice and encouragement from the Bible or from a priest. He complains to Mephistophilis, but then allows himself to be persuaded to continue in his evil ways, justifying them with the hope of repenting and being saved at the last moment. Being a devil, God may pity me... if I repent, he says. Ay, but Faustus never shall repent, the Evil Angel observes, knowing Faustus better than he knows himself.

Faustus demonstrates that the Evil Angel was correct. Hardening his heart once more, he vows to never repent, preferring instead to seek "sweet pleasures" and avoid desperation. He considers astronomy, which he refers to as "divine astrology." The term could be applied to both fields of study in the 16th century, with little distinction made between them. His first question about the subject is met with a deflating response from Mephistophilis. The devil repeats what academia has long held — a very old, Earth-centered description of the "heavens [planets] above the moon," based on ideas developed by the Greek astronomer and mathematician Ptolemy in the second century. Nicolaus Copernicus, a 16th-century Polish astronomer, had contested this view. He proposed that the sun, rather than Earth, was the centre of our solar system. The possibility that Copernicus was correct was still being debated during Marlowe's period. Faustus chastises Mephistophilis for giving an answer that Wagner could have come up with.

His next question is about the erratic motion of certain spheres or planets, which is another unanswered question from Marlowe's time. Variation in phenomena related to movement among

spheres is "due to their unequal motion with respect to the whole," Mephistophilis says. *Well, I am answered*, Faustus appears to give up this line investigation in anger. In other words, it's a response — not a particularly good one, but a response nonetheless. His dissatisfaction is obvious. Marlowe's contemporaries couldn't come up with a definitive response. As a result, Marlowe uses the devil's unwillingness or inability to respond as a warning that Faustus's deal for unlimited knowledge may not live up to its promises. This raises the possibility that Faustus was tricked into selling his soul for pennies on the dollar.

Mephistophilis all but concedes God's superiority over Lucifer by refusing to answer the doctor's final question, "Who made the world?" For daring to challenge this dominance, Lucifer was expelled from heaven. As Lucifer's ally, Mephistophilis was also expelled. His pride will not allow him to admit that he was wrong, even if only inferentially. If only God is capable of creating the world, Lucifer must be a lesser being.

The next twinge of guilt draws Faustus closer to repentance than ever before. This time, Lucifer appears to scare Faustus into abiding by the pact. He then bestows personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins upon the medic. For Faustus, they are more than just entertainment; they reflect the sins he will commit over the next 24 years. The first and most obvious of these is pride. Faustus and Lucifer are similar in their ambition pride. The most important step in their damnation is their desire for godlike power, which leads to defiance of divine authority. This high-flying ambition is aided by envy. Faustus lusts after those who possess knowledge and authority that he lacks, and will go to any length to obtain it. The doctor will also engage in lechery with "the fairest courtesans" and Helen of Troy, as well as wrath to punish enemies and avarice (i.e., covetousness), gluttony, and sloth as he amass vast, useless wealth and overindulges in forbidden arts and sensual pleasures.

3rd Act Chorus

Wagner explains that Faustus has devoted his life to the pursuit of infinite knowledge. He has mastered astronomy, amassed power equal to that of the Olympian gods, and is now scouring the globe for information on geography. He then travels to Rome, where he hopes to meet the Pope and participate in the day's sacred Feast of Saint Peter.

Faustus has thrown himself headlong into gaining the knowledge he seeks, in the true Renaissance spirit. Faustus now rides in a chariot drawn by a dragon. He is rising to perilous heights like mythic Icarus, as mentioned in the prologue. A Christian symbol of evil, paganism, and Satan is the serpent. Faustus' ambition is limitless.

It is important that he visits Rome and the Pope on that particular day. In the Holy City, the Feast of Saint Peter (also known as the Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul) is an annual public holiday. It is named after two of Christ's original disciples who are credited with founding the Christian church and its teachings. The first pope is thought to be Peter. For the current Pope, this feast day would be extremely significant.

Scene 1 of Act 3

Doctor Faustus reminisces about his recent journeys with Mephistophilis. Trier, Germany; Paris and the French coast; the Rhine River's path; Naples and Campania, Italy; the poet Virgil's tomb; Venice and Padua, Italy are just a few of the places he mentions. He then inquires as to whether Mephistophilis has taken him to Rome as ordered. Faustus is assured by the devil, and they are in the pope's private chamber. He then goes on to explain the city's high points, including the Tiber River, the four major bridges, the castle, and so on. Faustus, intrigued, suggests that they go off and explore Rome. Mephistophilis, on the other hand, encourages him to stay until he sees the Pope, promising that they will have a good time. Faustus agrees and asks the devil to make him invisible as a precaution.

The cardinal of Lorraine and attendant friars accompany the pope as he enters. A banquet is on the way. Their conversation is interrupted by snide remarks from a disembodied voice, much to the pope's embarrassment and confusion. Food dishes and cups are stolen by unseen hands. The cardinal proposes that this is a soul who has escaped purgatory, and the pope concurs. His ears are then boxed by invisible hands as he makes the sign of the cross. The friars begin a dirge to curse the evil spirit, as directed by the pope. Faustus and Mephistophilis retaliated by beating them and throwing fireworks at them before escaping.

Notes

Faustus has been on a learning binge, fulfilling his desire to learn everything there is to know about the universe in the true Renaissance spirit. It has been a thrilling adventure, and Faustus has a nagging feeling that there is more out there for him to find. Despite the fact that he has begged Mephistophilis to take him to see the Pope, Faustus is enthralled by the devil's descriptions of Rome. The devil, on the other hand, tempts the doctor away from his intellectual pursuits by offering him the opportunity to have some wicked fun, particularly the pope's childish torment. The ease with which Mephistophilis manipulates Faustus reveals a flaw in the doctor's character that will derail all of his lofty ambitions. Despite his intelligence and high-minded scholarship, Faustus has a streak of pettiness and a fondness for sensual pleasure, which Mephistophilis will exploit to keep him bound to Lucifer and doomed to hell. In this scene, Faustus employs the wonders of magical abilities to perpetrate heinous deeds. His noble ambitions are starting to fade, and the corrupting influence of unbridled power is becoming apparent.

The attack on the pope by Faustus is blatantly anti-Catholic, which would have delighted Protestant audiences in Renaissance England. Faustus' antics, which include grabbing the pope's food and drink and striking him, humiliate him. Faustus and Mephistophilis *beat the Friars and fling fireworks among them*, as the monks chant nonsense. Catholicism's distinctive beliefs are mocked. These include the possibility of a soul escaping from purgatory. Purgatory is a place or state of being in Catholicism where souls are purified through suffering before entering heaven. Purgatory is a concept that Protestants reject, so the cardinal of Lorraine's explanation that there must be a runaway ghost from purgatory in the room would have amused them. They also oppose the pope's use of the cross to invoke God's protection from the evil that besets him. Tracing a cross from the forehead to the chest and shoulder to shoulder is part of this exercise. The practice was considered superstitious by Protestants at the time.

The Catholic ritual of excommunication, which Faustus refers to as "bell, book, and candle," is a third ritual in which a person may be permanently excluded from the Christian Church. A death bell is rung during this ceremony, signaling the soul's death. The Holy Bible is then closed, cutting the person off from God's word. Finally, a candle is extinguished, consigning the person's soul to an eternity of darkness. Excommunication is not the same as exorcism, as Marlowe has misunderstood. Exorcism is the proper method for removing evil spirits or demons.

The B-Text later expands on this scene to emphasize the pope's and his guests' unflattering characteristics. In doing so, it represents Protestant England's growing opposition to the papacy's claims to supreme authority in Western Europe.

Scene 2 of Act 3

Robin and Rafe have been practicing conjuring with Doctor Faustus' book. A stolen silver goblet is held up by Robin as evidence of their success. Then a vintner (wine merchant) comes up to you and demands payment for the goblet. While the vintner searches each of them, Robin and Rafe deny having the item and secretly pass it back and forth. Then Robin insists on searching the vintner while reciting an incantation. As a result, a disgruntled Mephistophilis appears, having travelled all the way from Constantinople to respond to the summons. When the devil discovers that the call came from these two lowlifes, he transforms Robin into an ape and Rafe into a dog.

Robin and Rafe provide comic relief while making a point once more. In two earlier scenes, Faustus has been treated to a procession of the Seven Deadly Sins and has played low pranks on His Holiness, the Pope, with the assistance of Mephistophilis. Similarly, Robin and Rafe torment and tease a lowly wine merchant with magic. Though the targets of these pranks are of varying social status, the pranks themselves are equally cruel and petty. The point is that, for all of Faustus' wisdom and authority, his instincts for its application are no more noble or moral than those of a couple of scumbags.

Mephistophilis is enraged by Robin and Rafe's antics when they call him. He appears as the proud and powerful demon—the "monarch of hell"—who captures souls for Lucifer, rather than as the obedient servant to Faustus. This is Mephistophilis, who will work tirelessly to get Faustus to his death. His punishment for Robin and Rafe's audacity is amusing and serves as a reminder of his demonic destroyer role, as he turns them into an ape and a dog to highlight their lowliness and folly.

Notes

4th Act, Chorus

Faustus has seen all he wants to see of the world, according to the chorus, and has returned to Germany. His friends have welcomed him warmly and have been astounded by the doctor's vast knowledge of astrology, the world, and magic. Faustus's intellect has made him famous *all over the world*. Emperor Carolus the Fifth has asked the doctor to show off his skills at his palace.

Faustus' quest for knowledge appears to be coming to an end. He now has the authority and fame he craves. His closest friends and companions enjoy hearing about his adventures *through the world and air*. He is highly regarded and sought after. However, this is only because of his wit. He dines with royalty, but only to amuse them with magic demonstrations. The chorus does not tell any stories that represent Faustus's grand and noble ambitions of becoming world emperor.

The chorus declares that Faustus has arrived at Emperor Carolus the Fifth's palace. Carolus is a Latinized version of the name Charles. Charles V, king of Spain and Holy Roman emperor, is Carolus the Fifth. From 800 to 1806, the Holy Roman Empire was a confederation of lesser kingdoms in western and central Europe ruled by an emperor.

Scene 1 of Act 4

The emperor Carolus the Fifth challenges Faustus to demonstrate his famed knowledge of conjuring at his court. He assures Faustus that he will not be harmed in any way because of his magic. The emperor asks Faustus to raise Alexander the Great and his paramour from their graves, and Faustus accepts. Faustus explains that he won't be able to raise their physical bodies, which have long since decomposed into dust, but he will transform them into spirits. A knight has interjected snide, sceptical remarks throughout this exchange between Faustus and the emperor. He now openly mocks Faustus and walks away, not wanting to witness Faustus's conjuring. The doctor vows to avenge him as soon as possible.

Alexander the Great and his paramour are welcomed by Mephistophilis. The two creatures appear alive and tangible to the emperor. Faustus requests that the unpleasant knight be summoned after they have left. The man returns, oblivious to the fact that his head has sprouted a pair of horns. They are a sure sign that the man is married and has been cheated on by his wife, according to the emperor. The knight is enraged and demands that Faustus undo the magic. Faustus departs from the court after savoring his vengeance.

Faustus makes his way back to Wertenberg, Germany. When he returns home, a horse-courser (horse trader) approaches him and offers to buy his horse. Faustus eventually agrees after some persuasion but adds slyly that the horse-courser must not ride the horse into water. Following the man's departure, Faustus laments the passing of his days and the impending doom. He finds solace in the New Testament tale of a thief's last-minute salvation as he hung next to the crucified Jesus Christ on a cross. Because of his thoughts, the doctor falls asleep in his chair.

The horse-courser returns to Faustus' house, drenched and moaning, after a while. He informs Mephistophilis that he wishes to be reimbursed for his $40. The man had disobeyed the doctor's warning and rode Faustus' horse into a pond, believing the horse had magical characteristics that water would reveal. The horse had vanished without a trace. Mephistophilis reveals to the man the location where Faustus is fast asleep. When the man's yells fail to awaken the doctor, the horse-courser grabs Faustus' leg and pulls him. The leg comes off to his horror, and the frightened man flees. When Wagner enters, Faustus and Mephistophilis are enjoying the results of their latest prank. He informs Faustus that the Duke of Vanholt has invited him to pay him a visit. The doctor and the devil leave right away.

The emperor promises Faustus that if he shows his "knowledge of the black art," he will not be harmed in any way. During this period in European history, people believed in and feared witches, and they were burnt at the stake. Any hint of being in cahoots with the devil was met with wrath. Emperor Carolus the Fifth wields tremendous power and influence. Faustus, on the other hand, has been summoned to perform parlour tricks at his court. This is the doctor's reputation, which is far from the lofty position he once imagined.

Notes

The emperor has high hopes, and Faustus lives up to them. The emperor's request to see Alexander the Great is solely to satisfy his royal ego. Nonetheless, Faustus proudly conjures the conqueror and his paramour with the assistance of Mephistophilis and basks in the emperor's praise.

However, a knight's suggestion that Faustus is nothing more than a conman strikes a nerve. Faustus has amassed wealth and fame, but he has squandered his authority and sold out his lofty ambitions for personal gain. His once-brilliant ambition has faded. On some level, Faustus acknowledges this truth and resents it being pointed out, as evidenced by the doctor's petty revenge on the knight – making horns spring from the man's head.

Faustus then makes a cunning deal with the horse-courser. This, like other comic scenes, mocks the play's more serious action. Faustus tells the horse trader flat out that he is not allowed to ride the horse into the water. However, by doing so, he sets an irresistible trap for himself. Faustus understands human nature and realises that the man will simply disregard his warning because he has been warned. With the *false leg* joke on the horse-courser, Faustus abuses his authority once more. Because the doctor has much more power and intelligence than the man he deceives, the practical joke feels cheap and pathetic rather than clever.

Despite the high cost of access to dark knowledge, such as the forbidden study of black magic, he appears unwilling or unable to put it to good use. What Faustus doesn't realise is that he, too, has been caught in Mephistophilis' trap. Early on, the devil tells the truth about hell and the horrors of eternal torment in a straightforward and straightforward manner. Faustus, enamoured with his own colossal ambitions, disregards the advice. This enables Mephistophilis to assist Faustus in concluding his agreement with Lucifer. The demon seizes the doctor's soul and works tirelessly to keep Faustus trapped.

The A- and B-Texts begin to diverge at this point in the play. The B-Text adds four more scenes to the account of Faustus' practical jokes. The plot lines converge once more in the next scene of the A-Text (in the B-Text, Act 4, Scene 6). The extra scenes in the B-Text were most likely written by playwrights other than Marlowe.

Scene 2 of Act 4

Faustus and Mephistophilis have been entertaining the duke and duchess of Vanholt. Faustus addresses the pregnant duchess and asks what he might give in the manner of a delicacy to appease her. She responds that she craves a dish of ripe grapes, which is impossible to come by during the winter. Faustus declares that she will have it and dispatches Mephistophilis. The devil reappears a short time later, bearing the finest grapes the duchess has ever tasted. She wonders how Faustus got them when grapes are only available in the summer. While it is winter here, the doctor says, it is summer in some far-flung parts of the globe. To get the grapes, he only has to send a *swift soul.* The duke and duchess express their gratitude by promising to reward Faustus handsomely for his great generosity.

This short scene emphasises Faustus's use of his magic for trivial purposes. Conjuring grapes in the dead of winter bears little resemblance to his original aspirations to be *emperor of the world* and *build bridges through the air*, or to change the continents' configuration by connecting Africa and Spain (Act 1, Scene 3). Instead of dominating kings and other powerful figures, he entertains them by performing tricks at their command.

Scene 1 of Act 5

Wagner expresses his concern in a brief soliloquy that his master is about to die. Faustus has given him everything he owns. Yet, for a man about to die, he finds it strange that the doctor is feasting, drinking, and partying excessively with university students.

Faustus joins with three scientists as Wagner leaves. They have been dining together, and now the scientists ask Faustus to conjure up Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman in the world. Faustus agrees because he believes they are sincere in their intentions. Helen appears in all her glory, thanks to Mephistophilis, much to the delight of the scholars. They are happy men as they leave.

As the scholars are departing, an elderly gentleman enters. He provides Faustus with yet another opportunity to repent. Despite the doctor's heinous sins, he may still be saved by the mercy of Jesus Christ, the Savior. Faustus, disbelieving and despondent, accepts a dagger offered by Mephistophilis with the intention of committing suicide. The elderly man asks the doctor to stop, claiming that an angel is hovering over him, ready to bestow grace. Faustus detects some truth in this and requests that the old man leave while he mulls it over. With a heavy heart, the old man departs.

Faustus is on the brink of repentance when Mephistophilis accuses him of being a Lucifer traitor and threatens to tear him apart. Faustus apologises and declares that he will reaffirm his vow in blood, cutting his arm in the process. He then orders Mephistophilis to torture the old man who dared to tempt him to break his pact with Lucifer. The old man's faith, on the other hand, is powerful, and Mephistophilis predicts that no torment will be able to touch his soul, only his body. Faustus then begs the devil to return Helen to him as his lover, which the devil happily does *in the blink of an eye.* Faustus swears she will be his one and only paramour, mesmerised by her beauty and kiss. The old man (who has returned) is harassed by demons when Faustus departs with Helen. Mephistophilis' faith, on the other hand, remains strong and unaffected by their abuse, as he predicted.

Wagner, still in the role of Faustus' loyal servant, opens the scene as a choric narrator. He describes what Faustus has been up to and expresses his personal concerns for his master's safety. It is clear from his description of Faustus' eating, drinking, and carousing that the doctor has descended to new depths of corruption. While Faustus appears to be aware that his time is running out, he appears to be more interested in indulging in as much sensuality as possible before heading to hell.

The academics appear on the scene, debating their most recent subject of discussion: who was the most beautiful woman on the planet. While they undoubtedly used their scholarly abilities for logical debate in the debate, the subject itself is unimportant. These academics would reject any similarities between themselves and characters like Wagner the clown or Robin and Rafe. However, their daily fascination with women and lustful reaction to Helen's appearance, though eloquently expressed, reveal that they are more like these characters than they would like to admit. Education hasn't changed the scholars' ordinary interests or given them more nobility. They're just three guys who are enthralled by a stunning woman.

The old man has taken the place of the Good Angel and Evil Angel in this scene. He shows up as a positive force, urging Faustus to *break heart, drop blood, and mix it with tears*. In other words, Faustus' soul might be saved if he makes a blood sacrifice and sheds true repentant tears. Faustus, on the other hand, chooses despair and weeps "Faustus, you are damned, Faustus, you are damned! Doom and gloom!" According to Christian belief, despair is a mortal sin that entails the deliberate and complete rejection of all hope for salvation. A person denies the option of God's mercy and grace on purpose. Despair not only removes all hope of escape, but it also encourages submission to earthly pleasures that are sinful. Faustus purposefully rejects God once more, reaffirming his bloody bargain with Lucifer, and succumbing to his lust for Helen. Faustus trivialises his authority once more by choosing Helen as his paramour. All of his lofty ambitions have been reduced to the pursuit of sensual, self-indulgent pleasure. His anguish is palpable.

Scene 2 of Act 5

Faustus is spending his last night on earth with the three scientists. They notice something isn't quite right. Faustus sighs and appears to be terrified by something they can't see. He mentions the concept of eternal death. The scientists interrogate Faustus until he admits that an excess of sin has "damned both body and soul." They advise him to pray to God for forgiveness, but the doctor claims his sins are worse than the serpent's temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. He then confesses to Lucifer and Mephistophilis that he has rejected God, blasphemed, and sold his soul to them. The scientists are appalled and unsure how to help Faustus, other than to pray. As the clock strikes eleven, the doctor sends them away for their own safety.

Faustus, in desperation, begs time to stop so that midnight will never come. He now longs for the opportunity to repent and save his soul. He can feel hell dragging him down even as he reaches for heaven. Faustus prays to Christ and then Lucifer for mercy. He begs the mountains and hills to fall on top of him and hide him. When they don't, he prays for his soul to be torn from his body by a brutal storm brewing in the clouds, allowing him to ascend to heaven.

Notes

The clock strikes thirteen o'clock. Faustus wants to make a deal with God as his horror grows. Faustus begs God to set a limit on his punishment in hell in the name of Christ, whose death atoned for all sins. If he is finally rescued, a hundred thousand years is not too long. He then curses himself and Lucifer for his fate, cursing the fact that he has a soul at all, cursing his parents for giving him life, and finally cursing himself and Lucifer for his fate. The clock strikes 12 o'clock. Devils appear as thunder and lightning erupt. Faustus, in a panic, renounces magic and declares that he will burn his books. He is, however, too late, and the devils drag him to hell.

The time has come for Faustus to pay the price for his dark knowledge. He has stubbornly refused to repent and save his soul despite numerous opportunities to do so. His previous theological mastery, which taught him that hell is terrifyingly real, has not served him well. He has fooled himself into thinking hell is a fable or not so bad because of his defiance. Now that its existence, with all of its horrors, is becoming more real by the minute, Faustus can't help but admit what he's been up to someone. The scientists are astounded by the lengths to which Faustus has gone in pursuit of knowledge. They, too, are Renaissance men who place a high value on education, but they would not go down the same path as Faustus. They beg him to repent and vow to pray for his soul, but they fearfully abandon him, as if God's mercy is insufficient.

Faustus asks time to stop, to give him time to repent, rather than taking the direct path to repentance that the Good Angel and the old man have described. *Oh run slowly, slowly, ye horses of the night!* he exclaims, quoting Ovid's Amores. This quote contains verbal irony. The speaker of the poem lies in his lover's arms, praying for the slow arrival of dawn so that his time with him will not be cut short. It's an ecstatic love scream. For a different reason, Faustus is asking for more time. Faustus appears to beg for more time to make up his mind, enjoy life, or find a loophole in his deal with Lucifer, rather than outright rejecting magic.

Faustus reaches for heaven, body and soul, when time fails to slow for him, but something pulls him down. He discovers that he is caught in the middle of redemption and damnation. He knows how deeply he has offended God and the repercussions of God's wrath as a theologian. He despairs once more, pleading with the mountains to fall on him and hide him. His plea is reminiscent of Revelations 6:16–17 in the Bible: "And they said to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of Their wrath has come, and who is able to stand against it?'" The Book of Revelations in the Bible describes the Apocalypse, the end of the world, during which God destroys evil and evildoers and rewards those who are morally worthy by allowing them to join a new, heavenly kingdom.

Next, Faustus blames his impending doom on forces beyond his control, specifically the stars. Heavenly bodies are said to emit an ethereal substance that influences a person's personality and fate. He begs these celestial realms to do what God will not: release his soul. When nothing changes, he tries to make a deal with God to shorten his stay in hell. He curses the fact that he has a soul and desires fervently that Greek philosopher Pythagoras' theory of soul transmigration were true. This is the idea that after the body dies, the soul goes on to a new body. The soul would begin a new life as a human, animal, or spirit, depending on the quality of the previous life.

Faustus vows to burn his books if only God will save him at the last moment. This was once thought to be evidence that a magician was giving up magic. Regrettably, the promise arrives too late. Faustus never admits his sins, renounces his pact with Lucifer, and asks God for forgiveness and mercy without making excuses or evasions. Instead of taking the clearly marked road to salvation, he has stubbornly travelled a freeway to damnation, all the while looking for an unmarked off-ramp, an escape route.

Conclusion

Faustus is in hell, according to the chorus. His twisted, unhealthy life has been chopped off, just like the branch of a tree that has grown twisted and unhealthy. His chances of greatness and immortality have been shattered. The chorus warns that, while it may be fascinating to consider Faustus' life path, the wise will recognise that following in his footsteps is dangerous.

Examine

The chorus assures the audience that Faustus is in hell, and the line *And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough* sums up everything he has lost. Apollo, the Greek deity of wisdom, art, poetry, and oracles, is associated with experience, art, poetry, and oracles. A wreath of laurel, Apollo's symbolic tree, was given to winners of athletic competitions and poetry contests in ancient times. Because the leaves never wilt, the laurel is also associated with eternity or immortality. While fame may have brought Faustus triumph and immortality, his twisted aspirations have led him to the fiery pits of hell.

While the chorus blames Faustus for his *hellish fall* and *fiendish fortune,* it also expresses sympathy for the man whose great potential was never realized. *The branch that would have grown completely straight*, he says. The last line implies that God punished Faustus for doing *more than celestial power permits*. The doctor, like Daedalus and his son Icarus, *mounted above his reach* and the *heavens conspired his overthrow*, according to the chorus in the prologue. To put it another way, Faustus is doomed from the start because he seeks "illegal things." His life serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of seeking knowledge diligently and avoiding the pitfalls of pride and ambition.

Self-Assessment/Evaluation

1. During the play, how does Marlowe use the classical concept of the chorus?
2. Is it possible for Dr. Faustus to repent after his original contract with Lucifer?
3. What role does Greek classical imagery play in the play?
4. Discuss the flaws in the drama's structure.
5. How does Faustus' use of his magical abilities tie in with his previous wishes and plans?

Review Questions

1. What kind of tragedy is Doctor Faustus? Give a reasoned answer.
2. Give a character sketch of Mephistopheles in 300 words.

2.5 Concept of Heaven and Hell

The human heart is the abode of both God and the Devil, or heaven and hell. If we recall the famous lines from Milton's Paradise Lost:

"The mind is its own place, and in itself,

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."

However, myths and mythologies also promote the concept of a traditional physical Hell. It's an endless and terrifyingly dark place where a molten fire burns incessantly, tormenting the damned souls of despicable sinners. Then there's the celestial hell formed by man's mind inside himself, where the root of torment is the knowledge of imminent doom and damnation, as well as the loss of heaven's eternal bliss.

The definition of hell in *Doctor Faustus* is primarily metaphysical. The first mention of hell occurs in Act I's third scene, when Mephistophilis appears before Faustus after his first magic performance. In response to Faustus's inquiry, Mephistophilis says he is one of these:

"Unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer."

and is doomed to an eternity in hell. When Faustus asks him how he is getting out of hell at the moment, melancholic Mephistophilis responds with a deep and poignant response:

"Why this is hell, nor am I out of it:

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?"

As a result, Mephistophilis eloquently reveals that he suffers from a relentless gnawing at his heart because of losing both God and Heaven. As a result, hell is truly inside him.

Notes

After eventually surrendering his soul to Lucifer and signing the deed with his own blood, Faustus demanded to know the exact location of hell from Mephistophilis, and Mephistophilis describes the essence of hell as follows:

"Within the bowels of these elements,

Where we are tortur'd and remain for ever!

Hell hath no limits nor is circumscrib'd

In one self place; for where we are is hell,

And where hell is, there must we ever be."

The same concept is expressed in Milton's Paradise Lost: "Hell flies with Satan," and Satan himself declares, "Myself am Hell." Because of Mephistophilis' explanation, it is apparent that hell is not anything external to man. The terrifying tortures of hell are endured by a man inside his own self, and it is truly found within the heart and soul of a sinner.

The Sufferings and Sins of Faustus

The greatest sin of a man, according to Christian theology, is his *aspiring ego* to become a god himself by denying God and Christianity. Even Lucifer, *an angel once and most dearly loved by God*, was cast out of heaven and damned for all eternity for his *aspiring vanity and insolence*. Faustus committed this heinous crime by entrusting his soul to the Devil to *win a diety* and by voluntarily rejecting Christianity. And he only had two options left. The first was to seek God's grace through prayer and penitence, while the second was to plunge deeper and deeper into sin and the pit of hell, losing all hope of salvation. And Faustus rolled down the hellishly smooth lane. With his intellectual arrogance and insolence, with his usual Renaissance paganism, he dismisses Mephistophilis' timely alarm and declares arrogantly:

"Think'st them that Faustus is so fond to imagine

That after this life, there is any pain?"

Can he, however, escape the mental anguish that must accompany any act of sin or crime? After committing his act of surrendering his soul to the Devil, Faustus succumbs to his own fears and insecurities, and an intense battle between heaven and hell begins in his soul, continuing until his tragic end. With his sense of sin and folly, and the excruciating pricks of his guilty conscience, Faustus becomes hell itself, much like Mephistophilis. Faustus may reject and condemn God and the Trinity, but he is undeniably emotionally attached to them. That is why, right from the beginning to the end of this tragic drama, he is plagued by a guilty conscience.

In the final scene, Faustus discovers, much to his dismay, that he is condemned to eternal damnation with little chance of salvation. And Doctor Faustus' most profound soliloquy, which begins just before an hour before his final doom, shows the deep anguish of a horror-struck soul meeting its imminent doom in a very forceful manner. And we have the definition of both forms of hell in Faustus's last hour soliloquy—conventional or actual hell as well as metaphysical hell. Doctor Faustus is frightened by the dim and frightening prospect of a gaping hell, and, like Mephistophilis, Faustus is tormented by a thousand hells, ".....in being robbed of eternal bliss?" The debilitating pangs and tortures of the 'thousand hells' are most poignantly expressed in lines like:

"O God,

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,

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

Impose some end to my incessant pain.

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,

A hundred thousand, and at last be saved!"

Faustus performs his first great magical feat, summoning Mephistophilis, one of Lucifer's chief agents, after abandoning god and Christianity. Mephistophilis advises Faustus that the quickest way to learn necromancy is to abandon faith in God and pray only to the Prince of Hell, the Devil. Faustus then informs him that he has already met the condition. His only hope now is that there is no leader greater than Belzebub. He's also totally given himself up to the Devil. Since he does not distinguish

between hell and heaven, Faustus claims that he is not afraid of being damned. The spirits of noble people dwell in Elysium, while the souls of the damned live in hell. Faustus, on the other hand, sees little difference between hell and heaven. He also expresses his desire for his spirit or ghost to enter the spirits of the ancient philosophers. The ancient philosophers did not believe in any form of after-death reward or punishment. Faustus, too, does not believe in any after-death retribution or reward. As a result, hell and heaven have no sense for him. Faustus does not distinguish between hell and heaven since he rejects Christianity.

Self- Assessment/Evaluation

i. Discuss the concept of heaven and hell in the play *Doctor Faustus*.

ii. Give a character sketch of Doctor Faustus.

2.6 Master Servant Dichotomy

The relationship between the servant and the master is one of the central character relationships and a recurring theme in Doctor Faustus. Faustus' fundamental ambition is to be the ruler of the entire universe, rather than a slave to everything. He sells his soul to fulfil this wish. For the next twenty-four years, Mephistophilis is Faustus' servant, and he must carry out all of Faustus' wishes and orders. The paradox is that, in order to gain this mastery for these few years, Faustus must sell his soul, and as a result, he is no longer a free man, but rather a slave to his desires. Furthermore, when Mephistophilis first appears, he informs Faustus that total freedom does not exist. He admits that he is now Lucifer's servant and that everything in the world is now subjected to something else.

Another servant-master relationship exists between Faustus and his pupil Wagner. Wagner, the doctor's inferior pupil, represents the servant who does not understand his master or what is going on around him. Wagner aspires to be like Faustus in many ways, and to wield all of the strength that his master wields. He becomes one of the drama's comic devices as a result of his defeat. He attempts to use his supernatural abilities to compel the clown to obey him, creating yet another servant-master partnership. On a comic level, there is an even more egregious abuse of authority. Faustus' critical friendship with Mephistophilis has a more universal meaning, as Wagner's comic acts demonstrate. Faustus' acts have an effect on others, since Wagner attempts to mimic his master and fails miserably.

In the comic interludes, the master-servant relationship is taken to even more comic extremes in the relationship between Robin and Ralph. Robin obtains one of Faustus' conjuring books and attempts to compel Ralph to serve him.

As a result of this servant-master relationship, in which the master's actions affect the servant's conduct and fate, the comic episodes are loosely linked to the serious aspects of the drama.

2.7 Fall Motif

The drama's fall motif is derived from two sources, one Christian and the other classical. The picture of Icarus and his fall introduces the classical motif at the start of the play. Icarus was stuck in a labyrinth, so his father made him wax wings so he could fly over the perplexing maze and escape. Icarus, proud of his ability to fly, soared too close to the light, melted his wax wings, and drowned in the sea. As a result, the picture or allusion to Icarus should conjure up the concept of pride causing a person's fall and eventual death.

The Christian image of Lucifer's collapse is juxtaposed with this classical image. Because of his vanity, Lucifer rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. The focus in both images is on pride leading to a crash. The photos often allude to Faustus' case, in that he is a proud man who aspires to rise above his human limitations and, as a result, falls to his death. The many delusions to a "fall" in the drama brace him for his plunge from a potential state of redemption into one of eternal damnation.

Self- Assessment /Evaluation

i. Discuss the theme of the play *Doctor Faustus*.

Notes

ii. Do you agree with the view that Doctor Faustus is a renaissance man? Give a reasoned answer.

Further Reading

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Unit 03: Renaissance theater, the seven sins in Christianity

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Elaborate renaissance theater;
- Illustrate the seven cardinal sins as ordered Marlowe in the play Doctor Faustus;
- Enumerate an illustrative analysis of the seven sins.

Introduction

The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, commonly referred to simply as Doctor Faustus, is a play by Christopher Marlowe, based on the Faust story, in which a man sells his soul to the devil for power and knowledge. Marlowe very effectively depicted the seven deadly sins in the charcater of Doctor Faustus. But what exactly is sin? While there are many definitions of sin, the broadest and most accurate definition of sin is found in 1 John 5: 17: "All wrongdoing is sin. In other words, all unrighteousness is considered sin. The Bible has clearly and emphatically indicated that which is not right; Gods laws and standards are very specific, showing us His utter and complete holiness. This unit elaborates the seven deadly sins used in Doctor Faustus at length.

3.1 English Renaissance Theatre

The Elizabethan theatre, also known as English Renaissance theatre, refers to the theatre in England between 1562 and 1642. The plays were written during the Reformation and the Puritan Revolt in 1642, when the theatres were closed. Early modern English theatre is another name for it. It includes William Shakespeare's plays, as well as those of several other well-known playwrights.

The mystery plays that were part of religious festivals in England and other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages influenced Renaissance theatre. The mystery plays were intricate retellings of legends focused on biblical themes that were first performed in churches but later became more closely associated with secular festivities that grew up around religious festivals. Other references include morality plays that originated from the mysteries, as well as "University theatre," which tried to reenact Greek tragedy. The Italian Commedia dell'arte tradition, as well as the elaborate masques often performed at court, inspired the growth of public theatre.

Foreground

Before Elizabeth I's reign, there were companies of players attached to the households of influential noblemen and playing seasonally in different locations. The professional actors who appeared on the Elizabethan stage built their careers on these foundations. The tours of these actors eventually displaced local actors' performances of mystery and morality plays, and a 1572 law labelled the remaining companies without formal patronage as vagabonds. At court, masques performed by

courtiers and other amateurs, which were apparently popular during Elizabeth's early reign, were gradually replaced by professional companies with noble patrons, who grew in number and quality during her reign.

The City of London authorities were usually hostile to public performances, but the Queen's taste for plays and the patronage of the Privy Council overcome their opposition. Theaters sprung up in the suburbs, especially in the liberty of Southwark, accessible to city dwellers across the Thames but beyond the authority's influence. The companies pretended that their public shows were merely dress rehearsals for their regular appearances before the Queen, but while the latter provided prestige, the former provided the real source of income for professional players.

The character of the drama shifted toward the end of the time, along with the economics of the profession. In terms of social status, Elizabeth's drama was a unified expression: the Court saw the same plays that the commoners saw in the public theatres. Drama became more geared toward the tastes and ideals of an upper-class audience as private theatres grew in popularity. By the end of Charles I's reign, few new plays were being produced for the public theatres, which were thriving on the backlog of previous decades' work.

Theatrical life was largely based just outside of London, as theatre was forbidden within the city limits, but plays were performed by touring companies around the world.

English theatre companies have also toured and produced English plays in other countries, such as Germany and Denmark.

The time period begins before the first permanent theatres are built. The courtyards of inns and the Inns of Court, such as the Inner Temple, were the first locations where plays were performed. Even after permanent theatres were constructed, these locations were still used.

The 'Red Lion,' the first permanent English theatre, opened in 1567, but it was a flop. The Theatre, for example, was one of the first famous theatres to open in 1576.

The establishment of large and successful public theatres was a vital enabler of English Renaissance drama's success. Drama could become a fixed and enduring phenomenon rather than a passing fad once they're in place. The Mayor and Corporation of London first outlawed plays in 1572 as a precaution against the plague, and then officially expelled all players from the city in 1575, triggering their construction. This prompted the establishment of permanent playhouses outside of London's jurisdiction, in the liberties of Halliwell/Holywell in Shoreditch and later the Clink, and at Newington Butts in rural Surrey, near the existing entertainment district of St. George's Fields. The Theatre was built in Shoreditch in 1576 by James Burbage and his brother-in-law John Brayne (the owner of the failed Red Lion playhouse of 1567), and the Newington Butts playhouse was founded between 1575 and 1577, most likely by Jerome Savage. The Curtain Theatre (1577), the Rose (1587), the Swan (1595), the Globe (1599), the Fortune (1600), and the Red Bull followed quickly behind (1604).

Archaeological excavations on the foundations of the Rose and the Globe in the late twentieth century revealed that although all of London's theatres were unique, their common purpose necessitated a similar general plan. The public theatres were three floors tall and focused on a central open space. The three levels of inward-facing galleries, which were usually polygonal in plan to offer an overall rounded effect (though the Red Bull and the first Fortune were square), overlooked the open middle, into which jutted the stage—essentially a platform surrounded on three sides by the audience, with only the rear restricted for the actors' entrances and exits and seating for the musicians. The upper level behind the stage could be used as a balcony, as in Romeo and Juliet or Antony and Cleopatra, or a vantage point from which an actor could instruct the audience, as in Julius Caesar.

The playhouses were usually three stories tall and made of wood and plaster. Individual theatre descriptions include additional details about their design, such as the use of flint stones in the Swan. Theatres were often designed to accommodate large groups of people.

The Blackfriars Theatre, which opened in 1599 and has been in continuous use since then, created a different model. In contrast to earlier theatres, the Blackfriars was small and roofed rather than open to the sky; it resembled a modern theatre in ways that its predecessors did not. Other small enclosed theatres, such as the Whitefriars (1608) and the Cockpit (1609), followed (1617). In 1629, the Salisbury Court Theatre was built near the site of the now-defunct Whitefriars.

The Globe, the Fortune, and the Red Bull were the three remaining large open-air "public" theatres, and the Blackfriars, the Cockpit, and the Salisbury Court were the three smaller enclosed "private" theatres. The plays of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries were already being

performed on a daily basis (mostly at public theatres) in the 1630s, and the newest works of the newest playwrights were plentiful as well (mainly at the private theatres).

The total theatre capacity of London was about 5000 spectators around 1580, when both the Theatre and the Curtain were full on summer days. After 1610, the capital's total theatre capacity reached 10,000 due to the construction of new theatre facilities and the establishment of new companies.

Ticket prices fluctuated a lot during this period. The price of admission was determined by where a person chose to sit in the theatre or by how much money they had. People would pay extra for their entry if they wanted a better view of the stage or to be isolated from the crowd. In certain theatres, admission increased from a penny to a sixpence or even more due to inflation during this time period.

Performance Arts

The acting companies used a repertory system; unlike today's plays, which can run for months or even years, the troupes of this period seldom performed the same play twice in a row. The authorities closed Thomas Middleton's A Game at Chess after nine consecutive performances in August 1624, but this was due to the play's political content and was a one-of-a-kind, unparalleled, and unrepeatable phenomenon. Consider the 1592 Rose Theatre season of Lord Strange's Men: from February 19 to June 23, the company performed six days a week, except Good Friday and two other days. They performed 23 different plays, some just once, and 15 times of their most famous piece, The First Part of Hieronimo (based on Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy). They rarely played the same play twice in a week, and they never played the same play two days in a row. The actors' workload must have been enormous, particularly for leading actors like Edward Alleyn.

One of the companies' distinguishing features was that it only employed men. Female roles were performed by teenage boys dressed as women. Since there was no artificial lighting, performances were also held in the afternoon. Candles were lit as the light began to dim, allowing the play to continue until the end. The scenery was portrayed by the actors in the play, so there was little or no scenery.

Dresses

Colorful, visually enticing, and costly costumes were common during this time period. Because of the fast-paced nature of the plays and their runs, there was always little time to create period-appropriate costumes for the actors. As a result, the actors dressed in modern rather than period-appropriate apparel for the plays. Patrons also donated costumes to actors, but most of the time, actors wore the clothes of the day.

Characters were also known by their costumes. Colors were used to represent class, and costumes were designed to reflect that. If a character was royalty, for example, their costume would contain purple. The different colours and fabrics of the costumes helped viewers to identify each actor's role as they entered the stage. Despite the fact that the English Sumptuary Law of 1574, which specifically specified the colour, style, and fabric of clothing that different castes might wear, a provision was inserted that permitted actors to dress in clothes that were above their rank as long as they were members of a licenced acting troupe.

Authors of plays

London's increasing population, its people's growing wealth, and their love of spectacle resulted in a dramatic literature of remarkable variety, nature, and scope. Over 600 plays written for the Elizabethan stage have survived, despite the fact that the majority have been lost.

These plays were often written by self-made men from humble backgrounds (at the time, no women employed as professional dramatists). Some were educated at Oxford or Cambridge, but the rest were not. While some writers, such as William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, were actors, the majority do not seem to have been, and no major author who appeared after 1600 is known to have supplemented his income by acting.

Not all of the playwrights are portrayed as writers or philosophers in today's society. Ben Jonson killed an actor in a duel, while Christopher Marlowe was killed in an apparent tavern brawl. Several of them were most likely soldiers.

Playwrights were typically paid in instalments during the writing process, and if their play was approved, they would also receive the proceeds from one day's production. They did not, however, own the plays they wrote. A play was sold to a corporation, and the playwright had no influence over casting, performance, revision, or publishing once it was sold.

The job of a dramatist was both difficult and unrewarding. According to entries in Philip Henslowe's diary, Henslowe paid as little as £6 or £7 per play in the years around 1600. This was most likely on the low end of the scale, but even the best authors couldn't expect much more. Working alone, a playwright could only produce two plays per year; in the 1630s, Richard Brome signed a contract with the Salisbury Court Theatre to supply three plays a year, but he couldn't keep up with the demand. In a career spanning more than two decades, Shakespeare produced less than 40 solo plays; he was financially prosperous because he was an actor and, more importantly, a participant in the company for which he played and the theatres in which they performed. Ben Jonson made a name for himself as a purveyor of Court masques and a master of the patronage game, which was a big part of the social and economic life at the time. Those who were purely playwrights did even worse; the biographies of early figures such as George Peele and Robert Greene, as well as later figures such as Brome and Philip Massinger, are characterised by financial insecurity, hardship, and poverty.

The majority of plays written in this period were collaborations, and solo authors who usually avoided collaborative projects, such as Jonson and Shakespeare, were the exceptions. Of course, splitting the job meant dividing the money, but the arrangement seems to have performed well enough to make it worthwhile. (The adage "diversify your investments" may have applied as well to the Elizabethan play market as it does to the current stock market.) Around 50 of Thomas Dekker's 70 known works are collaborations; in a single year, 1598, Dekker worked on 16 collaborations for impresario Philip Henslowe and received £30, or just under 12 shillings per week—roughly twice as much as the typical artisan's daily wage of 1s. Thomas Heywood famously claimed to have had "an entire hand, or at least a key finger" in the authorship of 220 plays at the end of his career. A solo artist could take months to write a play (though Jonson is said to have completed Volpone in five weeks); Henslowe's Diary suggests that a group of four or five authors could complete a play in two weeks. However, the Diary also demonstrates that a group of Henslowe's house dramatists—Anthony Munday, Robert Wilson, Richard Hathwaye, Henry Chettle, and others, including a young John Webster—could begin a project, embrace advances, and yet struggle to produce something stageworthy. (The modern conception of teamwork in this period is skewed by the fact that errors have often vanished without a trace; see Sir Thomas More for an exception to this rule.) Most playwrights, such as Shakespeare, wrote in verse.

The simultaneous times of Elizabethan playwrights are represented in a timeline graph. It begins with George Peele and ends with James Shirley, portraying each playwright's life and work in relation to the monarchs of the time.

Various genres

The history play, which depicted English or European history, was a popular genre at the time. This category includes Shakespeare's plays about kings' lives, such as Richard III and Henry V, as well as Christopher Marlowe's Edward II and George Peele's Popular Chronicle of King Edward the First. A Larum for London, which dramatises the sack of Antwerp in 1576, is an example of a recent history play.

Tragic fiction was a hugely popular genre. Dr. Faustus and The Jew of Malta, two of Marlowe's tragedies, were extremely popular. Revenge dramas, such as Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, were especially popular with the audience. Many of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies (Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth) were written during this time period, as were many others (see Shakespearean tragedy).

Also famous were comedies. The city comedy, which satirises life in London in the style of Roman New Comedy, was a subgenre that emerged during this period. Thomas Dekker's The Shoemaker's Holiday and Thomas Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside are two examples.

Older genres such as pastoral (The Faithful Shepherdess, 1608) and even the morality play (Four Plays in One, ca. 1608-13) may have an impact, despite their marginalisation. During the reigns of the first two Stuart kings, James I and Charles I, the latest hybrid subgenre of tragicomedy, as well as the masque, flourished after around 1610.

Texts on paper

Only a small percentage of English Renaissance plays were ever printed; of Heywood's 220 plays, only about 20 were ever published in book form. In total, over 600 plays were published during this time period, most of them in quarto versions. (Larger collected editions of Shakespeare's, Ben Jonson's, and Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, for example, were a late and restricted development.) Play texts were thought to be influential among Renaissance readers and generated healthy income for the stationers who printed and sold them for most of the modern age. By the turn of the century,

academic opinion had changed somewhat on this belief: some modern historians claim that publishing plays was a risky and marginal business—though this assertion has been questioned by others. Plays were seldom published by some of the most influential publishers of the English Renaissance, such as William Ponsonby and Edward Blount.

A small number of plays from the time period have survived in manuscript form rather than as printed texts.

The English Parliament forbids plays, putting an end to the English Renaissance theatre.

The rising Puritan movement despised theatre, believing it to be a sinful form of entertainment. Playwrights and actors were political clients of the monarchy and bourgeoisie, and the majority of them supported the Royalist cause. The Puritan faction, long influential in London, took control of the city early in the First English Civil War, and on September 2, 1642, the Parliament, pushed by the Parliamentarian party and influenced by Puritans, outlawed the staging of plays in London theatres, though it did not order the closing, let alone the demolition, of the theatres themselves:

Whereas the distressed Estate of Ireland, steeped in her own Blood, and the distracted Estate of England, threatened with a Cloud of Blood by a Civil War, call for all practicable Means to satisfy and avert the Wrath of God, appearing in these Judgements; among which, Fasting and Prayer, having been tried and found to be quite successful, have been recently and are still being used.

The Act states that the prohibition is temporary ("...while these sad causes and fixed Periods of Humiliation continue, Public Stage Plays shall cease and be forborne"), although it does not define a time limit.

Even after the Puritans mandated banning of the performance of plays, theatrical activity that continued English Renaissance theatre could be seen to some extent after 1642, during the English Civil War and the subsequent Interregnum (English Commonwealth), even after the Puritans mandated banning of the performance of plays, theatrical activity that continued English Renaissance theatre could be seen to some extent, e.g. in the form of short comical plays called Drolls that were permitted by the authorities, while proper full-length plays were prohibited The theatres did not shut down. Other than staging plays, the buildings were used for other purposes.

The performance of plays was outlawed for the next eighteen years, only to be reinstated after the monarchy was restored in 1660. Many of the previous era's plays began to be performed again, but mostly in modified forms; modern Restoration comedy and spectacle styles soon appeared, giving English theatre of the late seventeenth century its distinct character.

List of Playwrights	List of Players	List of Playhouses	List of Playing Companies
William Alabaster	Edward Alleyn	The Theatre	The Admiral's Men
William Alley	Robert Armin	The Curtain	The King's Men
Robert Armin	Christopher Beeston	The Rose	King's Revels Children
Thomas Ashton	Richard Burbage	The Swan	King's Revels Men
William Barksted	Henry Condell	The Globe	Lady Elizabeth's Men
Barnabe Barnes	Alexander Cooke	Blackfriars Theatre	Leicester's Men
Lording Barry	Nathan Field	The Fortune	The Lord Chamberlain's Men
Francis Beaumont	John Heminges	The Hope	Oxford's Boys
Sir William Berkeley	Thomas Heywood	Red Bull Theatre	Oxford's Men
Samuel Brandon	Will Kempe	Red Lion (theatre)	Prince Charles's Men
Richard Brome	Augustine Phillips	Cockpit Theatre	Queen Anne's Men
Lodowick Carlell	John Lowin	Salisbury Court Theatre	Queen Elizabeth's Men
William Cartwright	William Rowley	Whitefriars Theatre	
William Cavendish	William Shakespeare		
Robert Chamberlain	Richard Tarlton		

George Chapman Henry Chettle John Clavell Robert Daborne Samuel Daniel William Davenant Robert Davenport John Day Thomas Dekker Edward de Vere Michael Drayton Richard Edwardes Nathan Field John Fletcher John Ford Abraham Fraunce Ulpian Fulwell Thomas Garter George Gascoigne Henry Glapthorne Thomas Goffe Arthur Golding Robert Greene Richard Hathwaye William Haughton Thomas Heywood Thomas Hughes Ben Jonson Henry Killigrew Thomas Killigrew Thomas Kyd Thomas Legge Thomas Lodge Thomas Lupton John Lyly Gervase Markham Christopher Marlowe Shackerley Marmion John Marston Philip Massinger	Joseph Taylor Nicholas Tooley	Newington Butts Theatre Inn-yard theatres	Queen Henrietta's Men Worcester's Men The Children of Paul's The Children of the Chapel (Queen's Revels)

Thomas May			
Thomas Middleton			
Anthony Munday			
Thomas Nabbes			
Thomas Nashe			
Thomas Norton			
George Peele			
John Phillips			
John Pikering			
Henry Porter			
Thomas Preston			
William Rankins			
Samuel Rowley			
William Rowley			
Joseph Rutter			
Thomas Sackville			
William Sampson			
William Shakespeare			
Edward Sharpham			
Henry Shirley			
James Shirley			
Philip Sidney			
Wentworth Smith			
Sir John Suckling			
Robert Tailor			
Cyril Tourneur			
John Webster			
George Wilkins			
Arthur Wilson			

3.2 Seven Deadly Sins in Doctor Faustus

The audience also observes the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins in Doctor Faustus. This is another feature borrowed by Marlowe from the tradition of the morality play. In Marlowe's play, to divert Faustus' attention from Christ, his savior, Lucifer, comes with his attendant devils to rebuke him for invoking Christ and then presents the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins as a diversion. The following are the deadly sins:

Pride

Seeing ourselves as we are and not comparing ourselves to others is humility. Pride and vanity are competitive. If someone else's pride really bothers you, you have a lot of pride.

Envy

"Love is patient, love is kind…" Love actively seeks the good of others for their sake. Envy resents the good others receive or even might receive. Envy is almost indistinguishable from pride at times.

Wrath/Anger

Kindness means taking the tender approach, with patience and compassion. Anger is often our first reaction to the problems of others. Impatience with the faults of others is related to this.

Sloth

Zeal is the energetic response of the heart to God's commands. The other sins work together to deaden the spiritual senses so we first become slow to respond to God and then drift completely into the sleep of complacency.

Avarice/Greed

This is about more than money. Generosity means letting others get the credit or praise. It is giving without having expectations of the other person. Greed wants to get its "fair share" or a bit more.

Gluttony

Temperance accepts the natural limits of pleasures and preserves this natural balance. This does not pertain only to food, but to entertainment and other legitimate goods, and even the company of others.

Lust

Self control and self mastery prevent pleasure from killing the soul by suffocation. Legitimate pleasures are controlled in the same way an athlete's muscles are: for maximum efficiency without damage. Lust is the self-destructive drive for pleasure out of proportion to its worth. Sex, power, or image can be used well, but they tend to go out of control.

The Seven Deadly Sins, when mentioned, conjure up ancient tales of dark deeds and dark characters, like Faustus and Mephistopheles. Doctor Faustus supposedly sold his soul to the devil, the evil Mephistopheles and, in so doing, made himself prey to all types of corruption and degradation. In his descent into wickedness, the ruined Faustus committed all of these deadly sins: pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth. These sins were considered deadly because they led Faustus, or any man or woman who would commit them onto a path from which there was no return.

The characteristics that are considered to be the seven deadly sins can be described this way: Pride is the exaggerated opinion of one's worth in comparison to God and others and a willful oblivion to one's flaws. Envy is the unhealthy longing for the possessions, abilities, or status of another. Gluttony is excessive indulgence in the pleasures of food and drink. Lust is extreme desire for sexual and sensual gratification. Anger is manifested by fits of wrath and rage due to intolerance of others. Greed is an insatiable desire to acquire material goods. Sloth is an almost pathological laziness which hinders productivity and good health. Anyone possessing some of these vices was considered evil; anyone who possessed all of them was utterly doomed.

By using the words "seven deadly sins," it suggests that there are serious character flaws which may exist in a man and that the deeds which are produced as a result of these flaws have fatal consequences. All death is a type of separation; spiritual death is separation from God. The Bible indicates that sin ends in death: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Seven Deadly Sins as set forth in literature—pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth—are by no means an exhaustive list of sins. It has already established that all unrighteousness is sin, but the book of Proverbs also lists seven things that God hates: "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers." Yes, God has indicated that these are things that he despises and that every wrong is sin—but He has also provided a remedy:

"'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

If God has provided a remedy for sin, how can it be deadly? The deadliness of sin was erased through the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood. God loves us so much that He sent His Son to earth for the express purpose of accomplishing this. However, if we do not believe and accept what God has offered, than any sin we commit will be deadly. "For God so loved the world that he gave

his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

3.3 Marlowe's Cardinal Sins

Pride

Faustus is proud of his knowledge. Pride, creates Doctor Faustus' inability to repent, therefore ultimately resulting in his death. "His fall is caused by the same pride and ambition that caused the fall of angels in heaven, and of humanity in the Garden of Eden.". Faustus' fall is foreshadowed during his first encounter with a devil, inquiring of the reason for Lucifer's exile in hell.

FAUSTUS: How comes it then that he is prince of devils? MEPHASTOPHILIS: O, by aspiring pride and insolence For which God threw him from the face of Heaven.

An eternity in hell becomes Doctor Faustus' fate, a fate determined by his own irrational decisions. Although he is a well-educated scholar, traits of arrogance, selfishness, and pride hinder his judgment. Doctor Faustus' troubles begin when he craves power and knowledge beyond human capacity. Bored with his great knowledge, he wishes to find another subject to study to pacify himself and achieve happiness.

FAUSTUS: Then read no more, thou hast attained the end; A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit.

By making a deal with the devil, Faustus trades his soul for satisfaction, and a greater field of study. He is selfish—wanting knowledge, power, and fun without having to work or take responsibility for it. As result of his selfish desires, he signs a contract with his blood trading his soul for his desires, eternal peace for eternal anguish, thus beginning his hardships.

Throughout the twenty-four year period in which Faustus has power and knowledge, his pride is constant and emerges in several scenes. Evidence of this threatening pride begins as early as the prologue when the chorus compares Doctor Faustus with Icarus, their similarity being vanity.

This excerpt suggests, that like Icarus, Doctor Faustus' pride will lead to his overthrow. Other examples of Faustus' arrogance are the scenes in which he comments on the things that the devil shows him. Several times in the play, Faustus remarks that hat Mephastophilis shows or tells him could easily be figured out by his own student, Wagner.

To make a statement such as that is egotistical, and typical of his character. Other statements that Doctor Faustus made in which his egotism is apparent.

FAUSTUS. I charge thee to return and change thy shape, Thou art too ugly to attend on me;

FAUSTUS: Come, I think hell's a fable.

Thinkest thou that Faustus is so fond to imagine That after this life there is any pain?

Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives' tales.

In these examples, Doctor Faustus clearly regards himself on a higher level than hell and its devils. He will allow Mephastophilis to be his "servant", but only in a more becoming shape, even though it is Mephastophilis that brings Faustus his magic. Furthermore, despite Mephastophilis' warnings, Faustus is oblivious to the dangers about him; he believes nothing will or can happen to him. It is the notion of near superhuman power that Faustus possesses that creates this unmovable pride. Faustus believes he is all-knowing; if anything was wrong, he would perceive it.

The arrogance that hinders Doctor Faustus' judgment continues as the play progresses, and it is depicted in several scenes. Faustus wishes to visit the Pope, as he feels he is entitled, and during this encounter in which Faustus is invisible, he grabs, and important dish meant to be given to the Friar.

It is the extreme pride of Doctor Faustus that leads him to believe that he is more deserving of the special dish than the Pope. Faustus also reacts in the same manner with the horse-courser. Instead of selling his horse made of magic for a fair price, he insists on more money than the courser can afford. Throughout the play, Marlowe combines these shameful displays of pride with several interventions between Faustus and the Good and Evil Angels. During these encounters, Faustus is asked and given the chance to repent to receive God's forgiveness and release from his contract with Lucifer.

However, he reacts negatively to the Good Angel's advice and is tempted by the Evil Angel's persuasions of worldly possessions and power, to maintain his pact with Lucifer.

Despite his agreement with the devil, Faustus is a free individual. However, Faustus was too stubborn and overcome by his pride to realize his freedom, and therefore does not repent. He is again unconcerned with the fate that lies ahead of him. He believes himself to be so powerful that there is no pain in hell capable of harming him.

The level of pride that Faustus contains at the end of the play is still abundant, and at this point, it is too late for him. In his last words, Faustus finally realizes the terrible fate upon him and admits his vulnerability asking for mercy on his soul, but only to lessen the pain of hell.

FAUSTUS: O God, if thou wilt not have mercy on my soul, Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransomed me,

Impose some end to my incessant pain:

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years, A hundred thousand, and at last be saved

With the closing of the play as Doctor Faustus is sent to hell, there are many ironic details evident. The main one is that despite his great knowledge and power, Faustus makes the most unwise decision. Repenting to Mephastophilis instead of God, he gives up everything for nothing in return. In all his years with his new knowledge and power. He did nothing of significance; he merely played tricks and showed off his new talents. Marlowe's play is full of irony depicting the downfall of man riddled with sin. The underlying theme however is that, like Icarus and Lucifer, Doctor Faustus allows his pride, a key to most tragedies, to become excessive and ultimately it is his downfall.

Covetousness

Faustus demonstrates this in various scenes, when he evokes the devils magic, the want of a wife, and the overall actions of his character portray his pursuit of knowledge and glory. Usually this sin is manifested through sex, power, or image which demises the self control and can suffocate the soul. It is the self-destructive drive for pleasure which is out of control. Faustus ... performs his silly tricks for self indulgence.

Envy

Doctor Faustus wanted more in his life and envied the powers of others. Therefore he wanted to command the demons to control the world to his accord... Doctor Faustus was envious of the accomplishment of others and wanted to exceed their glory (Act One). In one of the comic scenes, scene 6, we learn that Robin and Rafe have stolen one of Faustus' books and plan to use it to seduce a woman. They must have been jealous of Faustus' power and his magical aptitude.

Wrath

Often this is our first reaction to the faults of others. Faustus demonstrates his impatience with the way he treats the people around him, his servants (demonic and human), as well as other characters

... Wrath is what Faustus feels when he conjures up horns to place on the head of a knight of Emperor Charles V, court. Since the knight shows skepticism in Faustus' powers, Faustus must rebuke his insolence by placing horns on the knight's head.

Gluttony

Glottony is temperance in accepting the natural limits of pleasures, and preserves of the natural balance. This does not pertain only to food, but to entertainment and other legitimate goods, and even the company of others. Faustus demonstrates gluttony when he evokes the use of the dark arts. He is attempting to go beyond his earthly knowledge while disturbing the natural balance of Gods laws and expectations. Faustus wants to elevate himself as an equal to God. In Faustus's eyes God is no longer the balance or medium in his life, the devil has become the greater power to Faustus. Faustus starts using the devils name in place of where one would use Gods name.

Sloth

Sloth in conjunction with the other sins, works to muffle the spiritual senses so we first become slow to respond to God and then drift completely into the slumber of complacency to the demonic ways. This is the sixth sin in the death of Faustus Faustus has become numb to his own sub

consciousness; he no longer abides by what he does. Even in the scene where he signs the contract with the devil, his blood congeals and he does not understand why. His own body is fighting the deadly deed he was attempting to do.

Lechery

Also known as greed is the seventh sin. Faustus also displays greed in act one when he states he has not accomplished greatness. Faustus wants to gain glory; he has expectations of others to get him his glory. Faustus uses Mephastophilis to gain glory and he does not acknowledge that the demon

is responsible for all the tasks he performs, but states it is his gift of the dark arts.

Summary

•The Seven Deadly Sins, when mentioned, conjure up ancient tales of dark deeds and dark characters, like Faustus and Mephistopheles.

•Doctor Faustus supposedly sold his soul to the devil, the evil Mephistopheles and, in so doing, made himself prey to all types of corruption and degradation.

•In his descent into wickedness, the ruined Faustus committed all of these deadly sins: pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth.

•These sins were considered deadly because they led Faustus, or any man or woman who would commit them onto a path from which there was no return.

- Pride is the exaggerated opinion of one's worth in comparison to God and others and a willful oblivion to one's flaws.
- Envy is the unhealthy longing for the possessions, abilities, or status of another.
- Gluttony is excessive indulgence in the pleasures of food and drink.
- Lust is extreme desire for sexual and sensual gratification.
- Anger is manifested by fits of wrath and rage due to intolerance of others.
- Greed is an insatiable desire to acquire material goods.
- Sloth is an almost pathological laziness which hinders productivity and good health.
- Anyone possessing some of the deadlly sins was considered evil and anyone who possessed all of them was utterly doomed.
- In Romans, Paul indicates that the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God.
- The Gospel is the Good News that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again; Jesus paid the price.
- God has promised to make us pure and white and whole; this cleansing and purification was provided through, His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Marlowe has ordered seven cardinal sins in his play Doctor Faustus, viz. pride, covetousness, envy, wrath, gluttony, sloth, and lechery.
- Faustus is proud of his knowledge. Pride, creates Doctor Faustus' inability to repent, therefore ultimately resulting in his death. An eternity in hell becomes Doctor Faustus' fate, a fate determined by his own irrational decisions. By making a deal with the devil, Faustus trades his soul for satisfaction, and a greater field of study.
- Throughout the twenty-four year period in which Faustus has power and knowledge, his pride is constant and emerges in several scenes. In these examples, Doctor Faustus clearly regards himself on a higher level than hell and its devils.

- It is the extreme pride of Doctor Faustus that leads him to believe that he is more deserving of the special dish than the Pope. Faustus also reacts in the same manner with the horse-courser.
- Despite his agreement with the devil, Faustus is a free individual. However, Faustus was too stubborn and overcome by his pride to realize his freedom, and therefore does not repent.
- The level of pride that Faustus contains at the end of the play is still abundant, and at this point, it is too late for him.
- With the closing of the play as Doctor Faustus is sent to hell, there are many ironic details evident. The main one is that despite his great knowledge and power, Faustus makes the most unwise decision.
- Faustus demonstrates covetousness in various scenes, when he evokes the devils magic, the want of a wife, and the overall actions of his character portray his pursuit of knowledge and glory.
- Doctor Faustus wanted more in his life and envied the powers of others. Therefore he wanted to command the demons to control the world to his accord.
- Often wrath is our first reaction to the faults of others. Faustus demonstrates his impatience with the way he treats the people around him, his servants (demonic and human), as well as other characters.
- Faustus demonstrates gluttony when he evokes the use of the dark arts. He is attempting to go beyond his earthly knowledge while disturbing the natural balance of Gods laws and expectations.
- Sloth is the sixth sin in the death of Faustus ... Faustus has become numb to his own sub consciousness; he no longer abides by what he does.
- Faustus also displays greed in act one when he states he has not accomplished greatness. Faustus wants to gain glory; he has expectations of others to get him his glory.

Keywords

Pride: It is excessive belief in one's own abilities, that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. It has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride is also known as vanity.

Envy: It is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.

Gluttony : It is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires.

Sloth: It is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

Gospel: It is the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again.

Lust: It is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body.

Anger: It is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as wrath.

Greed: It is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness.

Virtuous nature: Conforming to moral and ethical principles; morally excellent; upright nature.

Betrayal: To deliver or expose to an enemy by treachery or disloyalty.

Shrewdness: Astute or sharp in practical matters.

Regicide: A person who kills a king or is responsible for his death, especially one of the judges who condemned Charles I of England to death.

Prophecies: Something that is declared by a prophet, especially a divinely inspired prediction, instruction, or exhortation.

Contrivance: Something contrived; a device, especially a mechanical one.

Timidity: Lacking in self-assurance, courage, or bravery.

Imbecility: An instance or point of weakness; feebleness; incapability.

Superstition: A belief or notion, not based on reason or knowledge, in or of the ominous significance of a particular thing, circumstance, occurrence, proceeding, or the like.

Obscenity: The character or quality of being obscene; indecency; lewdness.

Review Questions

What is the weakness of Dr Faustus?

Is Dr Faustus a morality play? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the significance of the good angel and bad angel in the play?

Further Reading

Chambers, E.K. *The Elizabethan Stage*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923.

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Unit 04: Ben Jonson- The Alchemist: classical unities, miracle plays and morality plays, plot structure

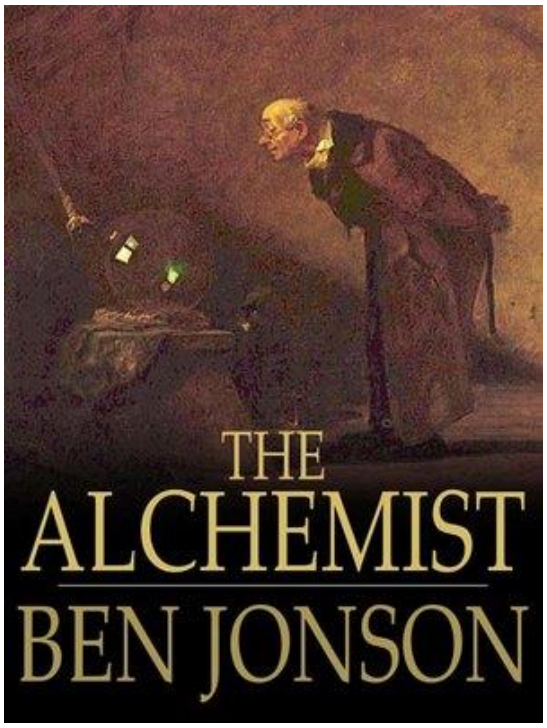
CONTENTS

Objective

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the significance of the three unities
- evaluate the elements of miracle and morality plays
- examine the development of drama
- elucidate the plot structure of the play *The Alchemist*

Introduction



The plague has struck London in the seventeenth century, and the city has been decimated. Lovewit, a wealthy local, flees to the countryside, leaving his townhouse in the possession of his trusted butler, Jeremy (dubbed "Face" in the play). Jeremy turns the house into a den of illegal activity as soon as his master has left. Assuming the guise of 'Face,' he enlists the aid of fellow conman Subtle and prostitute Dol Common, and sets out to rob half of London. Any knock at the front door soon becomes another unwitting victim eager to be robbed. When Sir Epicure Mammon arrives, ready to find the Philosopher's Stone, he brings an unexpected visitor with him: Pertinax Surly. Face and Subtle's nemesis, he's surly by name and surly by design, and he's determined to unmask the con men and expose them for the fraudsters they are. Face and Subtle's schemes get even more complicated as they discover a stockpile of gold, a wealthy widow, and Lovewit's surprising reappearance. Face's fast thinking saves him his work and life, while Subtle and Dol are forced to flee over the back wall with no gold.

The play deftly fulfils the classical unities while clearly depicting society's vices. This play is considered a Renaissance play because of its opposition to deceptive religious beliefs.

The new-fangled self-confidence is echoed in Jonson's satire. For the first time in this play, he applies his traditional play opening to a modern London setting, with energising results. The traditional elements, most notably the relationship between Lovewit and Face, are totally rationalised; similarly, the portrayal of 17th century London is given direction and course by the orthodox indulgent of comedy as revenue to expose immorality and imprudence to mockery.

4.1 The Three Unities

French Classicism derived the concept of unities in drama and tragedy from Aristotle's poetics. The unity necessitated a play with a single action portrayed in a single location during the day. Unity of Time, Place, and Action is the name given to this concept.

In his 1570 reading of Aristotle, Italian humanist Lodovico Castelvetro redefined these three unities. Aristotelian laws for dramatic structure are commonly referred to as three unities. When we discuss Aristotle's observations on tragedy, we learn that they are descriptive rather than prescriptive. Just one plot or action unit was highlighted by him.

The unities were adhered to literary and became the source of endless critical palemices in French Classical Tragedy. According to this tragedy tale, the hero must spend 24 hours in a single location, which may be a room or a city.

Until the Romantic age, the prestige of these unities dominated French drama.

Unity of Action:

A play should have only one key event and no or few subplots.

We must note the Triangle Of Freytag when discussing plots with unity of action. Because of its three sections, Begging, Middle, and End, it is the most significant. When the game started The rising action leads to a climax in the middle of the play, from which the dropping action and the play's conclusion emerge.

The plot has to be complete. Beginning, centre, and end in their entirety. The ideal scenario, according to Aristotle, does not have a subplot. The play "Romeo and Juliet" is the best example. An old rivalry emerges as a subplot in the play.

The event must be a one-of-a-kind mix. A single person's story. If we find a subplot in a novel, we can conclude that the story lacks unity of action. Aristotle is opposed to multiple actions because he claims it dilutes the tragic outcome. He believes that a series of events should be linked together in such a way that they all contribute to the same impact.

Aristotle explains his theory of tragedy in his poetics. The story, according to that, is a crucial element of the tragedy. Plot, he believes, is the soul of tragedy. He describes plot as the "assembly of events." As a result, the plot must be complete and contain all. This is where the concept of "unity of movement" comes into play.

Scenes must be related to one another. Scenes must be connected to one another and set the stage for the next. The game has to be self-relenting. It is unable to rely on any external power to maintain its unity of action. This external force is known as dues-ex-machina. In which the play's dilemma is solved by a sudden transition. Shakespeare's tragic play Macbeth is a good example of this. Character determines the cohesiveness of the action. However, the witches' prophecy leads to Macbeth's assassination of Duncan. Duncan's sons have devised a plot to exact vengeance on him. As a result, Macbeth is forced to commit further murders.

The plot's development is described by the unity of action. It also allows the viewer to engage with the play and motivates them and keep watching to see what happens next. As a result, the unity of action has become a strong weapon for distracting from logical errors and plot holes.

If the unity of action in a play is well managed, no one can doubt the logic of what is happening at the time because the facts are hidden inside several actions.

Unity of time:

In a play, the action should take place over no more than 24 hours.

The action of the play should take place in one revolution of the sun, according to Classical practise. If it is a tragedy, they believe it is the hero's last day. You are unable to depict the hero's upbringing or previous behaviour. If the author wishes to speak about the hero's history, he must use the course.

When we talk about movies and television shows these days, we can see how they use the flashback method to portray action from the past. They are able to do so because everything is registered. When it comes to the classical, though, using this approach is difficult because their audience is present. Whatever is going on is happening in front of the crowd, not in front of the camera. This technique is simple to use when this is done with a camera. However, when the viewer is present, it is complicated, which is why they conclude that when the disaster begins, it must be the hero's last day. And it is simple to demonstrate while the audience is present.

The unity of time presupposed that action must take place over the course of a single day. According to Aristotle, the length of time reflected in a play should preferably correspond to the actual time passing during its performance. Aristotle's idea can be seen in the analogy of the epic Beowulf and the tragedy Macbeth.

The action in Beowulf takes place over a five-year period. When we first meet Beowulf, he is in Daneland, assisting Hrothgar in ridding Hearot of Grendel. He rules over the area for five years after beating Grendel.

When it comes to Macbeth, we can see that the audience does not have a clear timeline. This audience can only believe that Malcolm and Donalbain are taking the proper steps to move across England and Ireland. The play does not specify when it takes place, but it could be interpreted as one continuous movement.

Limiting the play's action is similar to setting yourself a deadline to finish your storey as a writer. Even though the unity of time is beneficial, there are good plays that do not adhere to it. Chekhov's *Three Sister*, Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge*, and Cheryl Chruchill's *Far Away* are just a few examples.

Unity of place:

A play should take place in a single physical space and should not try to compact geography or reflect more than one location on stage.

When we think of ancient times, we can see that the plays were performed in front of an audience. There was no recording at the time, as there is now. We see movies recorded by cameras, so it's fine if they reveal different locations. However, since there is no recording at the moment, it is difficult for the audience to imagine the stage as the location where the event is taking place if they change locations often. We must also keep in mind that if the location changes often, the context must be changed accordingly. As a result, changing settings too often makes it difficult for crew members and actors to prepare according to position and thing. As a result, if the location is one, it is simple to carry out.

We can see from Aristotle's writings that he never discussed the unity of position. The three-unity theory, which has figured prominently in literary criticism. Renaissance isn't able to be credited to his account. He did not write it; it was thrust upon him by a Renaissance critic from France and Italy.

During the transaction cycle, the stage must be moved from one location to another, causing a break in the story's action, rhythm, and pacing, and sometimes dragging audience members out of the storey. Some audience members' willing suspension of disbelief is broken as they see set pieces and furniture pushed by stage hands and performers, reminding them that they are watching a performance rather than a slice of truth behind an unseen fourth well. It is less costly and easier to maintain a sense of location.

Example of a game that incorporates all three Unity elements:

The best example is Odious Rex, which meets all three unities. Since the events of the play take place over the course of a single day, it follows Unity of Time. Messenger reports on events that occurred in the past. As a result, we can conclude that it fits the Unity of Time.

Since all takes place on the palace steps, it adheres to the principle of unity of place. If Oedipus has to communicate with someone who isn't present, such as Teiresias, he must go to the palace. Oedipus does not go elsewhere. As a result, we can conclude that the play adheres to the Unity of Position principle.

Since all that occurs in a play is connected to Oedipus, the play's action is kept consistent. Oedipus and his subsequent investigation into the murder of Laius, followed by his own biography and parentage. In a play, we don't find any subplots. As a result, we can conclude that the play is based on the unity of action.

We may conclude that Oedipus Rex is the best example of three unities, since he follows both of them.

These three unities are drama laws derived from an Aristotelian poetics passage. Many writers and plays have been inspired by these unities. Though there are plays that do not adhere to these unities, they are still good. We may conclude that the rule of three unities is designed to help us better understand play.

4.2 Miracle and Morality Plays

The origins of English drama are a little hazy. There is no conclusive proof of its genesis. It may, however, be traced back to the century following the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Many scholars claim that drama followed them to England. According to legend, when the Romans arrived in England, they built a large amphitheatre to stage plays, but when they left, the theatre vanished.

The word drama comes from a Greek word that means "action," "to perform," or "to do." "Drama is an old tale told through the eye, a story put into motion by living performers," writes William J. Long. As a result, drama is a type of theatre composition in which the actors play specific roles, perform specific actions, and deliver specific dialogues.

Drama had a distinctly religious background in England, where it was used as part of church services. Apart from its origins, the Latin Church had a number of reasons for condemning Roman theatre. As a result, drama did not emerge until the tenth century, when the church started to incorporate dramatic elements into their services during a particular festival or rite. The reasons for the church's use of dramatic elements are uncertain. However, it was clear that the aim was didactic, i.e., to provide the believer with a thorough understanding of their religion's reality.

The "Quem Quarritis" trope (whom are you seeking) was the oldest extant church drama, in which the three Marrys visited the empty tomb of Christ and encountered an angel. Their dialogue with the angel is made up of four Latin sentences that are then translated and executed by the clergy in a rather simple manner. This basic start evolved into something more complex. Liturgical drama is a form of drama in which the storey is taken directly from the Bible. Previously, the play was performed within the church, with the storey composed by the clergy and performed by the clergy in Latin. Drama was not, however, performed in all churches; rather, it was limited to some cathedrals and monasteries with sufficient clergy to perform the plays.

Drama progressed from liturgical drama to Miracle and Mystery plays. Miracle was used to depict the lives of the saints in France, while Mystery was used to represent every scene from the Bible. In England, however, there was no difference between the two. Any tale taken from the bible or the scriptures, as well as the lives of the saints, was referred to as a miracle play.

"Ludus Santa de Katherina," which was performed in Dunstable around 11110, is the oldest Miracle play in England. The author of the original play is unknown, but the first version was written by Geoffrey, a French schoolteacher from St. Albans. The plays were either performed in Latin or in French. The Miracle play drew a large audience and boosted its success. The plays, which had previously been performed inside the church, started to be performed on the porch and then in the churchyards. However, when the plays started to disrupt church services and were too complex, the scandalised priest prohibited the play from being performed in the church. The Miracle Play started to move beyond the church in the thirteenth century. After the Miracle Play was moved outside of the church, secular organisations, such as town guilds, started to take over the making. During this time, few changes were made. The plays were performed in vernacular or local languages by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The actors were no longer clergy, but amateur actors who had been carefully educated and chosen. The performances took place in a series of mansions in the town square. The plays were staged on a moving platform known as pageants, with an act region known as pletea. Hell, earth, and heaven were divided into three sections on the stage. Hell is on the left, earth is in the centre, and heaven is on the right. Typically, props were used to identify the stages. The head of a dragon with red teeth, or a monstrous mouth with fire breathing, for example, represents hell, where the devil characters would be dragged. This time gave birth to the concept of redemption and damnation, which was later accepted by Dr. Faustus. Heaven, earth, and hell were the three worlds in which the costumes were divided. Heavenly characters, such as God, angels, saints, and Biblical figures, wore church robes with unique accessories. The earthly characters wore

the appropriate mediaeval garment for their rank at the time. Meanwhile, the devil dressed in black with wings, animal paws, beaks, horns, or tails.

The Council of Vienne resurrected the Corpus Christi feat in 1311. This annual festival takes place in June and lasts three to four days, with the possibility of extending to six days. The Miracle plays were performed in all of England's major cities. It was designed to tell the entire storey in a loop, from conception to the Day of Judgment. In England, there were four well-known cycles. York, Chester, Wakefield, and Coventry each have 48 plays, while York has 25 plays, Chester has 25, Wakefield has 32, and Coventry has 42. Dramas were written according to the Bible during this religious time, and no deviations were accepted. Until the sixteenth century, religious performances were held. Morality plays were a later development of drama. It's a dramatisation of personified abstraction pitting sin against morality in general. Death, sin, good and bad angels, the seven deadly sins, and other allegorical characters were personified in these plays. The intention of this drama was didactic, with the audience learning a moral lesson. In most morality plays, the good still triumphs over the bad. This play was distinguished by the introduction of a mischievous, comic, and humorous character known as "vice." Vice was the forerunner to today's clown or jester. "Everyman" and "The Castle of Perseverance" are two examples of morality plays. The beginning of the Morality Play also heralds the arrival of the so-called "interlude." The interlude is a condensed version of the morality play. Interludes were usually performed during the scene's break. It was the forerunner of comedies and was a short stage entertainment with a sense of humour. John Heywood's "The Four P's," performed about 1497, is an example of interlude.

The creative era was the final stage in the development of English drama. During this time, the object of the play was to portray human life as it is, rather than to point out a moral. Classical drama inspired English drama during this period. Nicholas Udall wrote the first comedy, "Ralph Roister Doister," in 1556. The play was written in rhyming couplets and was divided into acts and scenes. This first comedy served as a blueprint and forerunner for English comedies. About 1562, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Northon wrote the first tragedy, "Gorboduc." It was divided into acts and scenes and written in blank verse. Following this time, English drama evolved into a standard type of drama that flourished during Elizabeth's reign and is still known today. As a result, English drama evolved from liturgical drama to Miracle and Mystery plays, then to Morality and Interlude, which was influenced by the classical model, and finally to the standard drama types that we know today.

4.3 Ben Jonson: Life and Work

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was a successful early modern playwright who rivalled Shakespeare and Marlowe in terms of fame. He served many jail terms, wrote masques for the Queen of England and the Prince of Wales, and was appointed England's first poet laureate.

Despite this, he was born into relative poverty in 1572. His father died just before he was born, and his mother remarried to a bricklayer. Fortunately for Jonson, he was able to attend Westminster School thanks to the generosity of an unknown friend. After leaving school, Jonson tried to work as a bricklayer with his stepfather, but the job didn't work out; legend has it that young Ben recited Homer when constructing the walls of Lincoln Inn. Jonson served in the Low Countries' armed forces in the 1590s, and in November 1594, he married a woman he described as "a shrew, but honest."

It's unclear when Jonson first began acting, but by 1597 he was a member of the Admiral's Men. The Case is Altered, his earliest surviving play, was also performed by Pembroke's Company in this year.

Jonson's sharp tongue got him into a lot of trouble: the satirical comedy The Isle of Dogs, which Jonson co-wrote with Thomas Nashe, was performed in the summer of 1597, and the play enraged the powers that be. The play may have caused the Privy Council's order to close London theatres due to "lewd matters that are done on the stages, and by resorte and confluence of bad people," as Jonson and two other actors were arrested.

Jonson was released after just a few months, and he seemed to have forgotten his lesson. The Children of Her Majesty's Revels performed Jonson's Eastward Ho!, a collaboration with George Chapman and John Marston, in the summer of 1604. Eastward Ho! was a salacious response to John Webster and Thomas Dekker's Northward Ho! All three playwrights were imprisoned until October for mocking King James, the Scots, knights of the realm, and courtiers.

On a less political note, between 1599 and 1602, Jonson was involved in the "Battle of the Theatres," or "Poetomachia," in which he fought John Marston and Thomas Dekker by satirising each other in his plays and poetry.

Jonson really reached his stride in the early to mid-seventeenth century, writing such classic plays as Volpone (1605), The Alchemist (1610), Bartholomew Fair (1614), and The Devil is an Assailant (1615). (1616). Jonson specialised in portraying clever banter, confidence tricksters, and devils in disguise of all kinds, even when he wasn't casting thinly veiled aspersions on political figures.

Jonson was a man who enjoyed the finer things in life. He loved good food and creature comforts since he was raised in poverty. In his countless poems, he was a portly man who praised the finer stuff, and he sought appreciation from King James I's court. He composed over twenty masques for the court, including The Masque of Blackness, which was performed by Queen Anne herself. Jonson became England's first Poet Laureate in 1616.

Jonson was acutely aware of his reputation in a way that few other early modern playwrights were. He was the first playwright to have his work published as a structured folio, treating his plays as literary works rather than trivial stage productions. His works were divided into four categories in the 1616 folio: plays, poetry, masques, and entertainments. The engraving on the title page went to great lengths to connect Jonson to ancient Greek scholars.

Jonson was clever, intelligent, well-read, and as capable a poet as he was a playwright, so maybe the association was not unfair.

4.4 Jonson and Shakespeare

Shakespeare's greatest successor in English drama was born in London about nine years after Shakespeare's birth. Jonson lived twenty-one years longer than Shakespeare and contributed to the demise in drama. Ben Jonson, the son of a clergyman and the stepson of a master bricklayer, attended Westminster School and obtained a decent education. In one way, Jonson's education was unsuitable for a poet. He was taught to start with prose exercises and then move on to poetry. As a result, he developed the practise of attempting to articulate non-poetic ideas in verse. Art could convert prose into metrical rhyming lines, but it couldn't breathe poetry's life into them. Jonson later said that Shakespeare lacked art, but he acknowledged that the author of Hamlet had a natural magic touch. Jonson's pen was scarcely touched by her all-encompassing touch.

If Jonson did serve an apprenticeship as a bricklayer, as his enemies said afterward, he did not stay in the trade for long. He crossed the English Channel and enlisted as a soldier in the Netherlands for a short time. He soon returned to London, where he worked as a theatre writer and spent the rest of his life as an author and a reader. He enjoyed studying and translating classics. In reality, much of what a newcomer would think is original in Jonson's plays is often taken from the classics. "You follow him anywhere in their snow," Dryden says of his links to the classical poets.

Jonson was regarded as the most knowledgeable poet of his time because, if his plays required any special knowledge, no subject was too difficult, dry, or far from everyday life for him to master. He was familiar with Bohemia's borders, and he enjoyed telling a friend, "Shakespeare in a play brought in a number of men claiming they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near, by some hundred miles."

Jonson's personal characteristics help to explain why he fought against the spirit of the time. He was a savage fighter. It was almost a requirement for him to have a disagreement with someone or with an idea. If he hadn't pled advantage of clergy, he would have been hanged for killing two men in duels. He was preoccupied with pen and ink quarrels for the majority of his life.

When James I took the throne in 1603, Jonson became a royal favourite almost immediately. Jonson's Tomb in Westminster AbbeyHe was frequently commissioned to write masques, a peculiar type of drama that required magnificent scenery and costume and enabled the nobility to play the role of a distinguished or supernatural character. Jonson became close friends with the leading men of the day as a result of his work.

It's reassuring to know that he was Shakespeare's friend. "I loved the man and do respect his memory on this side idolatry as much as any," Jonson writes in Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter, a short volume of prose that includes his popular Shakespeare criticism. Few English writers have received such compelling testimony about lovable personality from a great rival author.

Jonson was appointed poet laureate in 1616, the same year Shakespeare died. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in an upright position when he died in 1637. His grave is marked by a simple stone inscribed with the special inscription "O Rare Ben Jonson."

The comedies of Ben Jonson are his most dramatic works. We can choose three of his plays to read out of all of them: Volpone, The Alchemist, and The Silent Woman. Volpone is the storey of a

Venetian nobleman who is aged, childless, and whose ruling passion is avarice. Anything else in the play is subordinated to this zeal. The first three lines of the first act hit the play's central theme. Volpone says:

"Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!

Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.

Hail the world's soul and mine! "

The Alchemist makes a good case for some types of credulity in human nature, as well as the unique tricks used by alchemists and impostors at the time. One character wishes to purchase the secret of the stars' beneficial power, while another is willing to part with his fortune in order to discover the alchemist's secret of turning everything into gold and jewels. The way these characters are duped is extremely amusing. The analysis of this play adds to our understanding of a particular period in history. The Alchemist is unsurpassed in terms of plot creative creation in English drama; nevertheless, the interference of Jonson's learning also makes the play boring to read, as when he uses scientific terms of the so-called science of alchemy to demonstrate that he has extensively learned it. One of the characters addresses-

"Your lato, azoch, zernich, chibrit, heautarit,"

and another asks:

"Can you sublime and dulcify? calcine?

Know you the sapor pontic? sapor stiptic,

Or what is homogene, or heterogene?"

Lines like the following show that Jonson's acute mind had grasped something of the principle of evolution:

"... 'twere absurd

To think that nature in the earth bred gold

Perfect in the instant: something went before.

There must be remote matter."

The Silent Woman is a more lighthearted play than any of the previous two. Morose is the main character, and his special whim or "humour" is a fear of noise. His house is on a street that is "so narrow at both ends that no coaches, carts, or any of these everyday noises" can pass by. He has mattresses on the stairwells and dismisses the footman because he wears squeaky shoes. For a long time, Morose has avoided marriage because he is afraid of the noise made by a wife's tongue. Finally, he asks his nephew to find him a quiet woman to marry, and the author takes full advantage of the potential for comedic scenarios that this change in the action provides. The Silent Woman was Dryden's favourite of the plays.

Aside from the plays listed in this section, Jonson wrote several other comedies and masques, as well as some tragedies, during his long life.

Marks of Deterioration A analysis of the decline of the drama, as depicted in Jonson's plays, can help us appreciate Shakespeare's genius. We may change Jonson's line to state one of the reasons for his lack of Shakespearean excellence:

"He was not eternal, but of a certain age."

His first play, Every Man in His Humor, depicts a particular kind of humour, rather than the universal emotions of men. As a result, he describes the way in which he employs humour:

"As when some one peculiar quality

Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw

All his affects, his spirits and his powers,

In their connections, all to run one way,

This may be truly said to be a Humor."

Unlike Shakespeare, Jonson portrays life in a skewed or incomplete manner. All in Volpone is subordinate to the avarice humour, which is given an unnatural amount of focus. There is nothing in The Alchemist to detract from the image of credibility and hypocrisy, while The Silent Woman's leading character is a man whose primary "humour" or goal in life is to escape noise.

No drama can be considered complete unless it depicts the nobler side of womanhood. We don't think a single woman capable of coming near the Shakespearean characters Cordelia, Imogen, or Desdemona in Jonson's plays. His failure to represent a virtuous woman is one of his most egregious flaws.

Another explanation for his failure to fully present life is shown in the following lines, in which he describes his mission:

"My strict hand

Was made to seize on vice, and with a gripe

Squeeze out the humor of such spongy souls

As lick up every idle vanity."

The greatest of men cannot be mere satirists, for the world needs building up rather than breaking down, a cure for a disease rather than fault-finding. Jonson's satire is cold and empty of sympathy, while Shakespeare's satire has some sympathy for the object of his satire.

Jonson took a stance against the romantic spirit of the time on purpose. Marlowe and Shakespeare had ignored the classical unities in favour of a romanticised version of the drama. Jonson vowed to design his plots in accordance with classical principles and to maintain a sense of time and place unity. For example, in the play The Silent Woman, the action lasts just twelve hours.

Characteristics in general. Jonson's plays have the touch of a thoughtful artist with a strong intellect. His immense knowledge shines through at all times. He is his era's satiric historian, displaying the follies and humours of the period through a strong lens. He also writes delicate lyrics and obnoxious prose criticism.

Among his plays' flaws, we can particularly notice a lack of feeling and universality. He doesn't understand what it's like to be a woman. He is not a compassionate observer of various aspects of life, but rather shows just what he sees through the frosted lens of intelligence. His work is self-aware. He defiantly rejected the romantic spirit of the time and undermined drama by imposing the classical unities on it.

The elegy *On My First Sonne* written after his seven-year-old son Benjamin died, is truly heartbreaking. Jonson was a Renaissance man in every sense of the word. The "Tribe of Ben," a group of poets who claimed to be inspired by and predecessors to Jonson, arose in the 1620s, and included Robert Herrick and Richard Lovelace. Jonson died on August 6, 1637, after suffering a series of strokes and falling out of favour with the court.

4.5 Plot Overview of *The Alchemist*

Face, a London servant and conman, enters with his criminal associates Subtle and Doll Common. Face's master, Lovewit, has fled the city for his country home due to a plague outbreak, and in his absence, Face is operating a criminal enterprise out of Lovewit's city home. They're waiting for their first victim of the day, Dapper, a law clerk. Face has persuaded Dapper that Subtle is a revered mystic and doctor of alchemy, and he is looking for a "familiar," a bit of alchemical magic that will help him win at cards and gambling. When Dapper arrives, he is greeted by Face, who is dressed as a captain. Subtle informs Dapper that he has the ability to summon a "familiar," but he is reluctant. Subtle says that alchemical magic cannot be used for such unethical purposes, but Dapper begs and promises to offer Subtle and Face half of his winnings. Subtle agrees and informs Dapper that in order to obtain his "familiar," he must meet the "Fairy Queen," who does not rise until the afternoon. He must return, but first he must complete the rite. Dapper must quick and put three drops of vinegar in each of his eyes, two in his mouth, and three in his nose. Then he must "hum" and "buzz" three times before washing the tips of his fingers and his eyes. Dapper accepts and rushes back home.

Abel Drugger, a local shopkeeper, is the next to arrive in Subtle, seeking guidance on his latest venture. To ensure success, he asks Subtle where he should position his door and shelves, as well as how he should show his merchandise. Subtle advises Drugger to face his new business south and to put a magnet under the threshold of his door to draw customers. Drugger was born under a "rare star," according to him, and would have a lot of success in business and in life. Drugger might also

come into possession of the philosopher's stone, a rare alchemical substance said to convert base metals to gold and create the elixir of immortality, which promises everlasting youth and life, according to Subtle. Drugger runs out the door, handing Subtle a handful of coins. Subtle appears on the face. Face claims that because it is his responsibility to locate "gulls" like Abel Drugger, he is entitled to a greater share of the income.

Sir Epicure Mammon and his companion Surly are the next to arrive. Mammon thinks Subtle is hard at work making the philosopher's stone for him, and he's been acting as if he already has it. Mammon will become wealthy as a result of the stone, and he will heal the sick and put an end to the plague. Surly does not believe in the philosopher's stone's magic, and he believes Face and Subtle are con artists; nevertheless, Mammon believes they are both genuine. Face, dressed as an alchemist's assistant, welcomes them and informs them that Subtle is busy with "projection," one of the final stages of the alchemical process, which results in the creation of the stone. Face learns about Mammon's ambitions for the elixir, which he intends to use to enhance his sexual prowess. He'll have sex with 50 different women every night, and his bedchamber will be lined with mirrors so that his reflection is multiplied as he walks naked around his "succubae." Subtle enters and tells Mammon to go home and get all of his metal and iron because they will be making "projection" soon. Surly tries to convince Mammon that Face and Subtle are con artists once more, but Mammon is distracted by Doll, who has just passed by. When Mammon returns, he is determined to meet her. Surly informs Mammon that Doll is obviously a prostitute and that they are in a "bawdy-house," but Mammon refuses to listen.

An Anabaptist named Ananias, who has come to barter for Mammon's metal and iron, answers the bell. Subtle and Face's fancy alchemical vocabulary doesn't please Ananias, who refers to them as "heathens." Subtle inquires about the money, but Ananias responds that he and his brethren will not offer Subtle any more money until they "see projection." Ananias is ejected in a subtly enraged manner, with the claim that he can only negotiate with Ananias' pastor in the future. Face walks in with Drugger, who tells him about Dame Pliant, a wealthy widow. Kestrel, Dame Pliant's brother, has arrived in town looking for someone to show him how to quarrel and survive on his wits. Kestrel is still searching for a husband for his sister, and he will only allow her to marry an aristocrat if she marries an aristocrat. Subtle is the wittiest man in London, according to Face, and he can even read Dame Pliant's horoscope. Face informs Subtle about the widow after Drugger offers to bring Dame Pliant and her brother to see them. They disagree briefly over who will marry Dame Pliant before deciding to draw straws—and not say Doll.

Tribulation Wholesome, Ananias' priest, returns with him. Men dislike and distrust Subtle and Face, and Tribulation also calls Subtle "antichristian," but they are willing to go to any length to obtain the philosopher's stone and advance their religious cause. Subtle apologises to Tribulation for Ananias' earlier visit, and Subtle informs him that he is still weeks away from making the stone, but he offers to teach them how to melt pewter and cast Dutch money in the meantime. Tribulation departs with Ananias, saying he would return to his brethren to see if casting money is legal. Face walks in and announces that he has just met a Spaniard who is really interested in meeting Doll and that he will be over shortly. When the doorbell rings, Doll says it's Dapper, who has returned for his "familiar." Face tells Doll to get ready by putting on her "Fairy Queen" disguise. Subtle enters dressed as a "Priest of Fairy" and informs Dapper that before meeting the Queen, he must clean his pockets of all valuables. Dapper is blindfolded and dressed in a petticoat—the only way the Fairy can see him—by Subtle and Face. Suddenly, another knock comes at the door. Face and Subtle don't want Dapper and Mammon to meet, so they gag him with a rag and a gingerbread cookie and shove him in the bathroom.

Mammon enters, carrying his metal and iron, and inquires about Subtle's whereabouts. Face appears to be busy in his laboratory, so Mammon instead inquires about Doll. Doll is a "rare scholar" and the sister of an aristocrat, according to Face, who believes she has gone insane after reading Puritan scholar's works. Face offers to introduce Mammon to Doll, but Mammon must avoid mentioning religion and keep their meeting quiet; otherwise, Subtle would refuse to give Mammon the stone. Doll walks in, and after a little sweet-talking from Mammon, they go to the garden for some privacy. Subtle then appears, accompanied by Kestrel and Dame Pliant. Subtle agrees to teach Kestrel how to be witty, but only if Dame Pliant is present. He kisses her and promises her she will soon marry an aristocrat while pretending to read her palm. Face enters with the Spaniard as Subtle escorts Kestrel and Dame Pliant to his office, where he can begin Kestrel's lesson and read Dame Pliant's fortune.

Surly is actually the Spaniard in disguise, but he acts as though he doesn't speak English, and Subtle and Face don't seem to care. They make fun of the Spaniard because they believe he doesn't understand them, and they freely say they're trying to "cozen" him. The Spaniard has come to see

Doll, who is busy in the garden with Mammon, as Face and Subtle recall. Face suggests that they add the Spaniard to Dame Pliant, and they begin to panic. Subtle hesitates at first because he wants Dame Pliant for himself, but eventually accepts. Face goes to find Dame Pliant and Kestrel and persuades them that the Dame is destined to marry a Spanish count, the best kind of aristocrat, according to Face. Kestrel agrees and sends his sister to the garden to meet Surly and get to know him. Doll and Mammon replace Face, Kestrel, and Subtle. Doll is ranting and raving in a fit of craziness, and Mammon is powerless to stop her. Face enters the room and leads Doll out, followed by Subtle, who is enraged that Mammon has clearly acted lustfully with Doll. He argues that Mammon's actions would cause "projection" to be delayed for at least a month. Face runs in, saying the stone has burst into flames, after hearing a loud explosion from the other room. Face says there is little to spare, and Mammon walks away, certain that his sinfulness has cost him the stone.

Meanwhile, Surly informs Dame Pliant that Subtle and Face are con artists. He also tries to inform Kestrel, but Kestrel decides to put his new quarrelling skills to the test and chases Surly out of the house. Doll says that Lovewit, Face's master, has returned and is standing outside. Face tells Doll and Subtle to pack their belongings and prepare to leave before shaving. Lovewit is speaking with his neighbours, who say that a steady stream of people has been coming and going from his home for the past month. Lovewit inquires as to the whereabouts of his butler, Jeremy, but no one has seen him. Lovewit enters and is greeted by Face, who, after shaving, resembles Jeremy the butler once more. He informs Lovewit that he had no choice but to lock the house after the cat contracted the plague and has been missing for three weeks. Face claims that the house must have been occupied by criminals when he was away. Face's victims—Mammon, Surly, Kestrel, and the Anabaptists—all converge on the building, searching for the "rouges" who duped them, and Dapper reappears, his gag intact. Face realises he's been captured, so he offers to introduce Lovewit to Dame Pliant in exchange for him not punishing him. Lovewit agrees, but refuses to allow the enraged victims in, who are on their way to call the cops.

Face, Subtle, and Doll easily pull one last con on Dapper in order to meet the "Fairy Queen." Doll dresses up as the Queen, gives Dapper a lucky bird, and promises to leave him trunks full of gold and "some twelve thousand acres of Fairyland." Face tells Subtle and Doll they must escape before they are arrested as Dapper exits just as the cops arrive. Face has been forgiven by Lovewit, but they have not, and there is no time for them to profit. Face has duped and robbed Doll and Subtle, and they are furious. Lovewit convinces the cops that his house was broken into when he was away, and he chases away Face's enraged victims. Lovewit turns to the audience and expresses his happiness with his new wife, Dame Pliant, while Face expresses his joy at being free of his crimes and able to "invite new guests."

Self Assessment

1. In the Middle Ages, type of play acted within or near the church and relating stories from the Bible.

a) Morality Plays
b) Cycle Plays
c) Commedia Dell'Arte
d) Elizabethan Theatre

2. A Renaissance Form of Theatre focused on simple characters with masks.

a) Cycle Plays
b) Commedia Dell'Arte
c) Elizabethan Theatre
d) None of the above

3. A medieval style of theatre that taught Morals and Lessons through a contemporary lens.

a) Cycle Plays
b) Commedia Dell'Arte
c) Elizabethan Theatre
d) None of the above

4. A Renaissance form of Theatre that happened in England, started by Elizabeth I.

a) Morality Plays
b) Cycle Plays
c) Commedia Dell'Arte
d) Elizabethan Theatre

5. The word for a low-class person who paid only a penny to see an Elizabethan Play.

a) Groundlings
b) Mud Toilers
c) Elizabeth I
d) None of the above

6. What is the opening line of the play The Alchemist?

a) "BELIEV'T, I WILL."
b) "NOW IS THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT".
c) "I FART AT THEE."
d) "GOLD! ALWAYS BELIEVE IN THE SOUL."

7. What are Subtle and Face doing as the play opens?

a) GETTING DRESSED
b) FARTING
c) PERFORMING ALCHEMY
d) ARGUING

8. Where does Face claim he found Subtle?

a) IN A CHEMIST'S SHOP, PERFORMING ALCHEMY
b) IN PRISON
c) IN A THEATER
d) HOMELESS, ON THE STREET, DRESSED IN RAGS

9. Who says, "I fart at thee"?

a) DOL COMMON
b) ANANIAS
c) SUBTLE
d) FACE

10. Ananias and Tribulation are members of which religious order?

a) ANABAPTISM
b) ISLAM
c) CHRISTIANITY
d) BUDDHISM

11. Where is the play set?

a) COOKHAM
b) BLACKFRIARS
c) MANCHESTER
d) HACKNEY

12. In whose house is the play set?

a. MAMMON'S
b. SUBTLE'S
c. FACE'S
d. LOVEWIT'S

13. In which year was the play written?

a. 1594
b. 1589
c. 1610
d. 1605

14. Ben Jonson was almost executed for which crime?

a. CONMANSHIP
b. EXPOSING HIMSELF
c. SORCERY
d. MURDER

15. Alchemy is the practice of turning base metal into what?

a. GOLD
b. LEAD
c. PEWTER
d. SILVER

Answer for Self Assessment

1.	A	2.	B	3.	D	4.	D	5.	A
6.	A	7.	D	8.	D	9.	C	10.	A
11.	B	12.	D	13.	C	14.	D	15.	A

Further Reading

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Unit 05: Ben Johnson-The Alchemist: fate and destiny, human folly, dreams and omens, reality versus desire

CONTENTS

Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyze the skill of Ben Jonson as a dramatist
- evaluate the elements of drama
- examine the themes of the play *The Alchemist*
- elucidate the climax and failure of the play *The Alchemist*

Introduction

The Alchemist is a superbly crafted play that adheres to the three neoclassical unities of time, position, and action to the letter. This play not only has the most total unity of action of all of Jonson's plays, but it also more precisely observes the unities of time and place than any other (Russell, 1929). The play's entire action takes place in one day and takes place in one location, Love wit's house in Black Friars.1 Furthermore, the action proceeds in a straight line without any digressions, side-issues, or irrelevances. The play's theme is avarice and lust, which is created, amplified, elaborated, and explained in relation to alchemy, which is a key component of the action. Every event and circumstance contribute to the growth and creation of this theme (Arnold, 1965).

5.1 The Play's Dramatic Opening and the Motive for Action

The play begins with a dramatic scene. Two of the three conspirators are at odds, each believing the other to be more significant than the other and thus underestimating the other's position. In fact, each is necessary for the conspiracy's continuation. The enraged intervention of the third, a woman named Dol Common, puts an end to the quarrel between these two - Face and Subtle. She informs them that none of them can assert primacy, that neither of them is the leader, and that each of them2 has a responsibility.

She informs Subtle that he has no business claiming priority in the "tripartite venture." The feud is soon forgotten, and the nefarious activity resumes.

This quarrel serves another essential function in addition to bringing great suspense to the viewer. It gives the audience information about the two male conspirators' backgrounds as well as the essence of the business they've started. Face was a mere "livery-three-pound-thrum" before embarking on this adventure, though Subtle was on the verge of starvation (Russell, 1929). Face was the one who supplied Subtle with all of the necessary equipment for his so-called alchemical

operation. The pretensions and true natures of all three partners are revealed during this quarrel, and much of the exposition is handled easily, excitingly, and with dramatic probability. The sincere reconciliation serves as the catalyst for the subsequent intervention.

Act I Developments:

The rest of Act I demonstrates the three partners' approaches to dealing with different clients. The conspirators have now been caught in the act. Collaborating to deceive and rob their clients by promising them all kinds of things based on the philosopher's stone that the conspirators claim to possess and the miraculous forces that Subtle is said to have. Dapper, a lawyer's clerk, comes first, seeking "a familiar or an attendant spirit to help him to win money at horse races, card parties, and dice parties." He is assured that his wish will be granted thanks to the Queen of Fairies, who regards him as her nephew. After that, he's sent away with "instructions to sharpen his senses by using vinegar" (Russell, 1929).

The next customer is Drugger, a tobacconist seeking commercial success. In this situation, the doctor uses his ostensible knowledge of palmistry, astrology, and metoposcopy to reassure the patient that his goal will be realised. This Act concludes with Subtle's description of the next client's ambitions, Sir Epicure Mammon, who is now approaching. Mammon hopes to obtain the "philosopher's stone" from Subtle, which would allow him to not only become wealthy, but also to cure all of the Kingdom's disease sufferers (Russell, 1929).

Act II Introduces New Characters:

Act 2 features a new cast of characters. Mammon, Surly, and Ananias, an Anabaptist, are their names. Mammon makes exaggerated statements to Surly on behalf of Subtle regarding Subtle's ability "to put the philosopher's stone at Mammon's disposal." With the philosopher's stone, Mammon will become as wealthy as King Solomon and be able to keep a harem of mistresses and concubines as large as King Solomon's.

Surly challenges Mammon's point, resulting in a fight between Surly and Subtle. This disagreement is crucial to the play's structure. Surly refutes Subtle's arguments while Subtly offers a theoretical justification for the theory of alchemy (Russell, 1929).

“Mammon, having caught a glimpse of Dol,” feels almost bewitched by her charms and graces, according to another development in this Act. Face agrees to find the lady for him in faith, giving Mammon's involvement with the conspirators a new dimension. The next guest, Ananias, refuses to pay any more money to Subtle and is therefore rejected by the doctor, who threatens that unless the Anabaptists pay an extra sum of money, they will be excommunicated.

If you gave him money in an hour or less, he'd destroy the laboratory and put an end to the alchemical phase that would produce the philosopher's stone for the good of the Amsterdam brethren. Drugger returns, this time in search of a sign of good fortune for his company. With Drugger's mention of young Kastril and his widowed sister, Dame Pliant, a new aspect joins the play's action.

The Plot Continues to Develop:

Act III takes the storey of the Anabaptists to the next level. The Anabaptists have agreed to pay Subtle the additional funds he has requested. They also agree to purchase the so-called orphans' products the Subtle requests on the condition that he turn all of the metallic articles into gold for them. Subtle offers "to mint or cast Dutch dollars" to make the Anabaptists extremely wealthy. Thus, the Anabaptists' greed and hypocrisy are completely exposed in this episode (Gurr, 1996).

Dapper returns and is given an interview with the Queen of Fairies, but by the end of the Act, Dapper has been stripped of all he owns, as well as gagged and stowed away in the bathroom. Kastril is invited to accompany Drugger, and Kastril is asked to bring his sister to this institution. The drugger has given the doctor some tobacco and has promised to get him a damask suit as well. Drugger has a fantasy that he will be able to marry Dame Pliant thanks to the doctor's magical abilities. As a result, the viewer is exposed to all of the dupes, and their credulity, wishes, and dreams are completely unveiled. They've already been robbed and are at risk of being robbed again (Keenan, 2014).

5.2 The Alchemical Process's Climax and Failure

Mammon is introduced to Dol in Act IV, and he retires to a private chamber to make love to her. Surly disguises himself as a Spanish Don and is introduced to Dame Pliant, whom he can now easily seduce but to whom he reveals his true identity and proposes marriage. Surly now has a falling out with the conspirators but is chased out of the doctor's office by the combined power of all of the doctor's clients, especially Kastril, who proves to be extremely violent.

When Dol pretends to be insane, Mammon and Dol's relationship comes to an abrupt end. An explosion is heard from the laboratory, and Subtle informs Mammon that the alchemical process has failed as a result of Mammon's lustful indulgence on these sacred grounds (Malin, 1992; Lake & Questier, 2002). Mammon, being the foolish fool that he is, accepts the doctor's justification for the experiment's failure and departs, ashamed of his disgraceful actions that led to the alchemical process's failure (Russell, 1929). Thus, the climax of the alchemical process is present in this Act, the pretense of which has been maintained thus far by Subtle and Face. There's also the climax of the Surly-Subtle feud, with Surly enduring a humiliating defeat. Another dramatic turn in this Act occurs near the end, when it is revealed that the master of the house, Lovewit, has returned to the city suddenly.

Act V: New Complications and the Resolution:

Act V introduces new complexities, as Face must now explain to his master what has happened while the master has been away. Subtle and Dol concoct a scheme to assassinate Face.

Subtle and Dol now intend to rob Face of his share of the booty, but Face confesses the whole criminal operation to his master and joins him in a plot against the others.3 When Dol impersonates the "Queen of Fairies," Dapper is even more duped (Donaldson, 1997). Drugger is further duped when the widow is convinced to marry Lovewit instead of being offered to him for marriage. To avoid being apprehended, Subtle and Dol must flee the house. They are not permitted to take even a smidgeon of the accrued loot. All of the doctor's ex-clients now come to demand that the conspirators be brought to justice because they have learned the truth and recognized their own follies, but they are all chased away by Lovewit, who, in exchange for his marriage to a wealthy widow, now shows special concern for his butler Jeremy.

The Play's End: The knaves and fools are frustrated and angry at the end of the play, but Surly, the only character in the play who demonstrates any sort of positive virtue, is also disappointed and angry. Kastril and his sister are pleased with the result, while Lovewit and Face hold the booty. However, the "distribution of rewards and punishments has the randomness of creation, not the neatness of poetic justice," as the author puts it. All of the storylines are brought together at the end of the play when Lovewit reappears and triumphs over all of the other characters (Donaldson, 1997).

The tragedy has not been brought about from inside the main action of the play, which is an apparent weakness in the framework of this play. The audience may have expected the conspirators to bring about their own destruction by defrauding one another, but this is not the case, nor might the audience have expected Surly to expose the conspirators' deceptions (Donaldson, 1997). However, this does not occur. Surly is defeated, and they win.

As a result, the conspirators' demise is not convincingly inspired. To bring about this downfall, the author has resorted to an extraneous device, namely, Lovewit's unexpected return to the region. To claim that Lovewit had to return home at some point isn't a defence of the unit. His reappearance is unexpected and unfathomable. His reappearance is unexpected, almost shocking. If this abrupt change is to be recognized, the audience must understand that all of the play's threads and action have been intricately interwoven, to the point that they are almost one (Arnold, 1965).

Other Master Structurers: As one reviewer put it, "this play is structurally propelled forward by a sequence of knocks on the door." A knock normally means that the customer who is actually on stage must be moved to another area of the house or out a different exit. For all three conspirators, a knock often means a quick change of clothes (Foley, 1949). Furthermore, the different dupes must not be allowed to interact with one another. For the conspirators, it would be disastrous if Mammon spoke to Ananias, or if Ananias exchanged notes with Dapper. Face allows a few encounters between the dupes, but they must take place under his strict supervision. Dapper, for example, is only allowed to stay in the room with Drugger and Kastril for a short time. In order to preserve their edifice of deception and cheating, Face and Subtle must keep their victims strictly apart. This, on the other hand, becomes more complicated. The plan to force Dame Pliant into Surly

5's arms was devised in desperation because Dol was preoccupied with Mammon at the time. This episode would have resulted in an instant discovery of the conspirators' deception if Dame Pliant had not been so dumb.

Surly, Mammon, Kastril, Ananias, and Tribulation's meeting outside Lovewit's house in Act V, as much as Lovewit's return, is what finally brings the partnership to an end. Face and Subtle had managed to keep seven distinct comic plots running concurrently within the alchemist's establishment up to that point.

5.3 The Laboratory, a Central Symbol in the Play

Despite the fact that it is never used, the laboratory is the play's emblem and focal point. It's the dream factory, the most powerful delusion weapon. The laboratory's existence and position are identified early on in the match. Jonson was forced to have others because of this one fixed point in space: the two doors on the right and left, one to the outside world and the other to the back way. Jonson the scholar would have been delighted to write a play that followed the neoclassical prescription for the unification of time, place, and action so precisely. Jonson, the master of the stage, brilliantly exploited these strict constraints in concocting comic stage company, such as arrivals and departures, swift changes, abrupt entrances, and so on (Sherman, n. d.; Dykeman, 1988).

Scholar and craftsman, on the other hand, are both subordinate to the visionary artist who saw the gold-making apparatus as the core emblem of a play about human greed and credulity, and their eventual result in disappointment and defeat (Sherman, n. d.; Dykeman, 1988).

Unifying Factors in the Play: There are two aspects of this play that help to unify it, resulting in what is known as action unity. The first is avarice, or a desire for money, which is a vice shared by nearly all of the characters in the play. Despite the fact that each character is distinct from the others, there is one thing they all have in common: an obsession with money and the ability to become wealthy. This shared desire for gold acts as a strong connection between all of the play's plots (Arnold, 1965).

If it's Dapper, Drugger, or Mammon, the Anabaptists, Surly or Lovewit, or Kastril, each plot revolves around a single character. However, all of the characters are guilty of the same folly and credulity. The play features a diverse cast of quirky characters, each with their own plot6; nevertheless, the play brings them all together by involving them in Subtle, Face, and Dol's central business venture.

The second is the play's use of blank verse throughout, with the exception of a few places where prose or rhymed verse is used. Every character speaks in blank verse, which serves as another unifying element (Foley, 1949).

Increasing Concentration and Tempo: Another intriguing aspect of this play's structure is that, amid the abundance of comic content, it conveys a sense of purposeful, and continually accelerating, movement. In his popular commentary on Ben Jonson's "The Silent Woman," Dryden noted that the play's business increases with each Act, with the second Act being greater than the first, the third Act greater than the second, and so on to the fifth (Ouellette, 2005; Russell, 1929; Arnold, 1965).

Exactly the same can be said of the Alchemist. There is clearly a carefully staged development of characters. Five characters appear in Act I, seven in Act II, eight in Act III, nine in Act IV, and twelve, or twenty-one if you count the neighbours, soldiers, and priest, in Act V. (Ouellette, 2005).

There's even one that's made up of far more complicated intrigues so that the viewer gets the impression of watching a juggler add more and more balls or other items to the ones he's already thrown into the air.

Finally, there is a sense of rising tension expressed by the rogues' alliance itself, as Face and Subtle, re-united into a precarious partnership by Dol in the opening scene, gradually revert to a state of competition, and begin to work against each other to secure the upper hand, as in "Sejanus" and "Volpone." As a consequence, there is a rise in focus and a rise in tempo. The audience is kept tensely aware of the unknown world outside the building, a possible source of benefit but also a danger, by the Dol peering through the window and the relentless knocking on the door. The house could turn into a prison at any time, and when Lovewit returns and Face immediately declares that they are undone, the house does turn into a prison (Craig, 1999; Sherman, n. d.; Arnold, 1965).

The Alchemist uses the theme of an empty house taken over by a servant and his accomplice, which appears in one of the plays by the ancient Roman dramatist Plautus; however, Plautus' formula is ironically reversed in this play. Surly would have been the play's hero and agent of release if Jonson had strictly followed the formula, and the rogues would have been the anti-comic society's members. Surly would have triumphed over the villains, and the play would have ended with his marriage to Dame Pliant and a general truce.

However, the play written by Jonson is very different. Surly represents the basic comic virtues of vitality and joy, and the rogues reflect the anti-comic mood. Surly eventually leaves befuddled and alone, Face goes undefeated, and Lovewit takes the girl and the money.

Jonson does conclude the play with a marriage, but it lacks the conventional concomitants of this conclusion, such as individual self-discovery and a heightened sense of social solidarity. Lovewit's marriage appears to be a strictly cosmetic transition. All remains mostly unchanged.

This is a rather bold and disturbing framework that has elicited some criticism as well as a variety of critical interpretations. The conclusion, in particular, has received a lot of criticism. For example, in the seventeenth century, John Dennis stated that the disaster, or denouement, was unquestionably bad; and that a gentleman of fortune conspiring with his Knavish servant to defraud a number of gulls of their money and goods was equally cruel and immoral (Craig, 1999; Sherman, n. d.; Arnold, 1965).

5.4 Characters in the Play

SUBTLE

In the play, he plays a "Alchemist" who runs a con. It's unclear if the word "Subtle" is the character's surname or forename. Subtle is a very clever and crafty guy, as his name suggests. Subtle is at odds with Face, another character in the storey, in the play. He is older than Face and has a greater understanding of alchemy. In order to run his fraud firm, he often disguises himself as a "Doctor."

FACE

He is a nameless and faceless character. Since he changes his looks so much, the viewer has little to no idea about his personality. He alternates between positions on a regular basis. Some critics believe his real name is Jeremy, but others disagree, claiming that Jeremy is one of his many faces as a result of his role switching. For Sir Mammon, he is "Lungs," and for the rest, he is "Captain Face," the wise guy. He is in charge of finding customers for his con company and transporting them to the Lovewit residence.

DOL

In the play, Dol Common, also known as Dorothy, is a prostitute. The surname Common is a pun that means "everyone." Dol has sexual relationships with both Face and Subtle, we learn. She isn't as relevant in the convention industry as Face and Subtle. However, she must disguise herself as a "royal lady" in order to direct Mammon and divert his attention. She runs away with Subtle without a share at the end of the match.

DAPPER

He is a ruthless legal clerk who desires a "gambling fly," a spirit that will assist him in winning the game of gambling. Face tempts Dapper to his blackfriars houses when they meet at the bar. When Dapper returns, Subtle claims that the fairy queens are his relatives, and they lock him in the outhouse for the rest of the play.

DRUGGER

He is a trustworthy tobacconist who has recently opened a new shop on the lane. Face, in the guise of "Doctor," is to advise him on how to start a new company. He is smitten with Dame Pliant, a wealthy widow, and wishes to marry her. Face and Subtle con him by asking him to bring a large

amount of expensive tobacco, as well as Dame Pliant and his brother, to the Blackfriars building. He is robbed and left with nothing at the end of the play.

LOVEWIT

He is the master of the house, and he leaves his house to his butler, Jeremy, to go to the hop-yard in London. He only appears twice in the play: once at the beginning and once at the end. When Lovewit returns, he punishes Face for his wrongdoings. He marries the pliant Dame and retires from the stage.

SIR EPICURE MAMMON

He is the play's greatest liar. Epicure Mammon translates to "one who devotes himself to material riches and sensual pleasures." He compares himself to the alchemist because he is arrogant. He is obsessed with food and desire, and he wants the philosopher's stone to transform his wealth into gold. Congratulation. Finally, hold his lust accountable for the furnace's blast.

SIR PERTINAX SURLY

He is Sir Epicure Mammon's personal assistant. He frequently criticises Mammon in the play, as well as inquiring about the behaviour of the Face and Subtle. Surly intends to catch them red-handed while posing as a Spaniard, but they fall for their ruse. He falls in love with Dame Pliant by chance. In the end, however, he battles Kastrill and loses his sister.

TRIBULATION WHOLESOME

He is an Amsterdam pastor and the leader of an Anabaptist community. He has an insatiable desire for wealth, influence, and leadership. He seems to be more measured and rational than Ananias.

ANANIAS

He is an Anabaptist and a Deacon of Amsterdam, and he, like Tribulation, is hungry for strength, membership, and wealth. He is symbolically portrayed as a New Testament character who died as a result of his selfish nature. In the action, Ananias is enraged and swift to pass judgement on something.

KASTRILL

Kastrill is a ferocious young man who comes to the conmen to learn a martial art, such as how to argue formally with others. He is a young man with a trusting disposition. We find him overly concerned and protective of Dame Pliant, his girlfriend. He's on the lookout for a more suitable suitor for her. He quarrels in an unimpressive and childish manner in the play.

DAME PLIANT

She is Kastrill's innocent sister and a window. Pliant is a versatile and bendy term for a dame. She is regarded as one of literature's most illogical characters. She, like her brother, has a speech disorder and only talks infrequently. She's still confused and doesn't care when subtle steals her kisses. The two conmen compete for Dame's hand in marriage, hoping to inherit her husband's substantial wealth. Lovewit, however, is the one who marries her in the end.

NEIGHBORS

At the conclusion of the play, several neighbours mob Lovewit and inform him of the conmen business at his home, which he has handed over to Jeremy. Neighbors play a minor role in the play, mostly at the end, but we do see Dol shooing some women out the door at times. They refer to

these women as "sailor's wives" and "oyster-women," implying that the conmen have engaged in even more deception than that depicted in the play.

Summary

Face, a London servant and conman, enters with his criminal associates Subtle and Doll Common. Face's master, Lovewit, has fled the city for his country home due to a plague outbreak, and in his absence, Face is operating a criminal enterprise out of Lovewit's city home. They're waiting for their first victim of the day, Dapper, a law clerk. Face has persuaded Dapper that Subtle is a revered mystic and doctor of alchemy, and he is looking for a "familiar," a bit of alchemical magic that will help him win at cards and gambling. When Dapper arrives, he is greeted by Face, who is dressed as a captain. Subtle informs Dapper that he has the ability to summon a "familiar," but he is reluctant. Subtle says that alchemical magic cannot be used for such unethical purposes, but Dapper begs and promises to offer Subtle and Face half of his winnings. Subtle agrees and informs Dapper that in order to obtain his "familiar," he must meet the "Fairy Queen," who does not rise until the afternoon. He must return, but first he must complete the rite. Dapper must quick and put three drops of vinegar in each of his eyes, two in his mouth, and three in his nose. Then he must "hum" and "buzz" three times before washing the tips of his fingers and his eyes. Dapper accepts and rushes back home.

Abel Drugger, a local shopkeeper, is the next to arrive in Subtle, seeking guidance on his latest venture. To ensure success, he asks Subtle where he should position his door and shelves, as well as how he should show his merchandise. Subtle advises Drugger to face his new business south and to put a magnet under the threshold of his door to draw customers. Drugger was born under a "rare star," according to him, and would have a lot of success in business and in life. Drugger might also come into possession of the philosopher's stone, a rare alchemical substance said to convert base metals to gold and create the elixir of immortality, which promises everlasting youth and life, according to Subtle. Drugger runs out the door, handing Subtle a handful of coins. Subtle appears on the face. Face claims that because it is his responsibility to locate "gulls" like Abel Drugger, he is entitled to a greater share of the income.

Sir Epicure Mammon and his companion Surly are the next to arrive. Mammon thinks Subtle is hard at work making the philosopher's stone for him, and he's been acting as if he already has it. Mammon will become wealthy as a result of the stone, and he will heal the sick and put an end to the plague. Surly does not believe in the philosopher's stone's magic, and he believes Face and Subtle are con artists; nevertheless, Mammon believes they are both genuine. Face, dressed as an alchemist's assistant, welcomes them and informs them that Subtle is busy with "projection," one of the final stages of the alchemical process, which results in the creation of the stone. Face learns about Mammon's ambitions for the elixir, which he intends to use to enhance his sexual prowess. He'll have sex with 50 different women every night, and his bedchamber will be lined with mirrors so that his reflection is multiplied as he walks naked around his "succubae." Subtle enters and tells Mammon to go home and get all of his metal and iron because they will be making "projection" soon. Surly tries to convince Mammon that Face and Subtle are con artists once more, but Mammon is distracted by Doll, who has just passed by. When Mammon returns, he is determined to meet her. Surly informs Mammon that Doll is obviously a prostitute and that they are in a "bawdy-house," but Mammon refuses to listen.

An Anabaptist named Ananias, who has come to barter for Mammon's metal and iron, answers the bell. Subtle and Face's fancy alchemical vocabulary doesn't please Ananias, who refers to them as "heathens." Subtle inquires about the money, but Ananias responds that he and his brethren will not offer Subtle any more money until they "see projection." Ananias is ejected in a subtly enraged manner, with the claim that he can only negotiate with Ananias' pastor in the future. Face walks in with Drugger, who tells him about Dame Pliant, a wealthy widow. Kestrel, Dame Pliant's brother, has arrived in town looking for someone to show him how to quarrel and survive on his wits. Kestrel is still searching for a husband for his sister, and he will only allow her to marry an aristocrat if she marries an aristocrat. Subtle is the wittiest man in London, according to Face, and he can even read Dame Pliant's horoscope. Face informs Subtle about the widow after Drugger offers to bring Dame Pliant and her brother to see them. They disagree briefly over who will marry Dame Pliant before deciding to draw straws—and not say Doll.

Tribulation Wholesome, Ananias' priest, returns with him. Men dislike and distrust Subtle and Face, and Tribulation also calls Subtle "antichristian," but they are willing to go to any length to

obtain the philosopher's stone and advance their religious cause. Subtle apologises to Tribulation for Ananias' earlier visit, and Subtle informs him that he is still weeks away from making the stone, but he offers to teach them how to melt pewter and cast Dutch money in the meantime. Tribulation departs with Ananias, saying he would return to his brethren to see if casting money is legal. Face walks in and announces that he has just met a Spaniard who is really interested in meeting Doll and that he will be over shortly. When the doorbell rings, Doll says it's Dapper, who has returned for his "familiar." Face tells Doll to get ready by putting on her "Fairy Queen" disguise. Subtle enters dressed as a "Priest of Fairy" and informs Dapper that before meeting the Queen, he must clean his pockets of all valuables. Dapper is blindfolded and dressed in a petticoat—the only way the Fairy can see him—by Subtle and Face. Suddenly, another knock comes at the door. Face and Subtle don't want Dapper and Mammon to meet, so they gag him with a rag and a gingerbread cookie and shove him in the bathroom.

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Mammon enters, carrying his metal and iron, and inquires about Subtle's whereabouts. Face appears to be busy in his laboratory, so Mammon instead inquires about Doll. Doll is a "rare scholar" and the sister of an aristocrat, according to Face, who believes she has gone insane after reading Puritan scholar's works. Face offers to introduce Mammon to Doll, but Mammon must avoid mentioning religion and keep their meeting quiet; otherwise, Subtle would refuse to give Mammon the stone. Doll walks in, and after a little sweet-talking from Mammon, they go to the garden for some privacy. Subtle then appears, accompanied by Kestrel and Dame Pliant. Subtle agrees to teach Kestrel how to be witty, but only if Dame Pliant is present. He kisses her and

promises her she will soon marry an aristocrat while pretending to read her palm. Face enters with the Spaniard as Subtle escorts Kestrel and Dame Pliant to his office, where he can begin Kestrel's lesson and read Dame Pliant's fortune.

Surly is actually the Spaniard in disguise, but he acts as though he doesn't speak English, and Subtle and Face don't seem to care. They make fun of the Spaniard because they believe he doesn't understand them, and they freely say they're trying to "cozen" him. The Spaniard has come to see Doll, who is busy in the garden with Mammon, as Face and Subtle recall. Face suggests that they add the Spaniard to Dame Pliant, and they begin to panic. Subtle hesitates at first because he wants Dame Pliant for himself, but eventually accepts. Face goes to find Dame Pliant and Kestrel and persuades them that the Dame is destined to marry a Spanish count, the best kind of aristocrat, according to Face. Kestrel agrees and sends his sister to the garden to meet Surly and get to know him. Doll and Mammon replace Face, Kestrel, and Subtle. Doll is ranting and raving in a fit of craziness, and Mammon is powerless to stop her. Face enters the room and leads Doll out, followed by Subtle, who is enraged that Mammon has clearly acted lustfully with Doll. He argues that Mammon's actions would cause "projection" to be delayed for at least a month. Face runs in, saying the stone has burst into flames, after hearing a loud explosion from the other room. Face says there is little to spare, and Mammon walks away, certain that his sinfulness has cost him the stone.

Meanwhile, Surly informs Dame Pliant that Subtle and Face are con artists. He also tries to inform Kestrel, but Kestrel decides to put his new quarrelling skills to the test and chases Surly out of the house. Doll says that Lovewit, Face's master, has returned and is standing outside. Face tells Doll and Subtle to pack their belongings and prepare to leave before shaving. Lovewit is speaking with his neighbours, who say that a steady stream of people has been coming and going from his home for the past month. Lovewit inquires as to the whereabouts of his butler, Jeremy, but no one has seen him. Lovewit enters and is greeted by Face, who, after shaving, resembles Jeremy the butler once more. He informs Lovewit that he had no choice but to lock the house after the cat contracted the plague and has been missing for three weeks. Face claims that the house must have been occupied by criminals when he was away. Face's victims—Mammon, Surly, Kestrel, and the Anabaptists—all converge on the building, searching for the "rouges" who duped them, and Dapper reappears, his gag intact. Face realises he's been captured, so he offers to introduce Lovewit to Dame Pliant in exchange for him not punishing him. Lovewit agrees, but refuses to allow the enraged victims in, who are on their way to call the cops.

Face, Subtle, and Doll easily pull one last con on Dapper in order to meet the "Fairy Queen." Doll dresses up as the Queen, gives Dapper a lucky bird, and promises to leave him trunks full of gold and “some twelve thousand acres of Fairyland.” Face tells Subtle and Doll they must escape before they are arrested as Dapper exits just as the cops arrive. Face has been forgiven by Lovewit, but they have not, and there is no time for them to profit. Face has duped and robbed Doll and Subtle, and they are furious. Lovewit convinces the cops that his house was broken into when he was away, and he chases away Face's enraged victims. Lovewit turns to the audience and expresses his happiness with his new wife, Dame Pliant, while Face expresses his joy at being free of his crimes and able to "invite new guests."

THEMES Themes of Alchemy and Transformation

The Alchemist is a play by Ben Jonson about alchemy, an ancient form of natural philosophy and an early form of chemistry that aimed to produce the philosopher's stone, a mythical alchemical material that could transform base metals like lead and mercury into gold and silver. The philosopher's stone was also thought to contain the elixir of immortality, which promised eternal life to anyone who drank it. In Jonson's day, alchemy was regarded as a valid branch of science, and many people pursued the strength of the enigmatic stone. The poor could become rich, and the sick and elderly could become lively and youthful, thanks to the philosopher's stone. Jonson juxtaposes alchemy's transformative abilities to his characters' transformations in The Alchemist. Jonson's characters are ever-changing, and as the main characters—Face, Subtle, and Doll—dupe unsuspecting victims into thinking they have discovered the philosopher's stone, they turn into completely different characters. Jonson claims that everything, including humans, is still in flux through his portrayal of transformation in The Alchemist.

Throughout the play, Jonson makes several references to alchemy's healing forces and the philosopher's stone, which promises to deliver Face, Subtle, and Doll's victims infinite riches and health. Subtle insists that Mammon wants the stone and the elixir of life when he tells Doll about their victim, Sir Epicure Mammon, who believes Subtle is a doctor of alchemy and in possession of the philosopher's stone. Mammon is “searching the spittle, to make old bawds young; / And the highways for beggars to make rich,” according to Subtle. The stone's transformative properties are of particular interest to Mammon. When Mammon arrives at the house where Face and Subtle are

putting on their con, he tells Face that once he buys the philosopher's stone from Subtle, he will immediately start transforming base metals: “This night, I'm going to turn all the metal in my house into gold.” Mammon is interested in the stone once more because it has the potential to transform him into a wealthy man. Since Subtle doesn't have the philosopher's hammer, when Mammon arrives, Face informs him that Subtle hasn't finished the process yet. Face tells Mammon, "[t]he red ferment / Has finished his office." “Three houses down, get ready to see projection.” Face refers to one of the final stages of transmutation, during which the philosopher's stone is formed and "projection" (the transformation of lead into gold) is possible.

In addition to the changes enabled by alchemy and the philosopher's stone, Jonson's characters change as well, implying that people are always changing. To his criminal friends, Jonson's main character is a butler and conman known as Face; however, in the presence of his victims, Face is a revered "Captain" and specialist in alchemy. Face is turned into a completely different character as each of his victims comes and goes. Face's accomplice, a conman called Subtle, turns as well for the good of their victims. Subtle transforms from a lowly thief to a revered alchemist who also happens to know about the philosopher's stone when each of their victims arrives. Face and Subtle's prostitute and criminal associate Doll is also transformed in the play. Doll is turned into the "Fairy Queen," a keeper of sorts of the secrets of the philosopher's stone, and the sister of an aristocrat who also happens to be a religious scholar, in order to pull off their con.

When Lovewit, the master of the house, returns at the end of the play, his face is changed once more. Lovewit has been gone for nearly a month, trying to avoid the plague that has engulfed London, and Face has been staging his schemes in Lovewit's London house. Face is turned into Jeremy, Lovewit's unassuming butler, with Lovewit's return, and his days of swindling gullible Londoners are over, at least for the time being. Alchemy's transformative abilities are reflected in Jonson's characters' transformations, implying that everything, including humans, is continually changing and developing.

REVELATION OF RELIGION

The Alchemist was written by Ben Jonson in 1610, less than a century after the Protestant Reformation, a revolution in Western Christianity that aimed to challenge the Roman Catholic Church's teachings and practises. King Henry VIII formally split from the Catholic Church in 1537, just a few decades before Jonson's birth in 1572, and established the Church of England, a form of Protestantism that denied papal authority. There was much friction between Protestants and those who refused to conform, as well as those Protestants deemed to be extreme, such as Anabaptists and Puritans, in the years following the Protestant Reformation and the establishment of the Church of England. The Alchemist makes several references to religion, starting with the dedication, in which Jonson declares that "the essence of religion" is found "not in the greatness and fat of the offerings, but in the devotion and zeal of the sacrificers." Jonson effectively describes himself as a Protestant by rejecting the Catholic idea that sacraments constitute religious grace regardless of the religious state of priests or parishioners. Jonson mirrors anti-Catholic feelings of the time in his depiction of faith in The Alchemist, but he also opposes religious fanaticism and those aligned with extreme Protestantism.

Jonson makes many references to Hugh Broughton, a Puritan Old Testament scholar who was self-exiled in Holland during Jonson's period for his radical views on Protestantism. Face and Subtle persuade Mammon, their unsuspecting victim, that Doll, a prostitute and Face and Subtle's criminal associate, is the sister of a wealthy aristocrat, as they attempt to defraud him. Face informs Mammon that Doll is a "rare scholar" who has "gone mad" researching Broughton's works. Not only does Jonson imply that Broughton's works are scarcely studied, but he also implies that Broughton's scholarship is nonsense, capable of driving others insane. Face advises Mammon about Doll's crazy before introducing Mammon and Doll. “But, good sir, no divinity at your conference,” Face says, “for fear of enraged her—.” Doll has allegedly researched the works of Broughton, a radical Puritan, and the mere mention of religion drives her insane. When Mammon discusses religion after Doll and Mammon are added, Doll starts to crumble, ranting and raving and quoting Broughton's A Concent of Scripture (1590). Doll quotes the Puritan in an extreme fit of insanity, further depicting Puritanism as nonsense, much as Broughton's work drives her insane.

Via his depictions of the Anabaptists, Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome, two of Face and Subtle's victims for their cons, Jonson further rejects radical Protestantism. As Ananias encounters Subtle for the first time, he is perplexed by Subtle's use of alchemical jargon and appears not to understand "heathen words." “Heathen, you Knipperdollink?” says the subtly. Subtle's response is a nod to Bernhard Knipperdollink, a German Anabaptist and leader of the Münster revolt, a group of radical Anabaptists who attempted to seize Münster and its bishop. Subtle seems to suggest that

Ananias and the Anabaptists are the true "heathens" with this connection. Subtle kicks Ananias out of the house after he tells him his name. “Out, varlet! / The Apostles' cozened varlet!” Hence, get out of here, / Mischief!” Says subtly. Ananias was a member of the early Christian Church in Jerusalem who was killed after lying to God about money in the Book of Acts, and this association casts Jonson's Ananias in an equally unflattering light. Ananias and Wholesome Tribulation don't like or trust Subtle and Face—in reality, they call Subtle "antichristian"—but they're willing to work with them if it means making money. Tribulation tells Ananias, "Good brother, we must bend unto all means / That may offer furtherance to the holy cause." In other words, Anabaptists are willing to do anything to advance their religious cause, even though it is unchristian, which makes them seem immoral and casts such extreme Protestants in an unflattering light.

The Alchemist is rife with sin, vice, and nefarious characters. Face and Subtle are both con artists, Doll is a slut, and almost every character is selfish and self-serving; however, the Anabaptists, Ananias, and Wholesome Tribulation, are the most despicable. Despite existing English law, the Anabaptists will do anything to get ahead and make a profit, including counterfeiting money, which Tribulation and Ananias' brethren find perfectly appropriate. Jonson condemns the Anabaptists, as well as other manifestations of religious fanaticism, for threatening the Protestant Reformation.

Greed and Sex

The Alchemist by Ben Jonson is fraught with vice and sin. Face and Subtle are two conmen who pose as professional alchemists with knowledge of the philosopher's stone in order to defraud unsuspecting Londoners—dubbed "gulls" in the play—of money and loose metal. Face and Subtle collaborate with Doll, a prostitute who assists them in luring and defrauding their victims, and each of the "gulls" they pursue is looking for alchemy and the philosopher's stone for selfish reasons including personal riches and sexual prowess. The play is set in London, according to the prologue, since “No clime breeds better matter for your slut, / Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more.” Jonson purposefully emphasises vice and sin, especially sex and greed, and those who commit such moral crimes are the subject of his satire; however, Jonson does not attempt to pass moral judgement on such sinners, and he does not expressly condemn their actions. Instead, Jonson claims that what he wants to do is inspire those sinners to become "better guys." The Alchemist's portrayal of sex and greed illustrates the frequency of which such sins are committed, and eventually suggests that such conduct is simply human nature.

Apart from Doll's career as a prostitute, the play contains many references to sex, implying that almost everybody is having sex, despite common belief that sex should be limited to marriage. Face and Subtle are having an argument when the play begins, and Doll is afraid that their loud voices will alert the neighbours to their criminal activities, so she uses sex to silence them. After supper, Subtle and Face consent to draw straws, with “the longest cut, at night, / Shall draw thee for his Doll Particular.” To put it another way, whoever draws the longest straw gets to stay with Doll for the night. When one of Face and Subtle's victims, Mammon, thinks he will soon possess the philosopher's stone, he intends to use the elixir of life to grant him sexual strength and stamina—enough to "encounter fifty [women] a night." Then, Mammon says, he'll put mirrors in his room "to scatter / And multiply the figures as I walk / Naked between my succubae." Mammon needs the philosopher's stone so that he can have sex with 50 women per night—in this case, prostitutes. Mammon sneaks off to have sex with Doll while waiting for Subtle to finish making the philosopher's stone, causing the stone to allegedly burst into flames. The philosopher's stone can only be formed by those with good motives, according to Subtle, and Mammon's action with Doll shows he isn't pure. Subtle, of course, is not an alchemist and does not hold the philosopher's stone. Subtle knows that if given the chance, Mammon will seduce Doll, and this is the ideal reason for Subtle's failure to deliver the philosopher's stone.

Along with sex, The Alchemist is riddled with greed, implying that greed is equally normal and widespread. Face and Subtle have a fight at the start of the play because Subtle asserts "primacy in the divisions" and declares that he "must be chief." Subtle believes he is entitled to be in charge and a bigger share of the income while he is posing as the alchemist. Subtle is selfish, and he needs more money than Face, who is only interested in luring their prey into the pit. As Face entices their first victim, a local clerk named Dapper, to Subtle, Dapper claims to be looking for "a familiar," a piece of alchemical magic that will help him win at cards and gambling. Dapper tells Subtle, "I will have it for all sports," demonstrating that he is just as selfish as the rest of them. Mammon, too, demonstrates his arrogance. Mammon plans to use the philosopher's stone to transform all of the loose metal in his house into gold, then move on to other people's metal. “And early in the morning, I will send / To all the plumbers and pewterers, / And buy up their tin and lead; and to

Lothbury, / For all the copper," Mammon says. Mammon isn't content with a small amount of gold; he desires as much as he can get his hands on.

Face, Subtle, and their victims aren't the only ones who are guilty of greed and unwanted sex. Face persuades Lovewit, Face's master and the owner of the house where Face and Subtle carry out their con, not to prosecute him when he returns home from the country to find his butler, Face, operating an illicit operation out of his house. Face says, "I'll help you to a widow." "I will make you seven years younger and richer in exchange for the gratitude you will give me." In exchange for Dame Pliant, a young, wealthy woman, Lovewit decides not to punish Face. Lovewit demonstrates that he is just as selfish and interested in sex as the rest of the characters, implying that these are two very common sins, according to Jonson. In the prologue, Jonson notes that the audience will find "things they'd think, or wish, were done" in his play. In short, Jonson's vices, especially greed and sex, are "natural follies" that "doers can see, but not own." Jonson means that most people are guilty of greed and sex in some way, even though they don't admit it.

Ben Jonson was England's most illustrious writer. The dramatist, who was mostly self-taught, created a style that combined his appreciation of the classics with an inherent sense of humour. Ben Jonson was England's most illustrious writer. The dramatist, who was mostly self-taught, created a style that combined his appreciation of the classics with an inherent sense of humour

Self Assessment

1) Where is the play *The Alchemist* set?

A. Cookham

B. Blackfriars

C. Manchester

D. Hackney

2) In whose house is the play *The Alchemist* set?

A. Mammon's

B. Subtle's

C. Face's

D. Lovewit's

3) In which year was the play *The Alchemist* was written?

A. 1594

B. 1589

C. 1610

D. 1605

4) Ben Jonson was almost executed for which crime?

A. Conmanship

B. Exposing Himself

C. Sorcery

D. Murder

5) Alchemy is the practice of turning base metal into what?

A. Gold

B. Lead

C. Pewter

D. Silver

6) In the first scene, Subtle claims to have:

A. killed Mammon
B. been the first alchemist in the world
C. taught face the art of alchemy
D. been the richest man in the world

7) The argument of the opening scene ends only when:
A. the doorbell rings
B. an explosion distracts everyone
C. Dol takes Face's and Subtle's weapons and calms them down
D. Dol throws her hat in the fire

8) Where is Lovewit during most of the play?
A. At his hop-yards, tending to his business
B. Looking for a wife in Spain
C. Following his anabaptist faith
D. In the town center

9) Which character dresses up as a Spaniard to fool the conmen?
A. Mammon
B. Dol
C. Surly
D. Drugger

10) Who is the first gull through the door at the start of the play?
A. Dapper
B. Drugger
C. Mammon
D. Dol Common

11) What does Dapper want from the Doctor?
A. A Gambling Fly
B. Information about his new shop
C. Money
D. The Philosopher's Stone

12) What is Drugger in *The Alchemist*?
A. A tobacco-man
B. A Lawyer's clerk
C. A Knight
D. A Thief

13) What does Drugger ask Subtle to tell him?
A. His parents' names
B. How his shop should be organized
C. Whether he will win at gambling
D. The meaning of life

14) What does Mammon want from the Doctor?

A. religious advice

B. gold

C. pewter

D. the philosopher's stone

15) What is Mammon's first name?

A. Perrinat

B. Pertinax

C. Epicure

D. Epicurus

Answers for Self Assessment

1.	B	2.	D	3.	C	4.	D	5.	A
6.	C	7.	C	8.	D	9.	C	10.	A
11.	A	12.	A	13.	B	14.	D	15.	C

Review Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the title *The Alchemist.*
2. Write about the different roles that Face, Subtle, and Dol Common play in *The Alchemist* and how this role-playing affects the play?
3. Do you think *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson is an allegory?
4. How might "The Alchemist" be considered a comedy of humours?
5. Discuss how *The Alchemist* is a satiric comment on the real social conditions of its time.
6. What are the major themes in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*?
7. How might one explain the significance of the characters' names in Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist*?
8. What are some important traits of Sir Epicure Mammon in Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist*?
9. Why do you think this play is titled *The Alchemist*? What is the play's overall attitude towards alchemy and the idea of transforming something base into something noble?
10. In the play's closing lines, Face invites us to judge the characters and the play as if we were a courtroom jury instead of a theater audience. Do you think the ending of *The Alchemist* delivers any dramatic "justice"? Give a reasoned answer.
11. Why do you think Ben Jonson is not as well known today as his fellow playwright, William Shakespeare?

Further Reading

Craig, D. H. Ben Jonson: The Critical Heritage. London: Routledge, 1999.

Donaldson, I. Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

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Unit 06: Thomas Middleton and William Rowley - The Changeling : Treachery, Reason and passion, Judgment and lust Unit Name

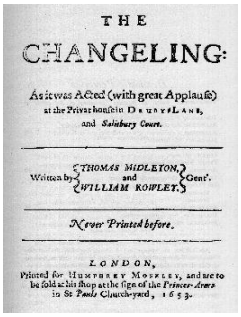
CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the background of the play *The Changeling*
- explore the literary contribution of the playwrights
- analyze different themes of the play
- evaluate the human weakness in the play

Introduction


THE
CHANGELING:
As it was Acted (with great Applause)
at the Private house in DRURY-LANE,
and Salisbury Court.
Written by THOMAS MIDLETON, and WILLIAM ROWLEY, Gent.
Never Printed before.
LONDON,
Printed for HUMPHREY MOSELEY, and are to be sold at his shop at the sign of the Prince's Arms in St Pauls Church-yard, 1653.

The tragic tale of love gone wrong and treachery is told in Thomas Middleton's "The Changeling." Within the play, there are two plot lines, both of which depict the difficulties of love.

While Thomas Middleton is best known for The Changeling, another author, William Rowley, is also worth mentioning. Rowley wrote much of Act I and contributed to Acts II and III, despite the fact that Middleton wrote more of the play. The story's subplot was written by Rowley, while the main plot was written by Middleton. Both plots and ideas were adapted from a storey collection by John Reynolds published in the 1620s.

6.1 LIFE AND BACKGROUND

THOMAS MIDDLETON, (1580-1627)

Thomas Middleton was born in London in 1580, the son of a "citizen and bricklayer" who died when he was just five years old. His mother's name is

Anne remarried shortly after, but the union was not happy, and Thomas Middleton grew up in a tumultuous environment of family feuds and litigation. Anne Middleton was a well-to-do city widow when his father died, but she had to protect the family legacy from her grasping second husband. Thomas, who entered Queen's College, Oxford, in 1598, did not complete his degree, possibly because the family's finances had been depleted by the numerous lawsuits. His literary career started with the publication of poems and pamphlets at this time, but we first hear of him in London in 1601, where he is said to be 'accompaninge the players.' It's unclear if he meant that he'd formed a bond with a group of performers, but it's obvious that he has an interest in and link with

the theatre. It's not shocking, then, that within a year or two, he was writing for the stage and beginning his career as a dramatist, according to the documents.

Many of his plays have unknown dates of composition, but we do know that in his early years he wrote mostly satirical comedies about contemporary London life, such as A Mad World, My Masters (?1604), Michaelmas Term (? 1605), A Trick to Catch the Old One (? 1606), and A Chaste Maid in Cheapside (?) The city is depicted in these plays as a place where almost everyone is looking for money, sex, or both. Characters that are the most cunning and imaginative in their attempts to outwit others in order to get what they want are the most effective. The audience also feels a sense of tension in these plays, as they alternate between enjoying the tricksters' and con-antics men's and the moral perspective that is often present. Middleton almost entirely stopped writing satiric comedies around 1613, and in the middle of his career, he wrote a number of tragicomedies, including The Witch (1614) and A Fair Quarrel (1617), which do not seem to have been particularly popular. In the 1620s, he turned to tragedy in Women Beware Women (?1621) and The Changeling (1622), as well as political satire in A Game of Chess (1623). (1624).

Middleton's job does not abruptly alter as a result of the tragedies.

They demonstrate evolution of themes, attitudes, and techniques seen in earlier city comedies, despite being written ten or more years later.

You might be shocked to learn that The Changeling not only has a comic subplot, but also has comic elements in the main plot.

Middleton's career as a playwright came to an end with the political satire A Game at Chess, which lasted for nine days in a row, which was a rare occurrence in the theatre at the time, as it was customary to show a new play each day. The play was well-received, but it had to be cancelled due to official opposition. Some of the company's members were arrested, forcing Middleton to flee. In 1627, he died.

WILLIAM ROWLEY (1585-1625)

WILLIAM ROWLEY was an Englishman who lived from 1585 to 1625.

Far less is known about William Rowley, Middleton's partner on *The Changeling*. His birth and death dates are unknown, but we do know that he was an actor who specialised in comedic roles. From around 1615 onwards, he worked with Middleton on a number of plays, sometimes writing the comic scenes and probably performing the key comic roles.

He is thought to be responsible for the comedic subplot as well as the play's opening and closing scenes in The Changeling. Rowley wrote a number of plays, including All's Lost by Lust (? 1619) and The Birth of Merlin (? 1619), but they are rarely if ever performed today, and he is best known for his collaborations with more experienced dramatists like Middleton.

A NOTE ON COLLABORATION

While we are not used to dramatists working together to write plays for the stage, collaboration between writers of television scripts is very popular. Collaboration was popular in Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

Theatre from the Jacobean era. During their careers, both Middleton and Rowley collaborated on plays with other playwrights. Since plays of the time had several plots (or lines of action), it was possible for various people to write different sections of the work. There would have been a shared planning stage before the writing began, where the dramatists would have discussed plotting and scene arrangement together. The connections between the plots, as well as the methods by which those connections were to be made, would have been worked out at this point. While the two plots of The Changeling were primarily written by different people and appear to be very separate and distinct in style at first glance, closer examination reveals that they are linked by essential links that reveal that they are part of a single design .

JACOBEAN AND ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The word 'Elizabethan' refers to Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603), while 'Jacobean' refers to her successor, James I's reign (1603-25). When it comes to period drama, however, the terms are sometimes used a little more loosely. Dramatists do not start writing different kinds of plays only

because a new king takes the throne; however, shifting social, political, religious, and dramatic circumstances are likely to result in changes in literature and drama. Around the turn of the century, there is a significant change. When applied to drama, the labels 'Elizabethan' and 'Jacobean' denote the contrasting characteristics and moods found in the earlier and later literature of the period 1558-1625, rather than indicating specifically whether a play was written before or after 1603.

The explanations for the shift in the mood of the times expressed in the drama are numerous and complex, and it is impossible to describe them all here, even in the most basic terms, matters on which historians disagree. Elizabeth I was a dynamic monarch who knew how to inspire her subjects' loyalty and commitment, offering a focal point for national unity. In literature, poetry, and music, she was revered, almost deified, as the Virgin Queen, Gloriana, or Astraea. With the defeat of the Armada in 1588, England won a major victory over its long-time foe, Spain, an event that boosted national pride and created a positive mood. During Elizabeth's already lengthy reign, the country seemed to have attained a level of protection and stability that contrasted sharply with the reigns of her two immediate predecessors.

She founded a civilised and cultured court of men like Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh, who were poets and authors as well as warriors. However, Elizabeth ruled for forty-five years, and many of her people would have known no other monarch during that period. The queen's advancing age and the likelihood of her death at the turn of the century must have centred their minds on the realities of time, transition, and mortality, creating feelings of fear and confusion, which were exacerbated by Elizabeth's reluctance to appoint her successor until the very last moment. When the queen died, the confusion of the succession increased the risk of civil war and anarchy.

Despite James' peaceful succession, I may have allayed immediate concerns, but the new king lacked his predecessor's charismatic charm and capacity to inspire loyalty and devotion. Religious, political, and social conflicts and divisions that existed prior to his accession to the throne became more visible and pronounced. They were exacerbated by increasing economic problems and social changes associated with the growth of mining and industrial enterprises, among other things.

Many patriotically minded Englishmen, who had always treated the Spanish as their enemies, objected to James' policy of peace with Spain. Sir Walter Raleigh, a figure associated with Elizabeth's reign when England was at war with Spain, was executed by the King in 1619. Tensions between the King and Parliament sparked discussion and inquiry into the existence of the state and sovereign authority. There was an air of scepticism in the air. In comparison to Elizabeth's court, the court of James became synonymous with greed and extravagant spending in public opinion. All of these factors added to the disillusionment, which was heightened in 1612 by the death of Prince Henry, the heir to the throne, whom many had hoped would usher in a brighter and more glorious future. The mood we've labelled 'Jacobean' is one of pessimism, scepticism, disillusionment, and doubt, emerging from a powerful sense of time, transition, and human mortality, in stark contrast to the mood we've labelled 'Elizabethan,' which is marked by hope and assurance, joy in life, and faith in human achievement.

There are notable shifts in tone and types of plays written in the drama at the turn of the century. Satiric and realistic comedy grew in popularity. To see the kinds of changes that occur, compare Thomas Dekker's genial and idealistic comedy The Shoemaker's Holiday (1599), which is set in London, with some of Ben Jonson's or Thomas Middleton's city comedies written just a few years later, which also have London settings. Dekker believes that human nature is fundamentally good, and in his play, he depicts a world that is united by the operation of human love, benevolence, and compassion for others. At the conclusion of the play, Simon Eyre, the shoemaker who has become Lord Mayor, hosts a banquet for all ranks of society, from the King to the young London apprentices, in a scene that exemplifies social harmony. We see a very different society in Middleton's London comedies, in which people follow their own goals regardless of others, using deceit and underhanded methods to achieve their goals. Magistrates and city merchants, who are supposed to be honest and responsible members of society, are shown to be no better than the ordinary rogues and con-men who society condemns. In these plays, human nature is portrayed as fundamentally corrupt.

In the realm of tragedy, we can see a similar shift of tone and mood from Elizabethan to Jacobean in the works of John Webster, George Chapman, Cyril Tourneur, and Thomas Middleton, for example.

The destructive force of evil is an aberration normally concentrated in a single character who is eventually defeated by the forces of good, with a corresponding restoration of order and peace, in Elizabethan tragedies. Character development is normally straightforward, with groups of characters rather than individuals being portrayed. Single main characteristics such as purity, greed, or folly can be shown by characters. Jacobean tragedies have a darker tone and a more inquisitive spirit. They

are always ambiguous; it is not always easy to categorise characters into basic good and bad categories. As attempts are made to represent personalities rather than categories, character drawing becomes more nuanced. All of Shakespeare's great tragedies, with the exception of Hamlet (1601), were written during the historical Jacobean era and show an interest in understanding why individual characters act the way they do. Middleton is clearly interested in discussing Beatrice-'psychology' Joanna's in *The Changeling*, an adolescent girl who is only experiencing the control her physical beauty gives her. The sense of human ambiguity and individuality found in Shakespeare's and his greatest Jacobean contemporaries' work often contributes to a recognition of the complexities of understanding another person's true nature. 'Oh, sly devils!/ How do blind men know you from fair-fac'd saints,' Alsemero cries agony in the final scene of *The Changeling*.

Via Middleton's use of soliloquy and asides, the audience has understood the true essence of Beatrice all along, as he has not (see Section 4.4). The audience is made to understand the issue through the central character, Vittoria Corombona, in John Webster's tragedy The White Devil (1612). Webster does not disclose what she is thinking, as Middleton does with Beatrice, so we are never quite sure to what degree Vittoria is a corrupt and scheming woman and to what extent she is wronged and defamed. The play's title, The White Devil, is vague and draws our attention to the difficulty of determining a person's reality. White is synonymous with goodness and innocence, so it's the polar opposite to what we'd expect from a demon. So would the term 'white devil' refer to a creature that is really bad (that is, devil) but appears to be good (white), or the polar opposite, a creature that appears to be evil but is actually pure?

Despite the differences in their portrayals of Vittoria and Beatrice, Webster and Middleton, like other Jacobean dramatists, are concerned with issues of understanding and perceiving reality. Both have a lot in common.

A feeling of being in a corrupted universe Everyone is corrupted by the greed that surrounds them in Webster's tragedies, The White Devil (1612) and The Duchess of Malfi (1613-14). The corruption in *The Changeling* is found inside the characters themselves. Middleton provides a cynical view of human nature, which is tainted by original sin, and as a result, man bears the seeds of his own destruction inside him through a natural proclivity to sin. The jail and the cage appear often in Webster's tragedies: his protagonists are imprisoned in their decadent court worlds, while Middleton's characters are unable to escape themselves and their immoral existence.

Whereas Elizabethan writers have a sense of human potential for development through love, courage, nobility, the practise of virtue, or the appreciation of beauty, Jacobean writers have an overwhelming sense of human limitations, of man as a physical creature subject to disease, the effects of time, and death, whose accomplishments are illusory or merely transitory, and who appears incapable. Shakespeare's work represents the changing moods of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The central character in Hamlet (1601), a play that is purely Elizabethan in date but Jacobean in mood, has a speech that reflects the change. Hamlet describes man as a glorious being, but he is subject to death; he is 'this quintessence of dust,' Adam being made by God from dust and returning to it in death. This realisation of man's mortality seems to cast doubt on the worth of the living individual and his amazing abilities:

What a work of art is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, how express and admirable in shape and movement, in motion how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the world's beauty, the paragon of animals - and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? (William Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, ii, 303-8)

The Revenge Tragedy (1605-6) epitomises the Jacobean mood and preoccupation with death. It is generally attributed to Cyril Tourneur, although some scholars believe it was written by Thomas Middleton. Vindice dresses up the skull of his dead mistress, Gloriana, and anoints the lips with poison in a scheme to assassinate the lecherous duke who had caused her death in the central scene. The duke arrives at the darkened summer house expecting to encounter a court lady with whom he would seduce her. He mistook the disguised skull for the living woman in the shadows, kissed it, and died an agonising death. This breathtaking scene depicts the harsh reality of human mortality, which kills physical beauty and puts an end to those once-important human passions. It's a scene full of ironies, not the least of which is the Duke's death, which he brings about by following his lustful pleasures. It's also a scene that mixes horror and bleak humour, which is a hallmark of Jacobean tragedy. You'll find it in the list of Recommended Reading. Nicholas Brooke's book looks at how Jacobean dramatists used this mixture of elements in their works.

By date, *The Changeling* is a Jacobean play; in mood, it is also unmistakably Jacobean. The central concern with transformation and the process of human corruption, with its focus on sex; the probing

and challenging essence of its study of human character and action; the dramatist's humorous vision, and his technique of portraying scenes of sensational horror while still evoking grim laughter; all of these features make *The Changeling* a typical play of its time.

REVENGE PLAYS

While there were shifts in the types of plays written during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, there was some continuity in the field of tragedy, with the pursuit of vengeance being the most frequently-treated subject in plays from the 1580s to the seventeenth century. This is a very old tragedy subject. In Aeschylus' Oresteia (525-456 BC), Orestes, the son of King Agamemnon, is tasked with avenging his father's murder, but the crime was committed by his mother, and so, in fulfilling the moral imperative to avenge his father, Orestes transgresses another divine law prohibiting matricide and is punished as a result.

The Roman dramatist Seneca (died 65 AD), whose ten tragedies were published in translation in 1581, was the ancient tragic writer who had the most influence on the Elizabethans. The plays were known for their bloodshed and brutality. Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (1592), inspired by Seneca, was a huge success and created a formula that other dramatists followed. A ghost appears at the start of the play, demanding revenge on those who murdered him. Horatio is assassinated in the play. Hieronimo, his aunt, has to figure out who the murderers are before appealing to the king for justice. He tries to take vengeance himself after failing to achieve it by legal means. His wife and he become enraged. He eventually defeats his foes and then dies. The presence of the ghost, the need to uncover the identity of the killers, and the preparation of the means to eliminate them all appeared in subsequent revenge plays, as did scenes of crime and bloodshed, and sometimes madness. Titus Andronicus (1594) by Shakespeare was an early example of the genre, and Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare was probably its pinnacle achievement. The Changeling (1622) has elements of a revenge play: Alonzo's ghost appears but does not demand vengeance; Tomazo is a revenger figure who seeks to locate the murderer of his brother; and madness is a major theme. However, since the early revenge movies, a lot has changed. Tomazo is by no means the central character; he makes few appearances and the pursuit of revenge comes late in the play; when he does appear he is ineffectual, and, in fact, he does not exact his revenge nor does he die in the act like Hieronimo or Hamlet. While Tomazo starts to display signs of confused and irrational behaviour at one point (V, ii), the theme of madness is not directly linked to the revenge aspect.

Middleton and Rowley's problems with other matters are reflected in the changes from the earlier revenge-pattern, but they also represent changes in the history of revenge plays over a thirty-year period. The revenger, who is the central character in early plays such as The Spanish Tragedy or Hamlet, was an innocent individual who was entrusted with the duty of obtaining justice that could not be obtained by legal means.

The job corrupts and destroys these vengeful souls. Later revenge plays, such as John Webster's The White Devil (1612) and The Duchess of Malfi (1614), feature villainous revengers, and the cause for revenge is often not as severe as murder, but rather slighted honour, insults, or envy. Unlike The Changeling, revenge remains fundamental to the mechanisms of these plays. The strong message in Cyril Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy (1611) is that retribution should be left to God, but it wasn't until the 1 620s that direct criticism of revenge as a course of action became widely articulated in drama. During this time, William Rowley, Thomas Middleton, Philip Massinger, John Ford, and Sir William D'Avenant, in particular, regard revenge as pointless and misguided, as does Massinger's The Fatal Dowry (1619).

When Tomazo tries to figure out who killed his brother in The Changeling, he comes off as a little ridiculous and ineffective. Middleton and Rowley are demonstrating that the revenger is unnecessary.

Since evil brings about its own demise, the truth will be revealed.

The main plot is based on a tale that appeared in a collection that depicted divine retribution in the punishment of murderers.

If the hand of God does not strike down the evil-doors in The Changeling, there is implied a theory in the essence of things that guarantees that evil does not prosper in the end. The dramatists' emphasis on Beatrice and De Flores rather than Tomazo demonstrates that Middleton and Rowley are more interested in the essence of evil and matters of sin and vengeance.

SOURCES

The key plot of *The Changeling* was based on a tale by John Reynolds called *The Triumphs of God's Revenge* against the Crying and Execrable Sin of Wilful and Premeditated Murder (1621) and a version of a Spanish story called Gerardo The Unfortunate Spaniard by Leonard Digges (1622). The source for the subplot has yet to be determined. The forms in which the dramatists used and modified their source material are interesting because they reveal their intent and primary concerns in writing the play.

De Flores is described in Reynolds' book as a "gallant young Gentleman" with no disfigurement or repulsive features. He murders Alonzo in order for Beatrice to marry Alsemero, but he makes no demands that she become his mistress. That happens only later, when Beatrice falls out of love with Alsemero, who develops an unjustified jealousy for no apparent reason.

Alsemero then kills Beatrice and De Flores by trapping them in the act of adultery. In the final scene of the play, Alonzo's pal, Tomazo, challenges Alsemero to a duel and is assassinated by him. Alsemero is then apprehended and put to death. Reynolds' storey does not mention Diaphanta being substituted for Beatrice on the wedding night, but the other source does.

The character of De Flores is one of the most significant variations between the play and its sources. He's a much more fascinating and nuanced character than he is in Reynolds' novel, where he makes no demands on Beatrice as a reward for the murder. However, in Digges' novel, a trustworthy servant who has fallen madly in love with Isadaura (who corresponds to Beatrice) appears in her bedroom just before her wedding. He confesses his love for her and threatens to kill her until she gives in. Isadaura kills him when he is sleeping after he ravishes her.

Middleton blends the De Flores figure from Reynolds' story who kills Alonzo with the servant from the Digges source who threatens and ravishes Isadaura, but he adds much more to the play's character.

Middleton transforms him into a repulsive figure, at first a victim of uncontrollable impulses that compel him to torment himself with the sight of Beatrice, but who gradually gains power over her by discovering her secret. Beatrice's fearful response to him in the early part of the play, as if he poses a threat to her, is particularly fascinating. The relationship between Beatrice and De Flores is examined in detail, and it is psychologically compelling in a way that the sources are not. Middleton accomplishes this in part by the disclosure of characters' emotions and opinions in asides and soliloquies. Character and motivation are obviously important to the dramatists. Alsemero becomes envious for no reason in Reynolds' novel, not because of something that has piqued his interest. It's also unclear why Alsemero may not escape the duel with Tomazo because he should simply justify that Alonzo was killed by Beatrice and De Flores.

The dramatists even outperform Reynolds in terms of impact and narrative consistency. They demonstrate how one thing leads to another in a chain of events. Beatrice's love for Alsemero causes her to use De Flores to get rid of Alonzo; in doing so, she puts herself in his hands and is compelled to become his mistress; as a result, she is afraid of sleeping with Alsemero on their wedding night lest he learns she is not a virgin, so she arranges for Diaphanta to serve as a substitute; Diaphanta dies as a result. Beatrice delves deeper and deeper into the abyss of sin. The play's most tragic impact comes from seeing Beatrice bring about her own demise by beginning a chain of events that she is unable to avoid or reverse.

There is an inevitability about the outcome once she has started down this path. Beatrice may not be a particularly sexy, virtuous, or noble character, but it is horrifying to see her lose herself and feel powerless. This is the basis of the play's influence, and it is entirely due to the dramatists' transformation of their sources.

6.2 Characters in the Play

Alibius

Alibius is a vengeful elderly doctor who runs a private insane asylum. He is married to Isabella, a much younger woman, and he is concerned that another man will usurp his place while he is away. As a result, he orders his servant Lollio to keep Isabella hidden from any visitors to the asylum, which may include young noblemen who come to gawk at the inmates.

Alsemero

Alsemero is a Valencian nobleman who is smitten by Beatrice. He immediately cancels his trip to Malta in order to express his love for her. Alsemero is a man of integrity. Alsemero wants to challenge Alonzo to a duel after learning that Beatrice is betrothed to Alonzo but would rather marry him. Beatrice, on the other hand, is adamantly opposed to this. Alsemero gives Jasperino a potion that is supposed to show whether a woman is a virgin after he and Diaphanta overhear strange conversations between De Flores and Beatrice. He is not a greedy man by birth, and he is pleased when his new bride passes the test. He is appalled and hates Beatrice when she is eventually compelled to confess her crime to him.

Antonio

Antonio is the imposter, the phoney fool. He is a member of Vermandero's team, but he is given permission to leave for a short time, claiming to be going to Bramata. In fact, he wants to see Isabella, so he poses as a fool and is admitted to the insane asylum. After some time, he removes his mask and declares his love for Isabella. Antonio (as well as Franciscus) is unfortunate enough to arrive at the asylum on the same day that Alonzo is murdered. When Vermandero learns of this, he arrests him for murder. Only when the fact is revealed in the final scene is he spared the gallows.

Beatrice

Beatrice, also known as Joanna, is Vermandero's young and beautiful daughter. But she has an immature, arrogant, cruel, and cunning personality hidden underneath her beauty. She is engaged to marry Alonzo when the play starts, and it appears that she has feelings for him. She transfers her affections to the new man as soon as Alsemero expresses his love for her. She hires De Flores, a man she despises, to kill Alonzo because she does not want her impulses to be thwarted, and she does so without considering the consequences. De Flores, on the other hand, she utterly misunderstands. She believes she can pay him for his services and have him leave the country, but instead he demands sex. She is compelled to surrender to him after he convinces her that they are criminal associates and that she can't get away from him. However, this poses a new challenge for her. She is now free to marry Alsemero, but she cannot risk him discovering she is not a virgin on their wedding night, so she sends Diaphanta to Alsemero's bed in her place. Before the truth can be revealed, De Flores effectively disposes of Diaphanta in a house fire, and Beatrice declares her love for him. When Jasperino overhears incriminating conversations between her and De Flores and reports them to Alsemero, her crimes catch up with her. When confronted by her husband, she admits to her part in the murder, but leaves out Diaphanta's replacement in the marriage bed. De Flores stabs her after she is rejected by her husband. She is humiliated in front of her father after being wounded, and just before she dies, she eventually tells Alsemero the whole thing.

De Flores

Vermandero, Beatrice's father, employs De Flores as a servant. He has an unattractive appearance, especially on his face. Most people regard De Flores as a trustworthy person, and Vermandero holds him in high regard. De Flores, on the other hand, has no ethical sense, and his defining sin is his sexual fascination with Beatrice. Even though she despises him and insults him, he finds some excuse to visit her. He is willing to put up with such humiliations just to get a glimpse of her. De Flores is more seasoned and well-traveled than Beatrice, and when she suggests that she wants Alonzo killed, he immediately sees an opportunity to blackmail her into sexual submission. He refuses Beatrice's attempts to buy him off after killing Alonzo, maintaining that he can only be fulfilled by his physical enjoyment of her. He has his urge after outwitting and outmanoeuvring her. De Flores devises a plan to save Beatrice when she is threatened by the fact that Diaphanta has not returned from Alsemero's bed. De Flores is so good at organising and carrying out his plans that Beatrice convinces herself that he is a man worth loving because he looks after her so well. De Flores, despite having moments when his conscience bothers him, remains defiant when his crimes are discovered. He kills himself and Beatrice in order for them to spend eternity together in hell.

Diaphanta

Beatrice's maid, Diaphanta, has an affair with Jasperino. On the wedding night, she takes Beatrice's place in Alsemero's bed at Beatrice's request. Diaphanta seems a bit too willing to embrace the role, and Beatrice wonders if she is really a virgin. She is pleased, however, when she gives Diaphanta the virginity test prescribed in a medical book, which the maid passes. Diaphanta, on the other hand, seems to enjoy her love-making with Alsemero, as she fails to return at midnight as promised. De Flores sets fire to Diaphanta's chamber as the first rays of dawn appear in the sky, hoping to entice her home. Diaphanta runs back to her chambers when the fire alarm sounds, where she meets her death in the flames, just as De Flores had planned.

Franciscus

Franciscus is a Vermandero employee who is on sabbatical. He uses it to pass himself off as a lunatic and infiltrate the insane asylum, where he intends to confess his love for Isabella. He behaves erratically for a moment, but then sends Isabella a love note, which is sadly intercepted by Lollio. Franciscus and Antonio are arrested on suspicion of murdering Alonzo, and Franciscus would have been hanged if the truth had not come out.

Isabella

Isabella is Alibius's young wife. Her old husband is concerned that her affections may wander because she is attractive to men. She is confined to a space where she can only reach the inmates of the lunatic asylum and not the guests, and she is subjected to Antonio and Franciscus' unwelcome romantic attentions. She also has to fight off Lollio's attempted seduction. Beatrice's utter lack of common sense and sound judgement contrasts sharply with Isabella's.

Jasperino

Alsemero's mate is Jasperino. He is taken aback by Alsemero's abrupt change of plans after falling in love with Beatrice, and he tries to amuse himself by seducing Diaphanta, who seems to be more than happy to be seduced. Later, Jasperino informs Alsemero that he and Diaphanta overheard De Flores and Beatrice having an incriminating conversation.

Lollio

Alibius' servant is Lollio. Alibius assigns him the task of ensuring that none of the lunatic asylum's guests are able to see Isabella. Lollio readily accepts, as he wishes to seduce Isabella himself. He introduces Franciscus and then Antonio to Isabella, oblivious to the fact that they are only acting as madman and fool, respectively. When Lollio attempts to kiss Isabella, she smacks him down and threatens to have Antonio cut his throat if he doesn't resist. Lollio then attempts to pit Antonio and Franciscus against one another by telling both of them that Isabella loves them separately.

Pedro

Antonio's friend Pedro is the one who sends him to the insane asylum.

Alonzo de Piracquo

Alonzo de Piracquo is a nobleman who is engaged to marry Beatrice when the play starts. Beatrice's father adores him and is overjoyed that he will be Beatrice's son-in-law. When Beatrice meets Alsemero, however, she rapidly loses interest in Alonzo. Tomazo, Alonzo's brother, advises him not to marry Beatrice, but he ignores him. De Flores murders him while showing him around Vermandero's castle.

Tomazo de Piracquo

Alonzo's brother is Tomazo de Piracquo. He notices that Beatrice is uninterested in Alonzo and warns him against marrying her. Following Alonzo's murder, Tomazo seeks vengeance at Vermandero's castle, but he is unaware of the murderer's identity. He is courteous to De Flores at first, believing him to be an honest man (Act 4, scene 1), but later takes an instinctive dislike to him and hits him (Act 5, scene 2). He is satisfied that justice has been served at the end of the play.

Vermandero

Beatrice's father is Vermandero. Since he lives in a castle and is surrounded by servants and other staff, he holds a high place in Alicant society. Alsemero is well-liked by him because he is an old friend of Alsemero's late father. He is a good-hearted, hospitable, and noble man who is forced to watch in horror as the evil deeds are uncovered and his own daughter is murdered in the play's final scene.

Summary

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's play The Changeling is a dark comedy. This Jacobean play, written in the early seventeenth century, was first performed in England in 1622. The storey revolves around a woman who has been promised to a man she doesn't love, and the lengths to which she will go to marry her true love. The opening and closing scenes are commonly attributed to Rowley, although the main plot is attributed to Middleton. Middleton is regarded as one of the most prolific Jacobean playwrights, having written both tragic and comedic works.

Beatrice, the play's main character, is a young woman. Vermandero, the governor of Alicante's castle, is her father. Vermandero anticipates Beatrice marrying well in order to secure gold and wealth. He makes a promise to Alonzo de Piracquo, a nobleman Beatrice despises. Beatrice is desperate to get rid of Alonzo so she can marry the man she really loves.

Beatrice meets Alsemero, who is also a nobleman, one day. He catches Beatrice's eye and she falls in love with him. Beatrice despises turning down Alsemero's proposal. She explains that she wants to marry him, but she's already committed to another man. Alsemero is heartbroken and promises to marry her in some way.

Meanwhile, back at the castle, Beatrice is pursued by De Flores, her father's servant who is madly in love with her. Beatrice, on the other hand, can't bear him because he's unattractive and follows her around. She doesn't express her feelings to De Flores, but she makes it clear enough.

Tensions increase in the background when Alonzo visits the castle. All but Alonzo can tell that Beatrice isn't pleased to see him. Alonzo is head over heels in love with Beatrice, much to his brother Tomazo's chagrin. Tomazo believes Alonzo should end their relationship, but Alonzo refuses. He's certain that Beatrice will eventually fall in love with him, and that's enough for him.

Beatrice seeks out Alsemero after Alonzo's visit. They discuss how to get rid of Alonzo and be happy together. Beatrice realises that killing Alonzo is the only way she can be with Alsemero. De Flores is the one man who would go to any length for her, including murdering others. She asks De Flores to kill Alonzo in exchange for money without Alsemero's knowledge.

De Flores believes that if he does this, he will win Beatrice's heart, and he readily agrees. De Flores has no idea that after he kills Alonzo, Beatrice intends to give him away so that she can get rid of both of them. De Flores stabs Alonzo three times and kills him. As his own reward, he steals Alonzo's pricey diamond ring.

De Flores returns to Beatrice with the ring when the castle is silent. She offers to reward him handsomely if he does a good job. De Flores, on the other hand, is uninterested in money. He wants to have sex with Beatrice, and if she refuses, he'll tell everyone what she's up to. Beatrice has sex with De Flores, terrified and helpless.

Everyone mourns Alonzo's death later, and Vermandero arranges for Beatrice to marry Alsemero. Just De Flores knows Beatrice isn't a virgin, and Alsemero isn't interested in her right now. Beatrice, desperate, arranges for Alsemero to have sex with another woman on their wedding night. Alsemero does not realise it's not Beatrice if they sleep together in complete darkness.

Diaphanta is the chosen woman. She's had a secret crush on Alsemero for a long time. Even if he won't know it's her, she leaps at the opportunity to have sex with him. She's still overjoyed at the prospect of having anything to use against Beatrice. Beatrice later tries to fake her own virginity and take a virginity test in front of Alsemero so Diaphanta doesn't have to sleep with him. Diaphanta, on the other hand, persuades her otherwise.

Beatrice is irritated because Diaphanta spends the whole night with Alsemero. She realises Diaphanta is having fun sleeping with Alsemero and that she has been duped. Meanwhile, Tomazo creates havoc in the castle because he thinks Vermandero is responsible for Alonzo's death. In shame, Vermandero dismisses him.

It's almost morning now. Alsemero will find out he's sleeping with the wrong woman, and everything will be destroyed, Beatrice is terrified. Alsemero will never talk to her again, she fears. De Flores claims he'll set fire to Diaphanta's chambers to force her to return to them. De Flores will kill Diaphanta when she arrives. In the meantime, Beatrice will retire to Alsemero's room. Beatrice expresses her gratitude and considers whether she could love De Flores after all.

Vermandero discovers that De Flores has murdered Alonzo in the morning. He does, however, want to protect his dearest and oldest servant. He locates men in a mental institution that he believes are responsible for the murder and turns them over to Tomazo, who is eager to see justice served. All hell breaks loose in the castle before Tomazo can kill them, and Tomazo learns who Alonzo's true killer is.

Alsemero discovers what Beatrice has done and imprisons her along with De Flores. In a fit of fury, De Flores murders Beatrice before stabbing himself. Tomazo is irritated because he is not allowed to destroy De Flores. Everyone pities Alsemero for marrying such a depraved, evil woman. He is sorry for what happened to Diaphanta, particularly because she was completely devoted to him.

Self -Assessment

1. Who was *The Changeling* written by?

a. Thomas Middleton
b. William Rowley
c. Shakespeare
d. Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

2.Who is Alibius in the play *The Changeling*?

a. Alibius is the doctor of the insane asylum and married to Isabella.
b. Alibius is Beatrice's father.
c. Alibius is betrothed to Beatrice.
d. Alibius is a servant.

3.Who is Beatrice in the play *The Changeling*?

a. Beatrice is Alibius' wife.
b. Beatrice is a servant.
c. Beatrice is Vermandero's daughter.
d. Beatrice is married to Tomazo.

4.Who is Jasperino in the play *The Changeling*?

a. Friend of Alsemero
b. Alibius' servant
c. Betrothed to Beatrice
d. Alonzo's brother

5.An unattractive servant of Vermandero who is obsessed with Beatrice:

a. Alibius
b. Alonzo
c. De Flores
d. Lollio

6.A doctor that runs an insane asylum. He is very jealous of his much younger wife.

a. Alsemero
b. Antonio
c. Alibius
d. De Flores

7. A noble gentleman from Valencia who meets and falls in love with Beatrice, even though Beatrice is engaged to another.

a. Alsemero
b. Antonio
c. Alonzo
d. Vermandero

8. A man who pretends to be crazy to be committed to the insane asylum where the woman he loves, Isabella, is.

a. Antonio
b. Franciscus

c. Both

d. None of the above

9. Known also as Joanna, she is the daughter of Vermandero and is very vain and selfish. She falls head over heels for Alsemero, although she is betrothed to another.

a. Celia

b. Maria

c. Beatrice

d. Portia

10. Beatrice's maid who replaces Beatrice in Alsemero's bed so that Beatrice can be proven a virgin.

a. Lucy

b. Emma

c. Della

d. Diaphanta

11. There are ____ parallel plots in the play *The Changeling*.

a. Two

b. Three

c. Four

d. None of the above

12. In Act I Scene I, Jasperino enters from the harbour, reminding Alsemero that:

a. The cart is ready

b. The wind is fair

c. The priest is coming

d. None of the above

13. In Act I Scene I, Jasperino and Alsemero should leave for :

a. Malta

b. France

c. Greece

d. India

14. What reason does Alsemero give to Jasperino for staying back in the castle of Alicante:

a. He does not give any reason

b. He is in love

c. He is unwell

d. He wants to take revenge

15. Alonzo de Piracquo in the play The Changeling is:

a. Tomazo's brother

b. Suitor to Beatrice

c. Both

d. None of the above

Self -Assessment Answers

1.	D	2.	A	3.	C	4.	A	5.	C
6.	C	7.	A	8.	C	9.	C	10.	D
11.	A	12.	B	13.	A	14.	A	15.	C

Review Questions

1. Some critics believe Beatrice has an unconscious attraction to De Flores from the start. Is there any proof in the play to back up this theory? What is it about De Flores that she finds appealing?
2. Characters that serve as foils for other characters are common in dramas; they balance each other out, giving the viewer a study in contrasts. Isabella is a foil for Beatrice in what way? Is Alsemero a De Flores foil?
3. Middleton wrote the majority of the main storyline, while Rowley handled the comedic subplot. What evidence can be provided to demonstrate their near collaboration? To put it another way, how do the two plots compare and contrast in terms of themes and language?
4. Investigate and explain the main characteristics of Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses. What was the theatres' physical structure?
5. What are the ways in which madness is trivialised in *The Changeling*?

Further Reading

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Unit 07: Thomas Middleton and William Rowley-The changeling

CONTENTS

Objective

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the patriarchal society in the play *The Changeling*
- explore the theme of appearance and reality
- analyze what does deception mean
- evaluate the human follies in the play

Introduction

The Changeling, a collaboration between Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, features two stories in which the primary characters are women from two very separate social systems. One comic subplot and a key plot are combined in The Changeling. The core storyline involves a philosophical exploration of Beatrice-own Joanna's dramatic dilemma, while the comedic subplot includes a fidelity examination that represents the central plot. The comic subplot is just as significant as the main plot in this case. Isabella serves not only as a comedic foil for Beatrice Joanna, but also as a corollary of her. She emphasizes all of Beatrice-virtues Joanna's and operates on a faithfulness paradigm in contrast to Beatrice-own Joanna's capriciousness. The two stories contrast the two dominant female characters' discretionary characteristics. Although Beatrice – Joanna's naive and egocentric deeds lead to tragedy, Isabella's foresight and intelligence make her the play's noble exemplar. Furthermore, the underlying distinction between the two characters is their knowledge of their respective social classes.

Isabella has a more realistic understanding of the world than Beatrice-Joanna, who leads a life of aristocratic luxury.

In both stories, the women are the object of male desire. While Alonzo, Alsemero, and De Flores court Beatric-Joanna, Lollio, Antonio, and Franciscus court Isabella. Similarly, though De Flores is in a position to "demand her (Beatrice) virginity," Alibius's disrespect for Isabella exposes her to asylum men (as shown in the comic subplot) and upper-class agents who "mistakenly think she is permissive and promiscuous"1. The stories of the two plots progress in tandem to the point that it appears that Middleton and Rowley have split a tale into two distinct storylines.

Isabella is a lower-class woman who is targeted by upper-class men. Lollio will demand his "thirds" if she is unfaithful, according to her realistic perspective (IV.iii. 38). Beatrice Joanna, on the other hand, seems to be utterly unaware of the power and class structures that exist in her culture. She feels she is immune to the harmful effects of her decisions because she is Vermandero's daughter.

Beatrice Joanna's presentation "like a princess in a fairy story, accompanied by obsequious attendants, only child of a powerful and kindly parent, with an enthusiastic suitor, a hidden boyfriend, a helpful confidante, a waiting gentleman who professes to live for her whim"2 poses concerns regarding woman as a species.

Though Beatrice Joanna is protected by her father's palace, Isabella is well aware of class dynamics and social constructs as an asylum inmate. Although Beatrice-Joanna has some personal liberty and lives like a princess, Isabella understands the importance of marriage and conjugal fidelity in her life. Isabella, ironically, is more suited to act in society than Beatrice Joanna, who is blind to pragmatic facets of authority and social standing due to her socioeconomic bias and individual rights.

7.1 Act I, Scene I

Alsemero is head over heels in love with a woman he met at church. He agrees to postpone his departure from Alicante, much to the surprise of his pal, Jasperino, who can't believe his eyes when Alsemero meets the lady, Beatrice-Joanna, and kisses her and expresses his love for her, which is uncharacteristic of him. Beatrice is disappointed that Alsemero appears just five days after she agreed to marry Alonzo de Piracquo at the request of her boyfriend, Vermandero. Jasperino begins to court Diaphanta, Beatrice's maid. Beatrice addresses De Flores, an unsightly gentleman, poorly and shows her dislike for him as he arrives to announce her father's arrival. Alsemero is invited to stay in Vermandero's palace. He also demands that Beatrice and Alonzo be married within a week. Alsemero wants to leave after he learns that Beatrice is already engaged, but he is persuaded to stay. Beatrice loses a glove as she walks. When De Flores picks it up, she puts the other back violently, refusing to wear something he has touched. De Flores shows his adoration for her while he is home.

The situation is set up with remarkable economy; the opening speech informs us that Alsemero has fallen in love with a woman he saw in church; Jasperino's reactions indicate that his friend's behavior is out of character; when they meet, the relationship between Beatrice and Alsemero is quickly established, as is the fact that he is the son of an old friend later on.

The play begins with Alsemero, the first of the play's changelings. He seemed to be a wandering traveler up until this stage, never remaining in one place for long.

Despite his mother's and friends' support, he has never had a romantic relationship with a woman, and kissing Beatrice on their first encounter is an unusual change of behavior for Jasperino.

His understanding of things has changed as a result of love, and he refuses to perceive things the way others do. The picture of the weather-vane turning 'full in my face' (20), which would mean that the wind was blowing hard, has an eerie ring to it, and indeed the play's first sixty lines contain a variety of references to omens and premonitions that hint at imminent evil. 'Unless there be any secret malady/Within me, that I understand not,' Alsemero tells Jasperino that he is well (23-4). A line with a picture of fire about to break out is given to the second servant (51). Jasperino mentions Alsemero going backwards (46) and insists that today is the "important day" (50) if they are to go to Malta, implying that if they do not take this chance, circumstances are likely to discourage them. This also implies that this could be a critical and definitive day in other respects for Alsemero. The

disaster hinges on Beatrice and Alsemero making irreversible choices and deeds, and it centers on these pivotal times in their lives. The word 'omen' appears in the play's second line, and Alsemero's opening speech has a forced sound to it. It starts with a challenge, which he answers, but he seems to need to persuade himself that his feelings for Beatrice are genuine. His point that his purposes are virtuous and therefore not incompatible with faith may be seen as special pleading, that the church ('temple') should be a venue for God's worship and eternal life focus, not for woman's worship and physical appearance concentration. Anyone who believes Man's soul has been tainted by the consequences of Original Sin will see the further assertion that marriage is the way of returning Man to perfection and recreating heaven (7-9) as highly questionable (see Section 3.3).

The first conversation between Beatrice and Alsemero has a flirtatious tone to it. She encourages him to proclaim his love for her by not rebuffing his advances or even being shocked that he should kiss her, then engaging him in an ostensibly academic debate as a philosopher, inquiring about the essence of the love he professes as if love is one of the sciences (that is, fields of knowledge), and finally by demanding evidence that it is real. She claims that the senses (in this case, sight) and reason ('judgment') should work together to perceive reality, but that the eyes will often mislead and 'tell us wonders/Of ordinary objects' (74-5). She urges Alsemero to protest that his eyes have not misled him about her by doing this, and he replies confidently.

Alsemero declares at the start of the play that he can sense the truth about Beatrice's nature and that she is not a "ordinary object" about which his eyes are telling him wonders. The play will progress toward his final recognition of his ignorance, his failure to discern reality (V, iii, 108-9) and her acknowledgement that she is defiled and useless, a normal occurrence, and should be consigned to the sewer and oblivion (V, iii, 108-9). (V, iii, 150-3). Alsemero claims that his senses and reason (eyes and judgment) agree on Beatrice, and that all that remains is for her to agree to marry him.

He acts like the naive man he is, believing that anything can be too easily arranged; he has fallen in love, he can demonstrate that it is real love and that his beloved is a worthy creature, and the next logical step is for them to marry. He appears certain that she would welcome him, but her next speech (83-5) reveals that the matter is more complicated than he thinks: her consent will be contingent on her father's approval. Then, in a note of agitation and the indication that Alsemero has arrived too late for her to agree, though the precise explanation is not yet made clear to the viewer, there is a note of agitation and the suggestion that Alsemero has arrived too late for her to consent, despite the coolly confident sound of her dialogue so far. When De Flores walks in, her agitation skyrockets.

In a variety of aspects, the scene's next section contrasts with the previous one. Beatrice's stern and furious demeanor toward De Flores contrasts with her confident and courteous demeanor toward Alsemero. Her reaction to De Flores here, as well as her still more aggressive reaction to him when he picks up her glove at the end of the scene (230), show a disturbingly unattractive side to this woman who seems poised and charming at first. De Flores' aside (100-7) establishes that he is enamored with her, despite her disdain, in comparison to Alsemero, who is enamored with her beauty but is treated better. De Flores' experience of marriage is more complicated than Alsemero's, who believes that seeking true love and marrying it is as simple as that: De Flores can't resist looking for ways to see Beatrice, and there's a hint that he'll keep doing so to taunt her (105), as though he wants a deep emotional reaction from her, even if it's hate rather than passion. In the scene's final expression, this concept is reiterated. Beatrice's conversation with Alsemero backs up De Flores' comment that she can't offer a justification for her rejection of him. The previous simple discussion about eyes and judgment is shown as artificial and unrelated to human experience. Beatrice's intense emotional reaction to seeing De Flores cannot be rationally interpreted, and the use of terms like 'infirmity' (109), 'frailty' (116), and 'imperfection' (118) mean that such misplaced emotions signify a character flaw. Alsemero's speech (116-26) claims that it is a flaw possessed by all humanity, implying that man's capacity to think, explain, and regulate his emotions is limited. The unreasonable hatred is represented as a poison (112, 127) in this scene, and imagery of poison can be seen in the play, particularly in relation to De Flores, who is later described as a poisonous snake (224). Beatrice's poison is the sight of him, just as Alsemero's poison is the sight of her, though he is unaware of it. He doesn't respond to Beatrice's inquiry, "And what could be your poison, sir?" (127), implying that he doesn't believe he has one.

The brief exchange between Jasperino and Diaphanta is important thematically, not only to lighten the mood or provide comic contrast.

It includes references to illness and the need for a cure (139-40), which contribute to Jasperino's question about Alsemero's health and his remark about the secret malady (22-4), as well as references to poison and 'infirmity' (109) in the section of the scene that has just ended. The play's obsession with mysteries and the discovery of forbidden things is related in a bawdy and comedic way by Jasperino's sexual suggestions to Diaphanta that he might show her'such a thing' (144) and his comment 'I'll discover no more now, another time I'll show thee all' (151-2). Vermandero checks Alsemero's credentials a few moments later before revealing him the castle's defense secrets.

Beatrice is afraid that her hidden friendship with De Flores and her true identity will be exposed if the castle holds the secret of the dead Alonzo deep within its inner recesses. The repeated use of asides in this scene, as well as in the play, emphasizes the fact that the actors on stage do not know each other's inner thoughts or secrets for the majority of the time. The encounter of Alsemero and Beatrice is in stark contrast to the conversation between Jasperino and Diaphanta. Jasperino's approach is emotionally provocative and tactile, while Alsemero's speeches have no overt connection to the physical realities of his attraction to Beatrice and are more concerned with mentally proving his affection. Unlike Beatrice, who seems to be leading Alsemero to his declaration of affection, Diaphanta deflects Jasperino's overt advances in a lighthearted, if not completely discouraging, way.

When Vermandero invites Alsemero to stay in the castle as a family guest, he announces that Beatrice is to marry Alonzo de Piracquo in a week. Alsemero replies to his wedding invitation with the words 'He intends to feast me, and poisons me beforehand,' evoking images of poison (207). This is an aside, and it's worth noting how the number of asides rises as the scene progresses, exposing the characters' true feelings beneath the social facade. One of the most significant is at 155, where there is a hint that Beatrice, like Alsemero at the start of the scene, will become a changeling. She'll focus her affections on Alsemero rather than Alonzo. She has a disorientation, giddiness (156) memory, much as Alsemero did at the start when he confessed to Jasperino that he didn't know where he was (22-3). The first scene depicts these two people at a point in their life where they are both confronted by events that disrupt their routines and put their personalities to the test.

Vermandero is adamant that Beatrice do just what he wants. He dismisses her protests that she shouldn't be hurried into giving up her virginity, and he also says that if Alonzo doesn't marry her, "I'll want/My will else" (219-20). In this scene, the word 'may' appears many times, and it appears to suggest 'a stubborn and careless selfishness,' as the editor, N. W. Bawcutt, puts it.

Vermandero implies that he is adamant about getting his way. Beatrice is equally adamant about getting hers, as evidenced by her aside (220), and De Flores is equally adamant about getting his way, as evidenced by the last paragraph. The erotic connotation of thrusting his fingers into Beatrice's gloves makes it clear what he desires. It is unequivocally proven that there is a substantial clash of wills.

7.2 Act I Scene II

The scene shifts to, Alibius, and his assistant, Lollio, who run a madhouse. When he is out on business, the former is concerned that his wife, Isabella, may be persuaded to be unfaithful to him with the guests who come to see the inmates of the insane asylum. He tells Lollio to keep a close eye on her to make sure she isn't seen by the guests. Pedro, a gentlemen, arrives at the asylum with a new patient, Antonio. Lollio interrogates him to determine the degree of his emotional impairment.

Off-stage, a cacophony of madmen announces that it is time for them to be fed.

When the action moves to the madhouse, the audience's mood shifts from grim to comedic, but the second scene also sets a foundation for making links between the main and sub-plots. The scene starts with a discussion about a secret. The word appears four times in the first seventeen lines of the poem. AIibius wishes to keep his wife a "secret," not in the sense that the world will be unaware of her presence, since, as Lollio notes, "it is too late to keep her secret" (8), but in the sense that no one other than himself will have sexual contact with her. The madhouse, like Vermandero's fortress, has secrets that must not be revealed to, and thus known by, strangers or enemies. Alibius uses the image of wearing his ring on his own finger (27) to indicate holding his wife to himself, but it is a pornographic image, which is more apparent to a Jacobean audience because 'finger' was

often used obscenely to mean 'penis.' When De Flores presents Beatrice with Alonzo's ring on his severed finger at the turning point of the main plot(III, iv), the image of the ring and the finger will feature prominently, with similar sexual symbolism. Aside from the assassination, the main plot's other major secret is an asexual one: Beatrice's friendship with De Flores. The madhouse has two types of inmates: fools and madmen, and both Alibius and Lollio are compared to them in jest in the dialogue with Antonio (203), but Isabella is portrayed as neither foolish normad (65-6), the only sane and wise person in the room. The madhouse is shown in two different ways, both of which are relevant to the play's concerns. It's first compared to a hospital where 'brainsick patients' (54) come to be cured by AIibius, the doctor (49-50). It's also depicted as a school where Lollio can teach the inmates and help them regain their sanity and wisdom. 'It will take a long time!' Alibius warns Lollio. Before all thy scholars learn this lesson'(79-80), and there are references to'scholars' at 228 and 237, as well as'schoolfellows' at 227. Lollio instructs or examines Antonio for a large part of this scene; he asks him questions to determine his mental condition so that he can be placed in the appropriate form (156-7). The main plot's obsession with Man's spiritual illness and his desire to gain moral knowledge is reflected in these aspects of the madhouse's presentation, which equate concepts of sickness needing to be healed and foolishness needing to learn wisdom. As the scene comes to a close, the sound of madmen can be heard inside. Alibius claims that it is time for them to be fed, and there is evidence that they are becoming restless, like hungry animals. Indeed, Antonio's apprehension that the madmen will bite him compares them to animals in which one must be cautious. The noise of the unidentified madmen may be intended to mean that potentially destructive powers are being held in check inside the madhouse, with the threat of trouble if their appetites are not satisfied. This provides a reference to the main plot once more: Food and feeding imagery is synonymous with sexual appetite, and chaotic sexual impulses will be seen in the main plot to lead characters to violate moral constraints in order to satisfy the appetite, with tragic and damaging consequences. In the main storyline, unrestrained madness is shown to be dangerous, just as unrestrained sexual desire is shown to be.

7.3 Act II Scene I

Beatrice sends a letter to Jasperino, requesting a private meeting with Alsemero. De Flores, whose crush on Alonzo appears to be increasing, arrives to announce Alonzo's arrival and is met with rage and harsh words from Beatrice, who is secretly terrified of De Flores. Vermandero, Alonzo, and Alonzo's younger brother, Tomazo, arrive. Beatrice persuades her father to postpone the wedding by three days, which Alonzo agrees to. Tomazo attempts to persuade him to break off the engagement because he has noticed Beatrice's coldness towards her future husband and believes she is in love with someone else. Alonzo ignores the alarm and shares his faith in Beatrice's constancy and goodness.

Beatrice is doing something morally and socially questionable as a woman already engaged to be married by secretly arranging a meeting with another man who has expressed ardent love for her, despite her words implying otherwise. She calls Jasperino's action in delivering the message to Alsemero "fair service," as if he were on some noble errand of love, and her words "Good angels, and this conduct be your guide" (3) imply that he is on a mission to preserve virtue and goodness against the threat of evilism. Beatrice is simply attempting to change the essence of the case so that it is seen as unquestionably correct rather than morally dubious. Her soliloquy that follows (6-26) reinforces this impression and demonstrates that she is presenting the situation in this manner not so much for Jasperino's advantage but for her own. Her voice, like Alsemero's at the start of the play, is an effort to persuade herself that she is right in what she is doing. She makes the same kind of claim based on the operation of judgment (reason) that Alsemero used to prove his love for her in the first scene. She claims that Alsemero is clearly a wise man because he chose a friend to serve as his messenger. However, her words are ironic because the audience knows from the earlier dialogue between Jasperino and Diaphanta that he is not particularly discreet, but rather a very down-to-earth character prone to bawdy suggestion, and therefore more suited to sexual intrigue than the refined con. She not only tries to persuade herself that he is a man of judgment, and therefore more deserving of her love than Alonzo, but she also tries to persuade herself that she has judgement in seeing that Alsemero is such a man. 'With the eyes of judgment,' she now loves (13). All of this is simply rationalization; she claims that what she wants to do is correct by claiming that it is sanctioned by her reason, the faculty that checks irrational impulses and allows Man to interpret reality and follow the higher path of virtue. Her picture of the worthy man gleaming like a

diamond in the dark (15-16) will have an ironic echo later in Act III, scene ii, when De Flores sees the diamond in Alonzo's ring gleaming in the dark (III, ii, 20-2). Beatrice associates the diamond with Alsemero, the worthy man, in this scene, while she associates it with Alonzo in the later scene. In this scene, we gain a better understanding of De Flores. His first speech, an aside that exposes what he is thinking, refers to his infatuation for Beatrice as an ailment (27), an idea that is echoed later with the phrase'mad qualm' (79); his love is an illness and a madness, an association we find in the sub-plot. It also seems that his illness is worsening, and that it is beginning to become an addiction. He claims that he has to see Beatrice with increasing frequency, despite the fact that he is suffering from it;'some twenty times a day' (29) is corrected, 'nay, not so few', almost as though the addiction is taking a stronger hold and he now has to see her more often, despite the fact that he previously only needed to see her twenty times. De Flores is no longer a scheming villain, but rather a victim of impulses over which he has no influence at this point in the play. The urges are irrational - he has "no justification" (31) for them - and the picture he uses of himself as a bull being pulled repeatedly to bull-baiting (80-1), a competition at the time in which bulls were set upon in a ring by dogs, emphatically portrays him as a victim. De Flores, like Alsemero and Beatrice, is enslaved by the powerful and irrational forces of love and desire, but unlike them, he does not try to rationalize his feelings; instead, he accepts irrationality as a human trait, and Man's consequent changeability gives him reason to hope that he will eventually get what he wants. In sardonic speeches, he points out that even uglier men than himself have had success with beautiful women, and that women who have been angry and antagonistic have been known to end up in bed with the man they have attacked. There's a strong feeling that Beatrice and De Flores are tormenting each other. He irritates her by coming into her presence on a regular basis, and she treats him badly and hurts him when he does. This torture is linked to the eyes: De Flores must see Beatrice with rising frequency (28, 78), and she cannot bear to see him (72-3), but this scene reveals that there is more to Beatrice's repulsion than De Flores' ugliness. He says she responds "as if risk or bad luck hung in my looks" (36), and her asides and soliloquies prove that she believes he is a threat to her. She describes him as not only 'ill fac'd' but also 'ominous'(53), which bothers her more than anything else, and when he leaves, she expresses a feeling of impending danger that lasts long after he has left. Despite this, when her father and Alonzo appear, she dismisses her concerns about De Flores as minor compared to the 'torment' he now faces in marrying a man she no longer wants as a husband. The play demonstrates that she was right to be afraid of De Flores, but she suppresses the fear of danger and evil because getting rid of Alonzo and pursuing her love for Alsemero are much more important to her. In the latter part of the scene, Alonzo and Tomazo are pitted against each other. Tomazo notices Beatrice's coldness towards Alonzo: she doesn't want to marry him and wants the wedding to be postponed. Despite the fact that this is self-evident, Alonzo continues to see and interpret the situation as Tomazo has presented it. It's articulated in terms of seeing; Tomazo asks, "Did you notice the dullness of her parting now?" (123) Alonzo, on the other hand, hasn't seen anything. Beatrice's eyes warn her about De Flores, but she can't bring herself to explain why she is so repulsed by him. Tomazo's eyes still serve as a tip, but he uses his explanation QUdgement) to figure out why Beatrice acts the way she does. Alonzo, like the other main characters, is clearly so determined to carry out his wishes, in this case to marry Beatrice, that he just sees what he wants to see. He is blinded by love to the fact that Tomazo brings to him. Tomazo exclaims that he is a fool for bothering to warn his brother (125-6), but it is plain to the viewer that it is Alonzo who is being foolish. Tomazo also portrays Alonzo's love as a madness (153), implying that the 'blind' lover shares the characteristics of the residents of the madhouse in the subplot, who are fools and madmen. Summary of Act II, Scene 2 The secret meeting between Beatrice and Alsemero takes place. She wishes she didn't have to marry Alonzo because of her father's command. Alsemero suggests a duel with Alonzo, but Beatrice is afraid of the consequences: either her lover will die, or he will be captured and forced to run. She unexpectedly gets the bright idea of using De Flores to get rid of Alonzo, and the meeting comes to an abrupt end as she becomes immersed in the concept. De Flores has been watching the lovers' meeting and notices that Beatrice is on the verge of succumbing to temptation. He understands that once she has fallen, he will have the opportunity to satisfy his desires. Beatrice pretends to treat him well, even touching his face, and De Flores is taken aback by this shift in behavior and his apparent good fortune. He wishes there was a way he could support Beatrice in any way. After feigning reluctance to tell him, she finally asks him to kill Alonzo, believing she will be able to pay De Flores and provide him with the means to travel abroad, thereby freeing herself of both her fiance and the man she despises and fears. It's plain that De Flores sees sexual favors from Beatrice as his reward. Alonzo meets De Flores and asks him to take him around the castle, which gives him the chance to carry out Beatrice's order almost immediately.

The meeting between Beatrice and Alsemero is performed at first as if it is about love rather than spiritual matters. These points imply that their passion serves as a replacement for faith. The speech portrays the response to prayers as making up for a person's shortcomings - that is, moral change - and the meaning of the reference seems to be that Alsemero's love would improve Beatrice even more than the answer to her prayers to God. Her excitement at seeing Alsemero is important in terms of the play's obsession with the deceit of the eyes - 'I have within mine eye all my desires' (8). Beatrice's preference for Alsemero over heavenly graces indicates a dangerous value distortion on her part. She is, of course, exaggerating the depth of her happiness, but the manner in which she does so provides us with insight into her mind. Rather than the illegal encounter that it is, there was some honorable love-tryst going on. Diaphanta describes it as a 'just meeting' (2) and Alsemero as a 'complete gentleman' (3); he describes secrets entrusted by ladies to their serving women, such as the meeting's, as 'Things of most precious trust' (7); and Beatrice compares Alsemero's appearance to prayers being answered (Alsemero fell in love in church, where he should have been worshipping God, and Beatrice says that she values Alsemero and his There are any number of comparisons she might have made to show how much' sweeter' Alsemero is, but the one that the dramatist puts into her mouth reveals that she wi It's an ominous contrast, and it gives us more insight into Beatrice's character as the scene progresses and she considers and then plots the murder of Alonzo. This isn't the only unsettling aspect of the scene's beginning. '1 dare not be too busy with my praises,/Th' are dangerous things to despise,' Diaphanta will not praise Alsemero too much because there is a danger that Beatrice will overhear and be jealous,' Diaphanta will not praise Alsemero too much because there is a danger that Beatrice will overhear and be jealous' (18). Beatrice compares the kiss she gives Alsemero to the one she has to give Alonzo, wishing that the latter could be poisoned (16-18). These words have a similar vehemence and contain similar feelings to those she had previously expressed against De Flores, and when poison is mentioned again in this scene (46), it connects Alonzo with him: her fiance is a poison of which she can rid herself by using another poison, The audience has already seen Alonzo in the previous scene, and although he is depicted as a person blinded by passion, there is no indication that he is an unsuitable man for her husband in terms of character or appearance. As a result, the ferocity with which Beatrice expresses her hatred reveals the utterly unreasonable nature of her emotions and her desire to justify her change of heart. She makes Alsemero appear so much more deserving of a partner by making Alonzo sound like a beast she is forced to kiss, but whom she would like to poison - and we find that the thought of killing is already there, if only subconsciously - Her wish that there was no such person as Alonzo and that she didn't have to obey her father's order (19-20) demonstrates that her rage stems from a strong desire to be free of restrictions and do whatever she wants. Alsemero plays the chivalrous lover who must rid his lady of an evil and troublesome suitor in response to her projection of loathing onto Alonzo. He will perform a 'good service' (21) for the lady, and when she inquires as to what that service will entail, he responds, 'The honourablest piece' bout guy, valour' (27); he will challenge Alonzo to a duel. Alsemero has been established as a mn inexperienced in love in the first act; his proposed course of action may be the brave and honorable thing to do in love fiction, and even if Alonzo really was as Beatrice wishes to presenthim, but her following speech quickly undercuts Alsemero's fine sentiments by preempting them. Just as Alsemero assumed in the first scene that marrying Beatrice will be easy because he loved her, he now naively assumes that getting rid of Alonzo would be simple. She points out that a duel would achieve nothing because it would either result in Alsemero's death or his imprisonment or forced exile. Alsemero's effort to portray the brave loverseem is made somewhat ludicrous by Beatrice's words. Laws prohibiting dueling had been passed a few years before the play was published, and Middleton and Rowley had written A Fair Quarrel (1617), a play about the duelling code. As a result, when Beatrice says that Alsemero could get into legal trouble as a result of the duel, the audience's attention is drawn to the fact that he prioritizes his love over legal considerations. The dramatist thus depicts a dangerous situation in which two individuals place the highest priority on personal desire, ignoring moral, social, and legal constraints that are necessary for society's order to function. Beatrice's final expression of the realities of what they're talking about comes when she says, "Blood-guiltiness becomes a fouler visage" (40), implying that their intention to get rid of Alonzo will entail crime and hence guilt. It also emphasizes that, despite the talk of honor and valour, Alsemero's killing of Alonzo in a duel will be considered murder. It's significant that Beatrice stops speaking aloud right after saying these sentences, and we just hear her thoughts in a sidebar. Not only has the mention of 'fouler visage' suggested DeFloresto to her and how she could use him, but she is also aware that by speaking these words, she risks revealing more of the side of her nature that is revealed when she meets De Flores, and less of the lady of high thoughts and virtues she wishes to be. Beatrice's chance discovery of the solution to her

dilemma by the use of a specific word, 'fouler visage,' is much more psychologically compelling than if she had sat down to consider her options. The second mention of 'poison' in this scene (46) indicates that her earlier latent impulse to kill Alonzo (18) is now becoming conscious as she realizes how she can use De Flores. It's worth noting that this specific incident was not in Middleton's source and is therefore most likely his creation, demonstrating his dramatic sense and ability to portray characters from the inside. Also compelling is her fast shift away from direct conversation and into asides, as if she wants to keep her thoughts hidden from Alsemero. She becomes so engrossed in her concept that she fails to notice Alsemero, who has to make two attempts to get her to talk to him. It's ironic that just as she's thinking of a way to get closer to Alsemero, she decides to stop communicating with him, hatching a plan that she'll keep hidden from him. Patricia Thomson claims that this point in the play shows their utter lack of understanding of each other (New Mermaid version, p. xv.), and she is right. Beatrice began by adopting a composed and charming social demeanor with Alsemero, but her first meeting with De Flores, as well as her asides in the first scene, revealed that there were other powers at work underneath this social veneer. While she attempts to appear polite, wise, and noble to him, he, as this scene demonstrates, tries to behave in the manner that he believes is fitting for the chivalrous lover. As a result, each tries not only to project an idealized picture of themselves, but also to persuade themselves of the ideal existence of the other. 'You teach wisdom, lady,' (52) indicate Alsemero's idealised view of Beatrice; he refers to her without familiarity as 'lady,' suggesting the kind of distance between the lover and the beloved found in much Elizabethan love-poetry, in which the lady inspires and transforms the lover thr The terms, however, are ironic because they come just as the audience realizes Beatrice is about to embark on a path of extreme folly and evil. De Flores has been watching the meeting and realizes that Beatrice will not be able to sustain her friendship with Alsemero and Alonzo without sinning, and if she does, he will be more likely to be able to fulfill his love for her. He offers a viewpoint on women that is diametrically opposed to Alsemero's. He cynically claims that after a woman has succumbed to temptation, it is in her nature to sin more and more often. He expresses the idea with an arithmetical image, and the exaggerated nature of the image, which portrays the woman as eventually being so promiscuous as to become the supplier of sex to an entire army, creates the effect of black humour that was evident in De Flores' speeches in the previous scene. His words here seem to suggest that knowing Beatrice's secret would give him control over her, allowing him to leave his position as a passive victim behind. 'serv'd' (59), 'put in' (60), 'point' (61),'mounts' (62),'serv'd' (59),'serv'd' (59),'serv'd' (59),'serv'd' (59),'serv'd' (59),'serv'd' (62). It's ironic that, right now, Beatrice is fantasizing about having the ability to control others so that she can live her life as she pleases, free of both Alonzo and De Flores. Beatrice hides her true feelings from De Flores, just as she hides her true thoughts from Alsemero, using the phrase "Cannot I keep that secret?" (68.) The amount of asides in this section of the scene emphasizes the sense of secret details and characters that don't even know each other. Beatrice's hatred for De Flores has been developed in previous scenes, and those feelings are reiterated here (66-7), associating him with death ('sepulchre'), so that we understand how much it must cost her to pretend to be pleasant to him, and how overriding her desire must be (81). She instinctively knows that the only way to operate on him is to use the strength that her physical beauty grants her, and De Flores' asides (79, 81, 86-7, 90-1) demonstrate just how good she is right away. In the same way that she persuaded Alsemero to announce his love for her in the first scene, she persuades De Flores in a measured manner. She begins by surprising him with kind and complimentary words; she then touches his face and promises to prepare a cure for his disfiguring rash with her own hands; she then says that his features are those of a man who might be trusted with something important; she then says that his features are those suitable for the kind of man who might be trusted with something important; she then says that his features are those suitable for the kind of man who might be trusted with something important; she then says that his features are those suitable (133-4).De Flores starts by becoming perplexed by Beatrice's shift in attitude toward him, and he is completely overwhelmed by it. The result is noticeably comedic, as his hopes of being 'rail'd at' are not met, and he is left perplexed. 'I was blest/To light upon this minute; I'llmake use of't,' he says on line 90, as he starts to recover from his astonishment and gain a grasp of the situation (90-1). As he gains more conscious power, the humor shifts to a level of parody of Beatrice's vocabulary, with sexual innuendos on'manhood,"service,' and'mounts' (94-7), on'creation,' (107), and 'act' (122). The word'service' appears nine times in the entire scene (21, 26, 54, 93, 96, 117, 119, 129, 140) and is a word that connects Alsemero and De Flores. It is used of honorable deeds done for a lady by a lover or devoted follower in the case of the former. De Flores retains this sense on the surface, but a layer of secondary sexual meaning, already present earlier in the scene - 'I'm sure both /Cannot beserv'd unless she transgresses' (58-9) - begins to creep in here

as he realizes that performing the service Beatrice requests may lead to service of another. His early asides show astonishment and unfathomable sexual gratification at her touch, but the way he later picks up her words and gives them coarse innuendos, as well as his ironic comments:

BEEF BEATRICE Thy reward would be priceless. FLORES DE That I've considered; I've assured myself of it ahead of time, and I know it'll be valuable; the thought ravishes. (130-2)indicates a return to equilibrium and the reassertion of his deceptive intellect, which was revealed earlier in his comments on Beatrice and Alsemero's meeting. Beatrice thinks she is manipulating him, but all signs are that he will become the manipulator, as he manipulates her words to have meanings she is unaware of. It is obvious to the viewer, but not to Beatrice, that his reward would be asexual. Beatrice has released the destructive force of his lust (the word 'blood' had such a meaning in this period), as evidenced by his utterance 'Oh, my blood' (146). She is completely ignorant of what she has done, and she is optimistic and complacent enough to believe that she has discovered a straightforward solution to her problem: I'm going to get rid of BEATRICE (aside) Piracquo and his dog-face were once two of his most vehement dislikes. 144 (6) The scene comes to a close with a series of references to eating and feeding. The expression of De Flores' lust (146), followed by a comparison of sexual appetite and hunger, is followed by a description of Alonzo as "the man [who] goes supperless to bed,/Yet shall not rise tomorrow to his dinner" (154-5), and a reference to the fact that "it is now close" (163). As a result of that earlier episode, this scene's linkage of sex demands and food appetite brings the additional correlation of sexual desire with madness. De Flores' desire has been piqued, and he anticipates the fulfillment of his sexual appetite, while Beatrice anticipates union with Alsemero.

7.4 Act III, Scene I and II

Since these two short scenes are intertwined, they are considered as a single unit here. They take place inside the confines of Vermandero's castle. Between the plays, De Flores hides a sword, ready to be used in the murder. In scene one, as he leads Alonzo through the castle, he persuades him to put down his sword before they descend through a narrow passage into the vaults. Scene ii takes place in the vaults, where De Flores viciously stabs Alonzo three times as he is looking out a window. De Flores plans to take the diamond ring from the murdered man's finger and show it to Beatrice as evidence that the crime was committed. When he can't get the ring off, he cuts off the finger.

In these two scenes, the writing texture is less dense than in other key plot scenes, and there are no character and motivation perspectives found elsewhere in the play. The scenes are also not purely required to explain the events of the main plot; the audience already knows that De Flores will murder Alonzo, and in Act III, scene iv, he will announce to Beatrice that the deed has been completed. In a play where every detail is meticulously planned, it's important to consider why the dramatists included these scenes of the murder at all. They may simply be there to provide a piece of exciting and sensational action, but they also provide two very striking effects, one produced verbally and the other visually, that contribute to the overall impact of the play on the audience. The setting of Vermandero's castle is expressed verbally in a powerful way. Earlier references to the castle's structure are brought up again. It is described by Alonzo as "a most spacious and impregnable fort" (4). The number of keys De Flores would obviously have in order to carry Alonzo around the building adds to its impregnability (1-3). Every part appears to be sealed, and we remember that Vermandero said about the position in Act I, scene I (166) that "inside are secrets," and there is the impression that Alonzo is being shown hidden places here. It sounds like the kind of location where a murder might be committed with little chance of the body being discovered. The image conveys the impression of a building with several narrow passages within. De Flores persuades Alonzo to lay down his sword in order to make his way more easily, and De Flores had spoken of 'the ways and straits/Of some of the passages' (II,ii, 159-60) at the end of the previous scene, implying a location with many such passages. The concept of a maze or labyrinth is possibly intended, as the latter word appears twice in the play. In Act III, scene iv, Beatrice says to Antonio, "I'm in a maze" (III, iv,71), as she tries to figure out what will please De Flores as retribution for his actions, and Isabella, disguised as the madwoman, says to Antonio, "Get up, thou son of Cretan Dedalus." Let us enter the lower labyrinth, and I'll lead thee to the clue. (iii, 110-12) (IV, iii) (IV, iii) (IV, I T. B. Tomlinson (see Further Reading) sees a comparison between the labyrinth of the castle where the murder occurs and "the labyrinths of sex Isabella joins in the sub-plot" (p. 195). Beatrice is now caught in a labyrinth of ramifications and worries as a result of the murder, leading her deeper

and deeper into sin and death. The legendary creator of the maze, the Labyrinth, in the palace of Knossos in ancient Crete, at the center of which was the beast, the Minotaur, is referred to by Isabella in the above quotation. The labyrinth takes Alonzo to the heart of Vermandero's castle, where he dies at the hands of De Flores. Beatrice's maze of worries and consequences eventually leads her to De Flores and death. De Flores is regarded by Beatrice as a demon, a dreadful creature that she hates, and he is often associated with death, whether in the form of poison, venomous snakes, or tombs (II, ii, 66-7). If the first scene verbally conveys a sense of the castle's secrecy and complex labyrinth of corridors, the second scene verbally conveys a sense of a different exterior, the spacious and impregnable fortress to which Alonzo alluded. De Flores advises him to look out a casement and see "the full power of the fortress" (7), and Alonzo remarks on the "rich variety" (9) and "goodly munition" (10). The words cause the viewer to see the outside world at the same time as they are about to witness a murder inside. The fine outward appearance of the well-defended castle contrasts with the heinous essence of the crime perpetrated against the defenseless Alonzo in the darkness of its narrow inner recesses. Thus, the two facets of the castle depicted here provide a striking mental picture of contrasts between outer appearance and inner truth, which is central to the play. There is blood and the body of a murdered man inside this beautiful forest from the outside. Another striking effect of the scenes is their visual impact. Since there isn't much in the way of thematic detail or character perspective, the viewer is forced to focus solely on the incident. It's an especially cowardly act - De Flores stabs the unarmed Alonzo in the back - and it's also a particularly cruel act - De Flores stabs him three times and then slices off his finger. The effect is to make the viewer feel as though they are witnessing the crime in its entirety. Beatrice, who told De Flores, "There's horror in my service" (II, ii, 119), has no real idea what the horror is like; she hasn't visualized what she's asked him to do. She was simply putting De Flores to the test to see if he would be willing to take on such a job at the time, and she seems to believe she would be able to pay him off and forget about it. The audience's experience of the murder allows them to appreciate how little Beatrice understands what pursuing her impulses entails, and elicits horror at her unfeeling and uncomprehending behavior in Act III, scene iv. As a result, these scenes are important to the play's critical and moral perspective. The severing of the finger in order to provide Beatrice with evidence that the deed has been done not only adds to the grotesque aspect of the scene, but it also lets the audience expect the later scene in which she will obtain it, and they will be curious to see her reaction.

7.5 Act III, Scene III

When Alibius is away on business, Lollio follows his master's orders and keeps Isabella behind locked doors at the madhouse. He amuses her by presenting the two most recent patients, Franciscus the madman, who appears to be a poet maddened by passion, and then Antonio, the fool, when Franciscus becomes abusive. These two men are probably courtiers who have disguised themselves so that they may see Isabella. When Lollio goes out to monitor the madmen off stage, Antonio reveals that he is a gentleman who has disguised himself as a fool in order to gain access to Isabella. He makes an attempt to make love to her, but she refuses. Lollio recovers, but he is soon forced to deal with the madmen once more. Antonio resumes his advances on Isabella, but this time he is noticed and overheard by Lollio, who appears on a higher level of the stage. The madmen come out of nowhere, disguised as birds and animals. Lollio takes Antonio away and then tries to kiss Isabella when he returns, revealing that he overheard what Antonio said to her. Isabella screams at him and threatens him not to reveal anything about what has happened to her husband or she will convince Antonio to slit his throat. Alibius returns with the news that he has arranged for the fools and lunatics to take part in the entertainments that will be presented at Vermandero's castle during the wedding festivities.

Isabella is being held in solitary confinement to keep her from being unfaithful to her husband, according to the scene. The words 'cage' and 'pinfold' (animal pen) are used (3, 8) to associate Isabella with a bird or animal that is kept contained. The connection between humans and birds and animals is continued throughout the scene as the madmen appear dressed as such (197). The photos of the cage and confinement may also be connected to the fortress from the previous scene. The link between the madhouse and the outside world is established early in the dialogue, drawing the audience's attention to the links between the main and sub-plots. When Isabella argues that the company she has in the house is made up of fools and lunatics, Lollio responds, "And where can you find the other, if you should go abroad?" (16, 17) He claims that the whole universe is made up

of idiots and insane people. Such a reference must cause the viewer to question what is going on in the world outside the madhouse, as well as draw attention to a comparison between Beatrice and Isabella. The latter's freedom is practically limited by the fact that she is held behind locked doors, while Beatrice is constrained by 'the order of parents' (II, ii, 20) and the social and moral relations of her contract with Alonzo. She hesitates and sighs in Act II, scene ii, as she pretends hesitation to tell De Flores what she wants him to do, and he uses imagery of a prisoner who wishes to be free. Take pity on it and lend it a free word; 'las'how it toils/For liberty!' (II, ii, 104-6; II, ii, 106-7). The utterance of Beatrice's terrible order, the "free expression," is thus a breaking free from the bounds of morality. Isabella, who is literally confined, yearns for freedom and is granted some by being allowed to mingle with the inmates of the insane asylum(38-9), but she resists the temptation to break free from the moral constraints placed on her as Alibius' wife, despite the fact that Antonio is clearly a far more powerful man. Lollio describes the new prisoner as sexy (26-7) and compares his physical beauty with his idiocy. The parallel with the main plot, in which Beatrice and Alsemero's physical beauty is not matched by wisdom, is obvious. There are several similarities in this scene. Franciscus, the seemingly crazy poet, has gone insane for love (48-52) and his insanity finally leads to abuse (91). The conversation between Franciscus and Lollio about changing sex (74-6) is reminiscent of the conversation between Beatrice and De Floresin in Act II, scene ii, lines 107-14. Franciscus also mentions being made blind by Juno (78,81). As a result, love is associated with ideas of madness, blindness, brutality, and the transformation of one's nature in this segment of the scene, just as it is in the main plot. The threat of punishment for the dangerous madman who attempts to overstep the bounds is literally present in the shape of Lollio's whip, which he brandishes; in the main plot, the threat of punishment for sin and for ignoring the restrictions imposed by morality is unseen and unheeded largel Even further similarities can be found in the segment of the scene where Antonio tries to make love to Isabella. He refers to the power of beauty to turn the lover as he reveals that he is not truly a fool (127-8). He is one of the changelings in the play, and he uses the word 'change' to describe his true nature (125). He claims that he has used the appearance of foolishness to conceal the fact that he is a lover (126), but Isabella refers to him as a fool four times (129, 135, 139, and 153), and the ironic meaning of these references is that his love is foolishness. Antonio's discussion of love and science (130-5) can recall Alsemero and Beatrice's first conversation, and the part of the scene in which Lollio overhears Antonio and Isabella clearly recalls the second encounter in the main plot seen by De Flores. Lollio, like him, believes that a woman who has succumbed to temptation would be more receptive to the advances of others, and so he makes advances with the implication that he has control over her because he can reveal something to her husband. The parallel with the main plot is not exact in that the situation here reminds us not only of Alsemero but also of De Flores, when Isabella, fending off Lollio's advances, threatens that if he tells her husband, she will see to it that Antonio kills him. She is also certain that Antonio is so enamored with her that he will do it (248-52). In contrast to the main storyline, Isabella avoids the seductions of love while also fending off the threat of blackmail; she is as adamant about remaining loyal to her husband as Beatrice is about fulfilling her desires. Isabella's soliloquy (219-24) emphasizes that physical constraint, such as locking a woman up, would not keep her from sinning; her behavior suggests that only strict obedience to moral standards will. Though she began the scene desiring freedom, she ends it by agreeing with Alibius that she should be locked up(257), recognizing the difficulty of escaping sin and the need for strict restraint. The madmen are heard off-stage in this scene, as they are in Act I, scene ii, a strong and restless force that threatens to become uncontrollable. Lollio is feeling the burden of being responsible for the insane asylum on his own (174-6). The madmen inside the house are like hidden human desires that, if not restrained, can be deadly, as they are in the main story. The madmen's cries of 'Catch there, catch the last couple in hell' (171) mean that they are playing barley-break, a game in which couples ran through a central area known as 'hell' while avoiding being caught. The sound of this game playing at the same time as Isabella faces the lure of a lover in Antonio serves as a reminder of the punishment that awaits those who sin. The cry is a well-placed reference that finds a resounding echo in the main plot when De Flores talks of playing barley-break with Beatrice and of them being cast into hell in the final scene (V, iii, 162-3). The appearance of the madmen dressed as birds and animals just as Antonio is tempting Isabella, and Lollio, thinking Alibius will be made a cuckold, whispers 'Cuckoo, cuckoo!' (197), symbolically suggests that madness reduces man to the state of a beast, while the connections which the plaza makes suggest that madness reduces man to the state of a beast. The news that the madmen and fools will be present at Beatrice's wedding foreshadows the coming together of the main- and sub-plots.

Act III, Scene IV, Summary

Vermandero, Beatrice, Jasperino, and Alsemero all arrive, but only Vermandero is aware of Beatrice and Alsemero. Except for Beatrice, they all leave to explore the castle. Beatrice claims she is beginning to persuade her father to like Alsemero. De Flores comes in with the intention of having sex with Beatrice, assuming she desires it as well. "Piracquo is no more," he tells Beatrice, before showing her the finger with the diamond ring. It was the first token Vermandero forced Beatrice to submit to Alonzo, according to Beatrice. Beatrice offers De Flores three thousand florins in exchange for the ring, which is worth three hundred ductas. When De Flores declines, Beatrice offers another three thousand florins. De Flores despises the thought of murdering for the sake of having sex with Beatrice; he murdered for the sake of having sex with her. Beatrice offers to double the amount, but she is perplexed as to why De Flores would not be satisfied with money, thinking that the amount he desires is much too large to announce out loud. As a result, she recommends that he leave the country (as she had previously advised) and give her the sum he requires on paper. He responds that if he leaves, she must as well, because their shame binds them together. In a last-ditch effort to cement their affection, De Flores kisses her, but she refuses him with disgust. De Flores explains why she must report to him in great detail, namely because he can now easily threaten her or else he will reveal how she hired him to kill Alonzo. He claims that his life is meaningless unless he has her, and that he is willing to go to jail if she does not sleep with him. She seeks to persuade him of their social class differences, but he insists that her evil act has made them equals. She makes one more attempt to give him all of her gold, but he declines once more. She finally realizes that she has fallen into a sinful cycle.

Act IV Scene I, Summary

Various gentlemen join, and Vermandero greets them, pondering Alonzo's flight. Alsemero, Jasperino, and the Gallants are the first to arrive. Vermandero gestures to the Gallants, who seem to applaud the decision. Beatrice walks in wearing her wedding gown. Diaphanta, Isabella, and other female companions accompany her.

De Flores is the last to join, grinning at the "accident"; Alonzo's ghost appears to Deflores, shocking him, and shows him the hand whose finger he had cut off.

Beatrice has married Alsemero and has given in to De Flores' sexual demands. Alsemero is alone in his room in the afternoon, too ashamed to have sex with her new husband on their wedding night. Many medications can be found in Alsemero's wardrobe. The first is a pregnancy test kit, and the second is a virginity test kit. Diaphanta walks in, searching for Alsemero. Beatrice informs Diaphanta that every virgin who has sex with her husband Alsemero instead of her on their wedding night will receive 1000 ducats. However, both of them take the virginity test to see whether Diaphanta is a virgin or not. Beatrice is not a virgin, while Diaphanta is, as she has shown the typical signs of gaping, sneezing, and eventually laughing during the virginity test. They intend for Diaphanta to pretend to be Beatrice in Alsemero's bed that night in the dead of night.

Act IV Scene II, Summary

Vermandero discovers that two of his gentlemen, Antonio and Franciscus, have abandoned the castle, leading him to believe that Alonzo has been murdered. Since Vermandero suspects they murdered Alonzo and fled, he issues arrest warrants for them. Tomazo walks in and accuses Vermandero of murdering his brother. Vermandero pretends that Alonzo has just bolted, and that it is he, Vermandero, who should be offended that his future son-in-law has bolted at the last minute. Tomazo, according to Vermandero, should also leave because he is the brother of an ignoble coward like Alonzo. Vermandero has left the building.

When De Flores enters, Tomazo extends a warm welcome, recalling his brother Alonzo's fondness for De Flores. Tomazo goes on to say that, while Vermandero is untrustworthy, De Flores is a gentleman who can be trusted. De Flores is reminded of Tomazo's brother Alonzo, whom he murdered. De Flores has left the room. Alsemero walks in and is greeted with hostility by Tomazo. After the wedding, Tomazo challenges Alsemero to a duel. Tomazo leaves, and Jasperino enters. Jasperino informs Alsemero that he overheard Beatrice and De Flores conversing in the manner of

lovers. Jasperino is told by Alsemero to go get the virginity test. Just when Jasperino returns, Beatrice joins. Alsemero believes Beatrice has a somewhat different appearance and has been abused. Alsemero gives Beatrice the potion, which she drinks and then fakes the symptoms to "prove" her virginity to Alsemero and Jasperino.

Act IV, Scene III, Summary

Franciscus declares in a letter to Lollio and Isabella that he is only pretending to be insane in order to obtain access to Isabella and that he is in love with her. If Isabella has sex with Franciscus, Lollio says he wants to have sex with her as well. Isabella claims that if she does commit adultery, she will sleep with him, meaning that she does not want to do so. She asks Lollio for advice about how to cope with Antonio and Franciscus' attraction to her, and he suggests abusing them. To that end, she disguises herself as a lunatic.

Alibius shows up and inquires about the wedding. Alibius then inquires about Isabella's well-being. He exits after Lollio tells him that she is fine. When Antonio walks in, Lollio makes him dance. Lollio leaves, and Isabella enters dressed as a madwoman in her new outfit. Antonio, unable to recognize Isabella and disgusted at the prospect of being kissed by a madwoman, rejects Isabella's attempt to kiss him. Antonio admits that he is not a fool, but rather a gentleman who pretends to be one. Isabella accuses him of only caring for her outward appearance. Lollio enters and tells Antonio that if he kills Franciscus, he will be able to have sex with Isabella. Lollio reads the letter he wrote to Isabella when Franciscus enters. If he kills Antonio, Lollio promises him that Isabella will have sex with him. Lollio goes to fetch the madmen after Alibius joins. For the wedding, all of the madmen dance.

Act V, Scene I, Summary

Even though Beatrice had instructed her to finish by midnight, Diaphanta has not yet emerged from Alsemero's chamber. As a result, Beatrice assumes Diaphanta is having sex with Alsemero for fun. This leads her to believe that Diaphanta was the one who told Alsemero of Beatrice's virginity loss (as Diaphanta may have had a chance to figure out that what she and Beatrice indulged in were virginity tests). As a result, Beatrice becomes enraged with Diaphanta. De Flores walks in. Beatrice is concerned that if Diaphanta does not appear before daybreak, Alsemero will be able to see with whom he has had sex and will realize his error, destroying Beatrice's plan. De Flores devises a plan to evict Diaphanta from the bed. He claims that he will set fire to Diaphanta's chambers, waking up the whole house, and that when Diaphanta returns to her bed, De Flores will pretend to clean the chimney with a gun while killing her. Beatrice agrees, also implying that she has fallen in love with De Flores. De Flores and Beatrice are haunted by Alonzo's ghost once more. De Flores starts the fire offstage, then leads the residents as they try to put it out. Beatrice summons Diaphanta and orders her to return to her chamber. Vermandero, Alsemero, and Jasperino are the first to arrive. A shooting is heard, signaling Diaphanta's assassination. De Flores reappears on stage, heroically rescuing Diaphanta's burned body from the flames. Vermandero and others have promised De Flores a monetary reward for his courage in alerting everyone to the fire and thus preventing further damage.

Act V Scene II, Summary

In a fit of misanthropy, Tomazo chooses to blame the next person he sees for his brother's death (since he holds everyone potentially accountable). De Flores walks in. Tomazo erupts in fury. He reiterates Beatrice's earlier reservations about using something that De Flores has already used. He declares that if his sword touches De Flores even once, he will never use it again, and then hits him. De Flores draws his sword, intending to retaliate, but is forced to remember Alonzo's murder and is unable to strike. Tomazo's unexpected, intuitive aggression frightens De Flores, and he flees quickly. Vermandero is accompanied by Alibius and Isabella. Tomazo orders them to leave. Vermandero tells Tomazo that he has tracked down Alonzo's killers, Antonio and Franciscus, who were hiding in a mental institution after the murder.

Act V, Scene III, Summary

Beatrice and De Flores were seen together in a garden by Jasperino and Alsemero, who are discussing it. Jasperino hides as Beatrice enters. Alsemero accuses Beatrice of being a slut and a liar, implying that she has been having affairs with De Flores. She admits to hiring De Flores to assassinate Alonzo, but claims that she did so out of love for Alsemero, as her original purpose was to have Alonzo removed so that she and Alsemero could be together. Alsemero says he has to think about it and locks Beatrice in a closet as he does so. Alsemero persuades De Flores to confess to the crime. De Flores reveals Beatrice's infidelity, believing she is trying to cheat and outmaneuver him. Alsemero locks him up with Beatrice in the closet. Vermandero, Alibius, Isabella, Tomazo, and Franciscus arrive, believing they have solved Alonzo's murder case. Alsemero also appears to have solved the murder of Alonzo. Screams of ecstasy and pain fill the room as Alsemero starts to expose the reality, and the pair emerges, Beatrice stabbed by De Flores. Beatrice admits to being in a bad mood and that she sent Diaphanta to the bedroom to have sex with Alsemero in her place. De Flores confesses to Alonzo's murder, staggers himself, and dies before Tomazo can seek vengeance. De Flores instructs Beatrice to obey him in death with his last words, and as she dies, Beatrice begs Alsemero for forgiveness. Changes and changelings are listed. Alsemero claims that Beatrice's beauty had turned to whoredom, and that he, a supposed husband, had turned to wantonness. Antonio claims that he was transformed from a small thug to a great fool, and that he was on the verge of being hanged at the gallows. Franciscus claims that he went from being a little wit to being completely insane. Alibius admits to his mistake and vows to change his ways and never hold phony patients again.

Self Assessment

1. Alibius tells Lollio a secret in *The Changeling*:

A. He cannot satisfy his wife sexually

B. He has a hidden treasure

C. He has murdered Alonzo

D. He has fallen in love

2. Pedro gives Alibius a large sum of money:

A. To take care of Antonio

B. To kill Antonio

C. To buy a cart

D. To go to Malta

3. Beatrice is in love with:

A. Alsemero

B. Tomazo

C. De Flores

D. Alibius

4. Jasperino is surprised to learn that:

A. Alsemero has fallen in love with Beatrice

B. Alsemero is ready to embark

C. Alsemero is ready to kill Tomazo

D. Alsemero will discontinue his studies

5. Beatrice in an aside regrets that five days ago she was promised in marriage to:

A. Alonzo

B. Tomazo

C. Jasperino

D. De Flores

6. Jasperino resolves to get a girl for himself and sees:

A. Diaphanta

B. Portia

C. Celia

D. Emma

7. De Flores inform Beatrice of her father's

A. tragic death

B. imminent arrival

C. loss

D. decision

8. Beatrice is always repulsed by:

A. De Flores

B. Alonzo

C. Tomazo

D. Antonio

9. De Flores is besotted with:

A. Maria

B. Viola

C. Beatrice

D. Ophilia

10. Alsemero is heartbroken:

A. hearing the news of shipwreck

B. hearing the sudden death of Jasperino

C. hearing talk of Beatrice's fiancé

D. hearing about the death of Alonzo

11. Beatrice gives Jasperino _____ for Alsemero in secret:

A. A sword

B. A casket

C. A note

D. A dress

12. In her soliloquy, Beatrice talks of:

A. how great Alsemero is

B. how great De Folres is

C. how great Alonzo is

D. how great Antonio is

13. For Beatrice, Alonzo de Piracquo is:

A. Amazing

B. Handsome

C. Smart

D. Horrible

14. Beatrice says the only reason that she is marrying Alonzo is:

A. because her father has forced the choice on her

B. because she cannot disobey her father

C. both the above

D. none of the above

15. Who leads Alsemero into a chamber secretly?

A. Maria

B. Diaphanta

C. Goneril

D. Regan

Answers for Self Assessment

1.	A	2.	A	3.	A	4.	A	5.	A
6.	A	7.	B	8.	A	9.	C	10.	C
11.	C	12.	A	13.	D	14.	C	15.	B

Review Questions

1. To what extent would it be true to say that there is no character in the play who is admirable or even likeable, or for whom we feel pity, and to what extent does that matter?

2. 'Beatrice is not a moral creature; she becomes moral only by becoming damned.' Do you agree? Consider to what extent Beatrice has a sense of guilt.

3. Alsemero has been described as 'the equal and opposite of De Flores',equal in his reasoning powers and his sexual attraction and oppositein his morality. In what ways does your study of the character lead you to agree or disagree with this?

4. 'De Flores elicits from the audience a variety of responses, fascination, amusement, pity, horror, repulsion.' Consider where in the play, and for what reasons, we respond in a variety of ways to him, and whether you feel the list of responses given here is complete and accurate.

5. To what extent would it be accurate or adequate to describe De Flores as the villain of the play?

6. 'Upon yon meteor ever hung my fate.' This line about De Flores might suggest that Beatrice's downfall was inevitable from the beginning. Do you consider that to be the case, and how does that affect the play's tragic impact?

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Dr. Sanjay P. Pandey, Lovely Professional university

Unit 08: Thomas Middleton and William Rowley-The Changeling

CONTENTS

Objective

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the sweetness in the play *The Changeling*
- explore the poetic naturalism
- analyze the constancy of change
- evaluate the history of closet drama

Introduction

One comic subplot and a key plot are combined in *The Changeling*. The core plot involves a psychological exploration of Beatrice-own Joanna's tragic dilemma, while the comic subplot includes a fidelity examination that represents the central plot. The comic subplot is just as significant as the main plot in this case. Isabella serves not only as a comedic foil for Beatrice Joanna, but also as a corollary to her. She emphasizes many of Beatrice-virtues Joanna's and operates on a faithfulness paradigm in contrast to Beatrice-own Joanna's capriciousness. The two plots contrast the two dominant female characters' discretionary characteristics. Although Beatrice – Joanna's naive and egocentric deeds lead to tragedy, Isabella's foresight and wisdom make her the play's virtuous exemplar. Furthermore, the underlying distinction between the two characters is their knowledge of their respective social classes. Isabella has a more realistic view of the world than Beatrice-Joanna, who leads a life of aristocratic luxury.

8.1 The Costancy of Change

In both stories, the women are the object of male desire. While Alonzo, Alsemero, and De Flores court Beatric-Joanna, Lollio, Antonio, and Franciscus court Isabella. Similarly, though De Flores is in a position to "demand her (Beatrice) virginity," Alibius's disdain for Isabella exposes her to asylum men (as depicted in the comic subplot) and upper-class agents who "mistakenly assume she is permissive and promiscuous". The stories of the two plots grow in tandem to the point that it appears that Middleton and Rowley have split a tale into two distinct storylines.

Isabella is a lower-class woman who is targeted by upper-class men. Lollio will demand his "thirds" if she is unfaithful, according to her realistic perspective (IV.iii. 38). Beatrice Joanna, on the other hand, seems to be utterly unaware of the power and class structures that exist in her culture. She feels she is immune to the negative effects of her decisions because she is Vermandero's daughter. Beatrice Joanna's presentation "like a princess in a fairy tale, surrounded by obsequious attendants, only child of a powerful and kindly father, with an enthusiastic suitor, a hidden boyfriend, a useful confidante, a waiting gentleman who professes to live for her whim"2 raises concerns about woman as a species.

Though Beatrice Joanna is protected by her father's castle, Isabella is well aware of class systems and social constructs as an asylum inmate. Although Beatrice-Joanna has some personal autonomy and lives like a princess, Isabella understands the importance of marriage and conjugal fidelity in her life. Isabella, ironically, is better equipped to act in society than Beatrice Joanna, who is blind to pragmatic facets of power and social standing due to her class bias and individual rights.

Beatrice-Joanna is guilty of never discouraging Alsemero's flirtations, but this in no way establishes the notion that she is a "whore." “One good service/ Will strike off both your fears,” Alsemero suggests, as he proposes to “Remove the cause” (II.ii.22-23, 24). Although there is no particular justification for such a contest, Alsemero suggests challenging Alonzo to a duel. Murderous seeds have been sown. “Pray, no more, sir. / Say you prevailed; you're danger's and not mine then. /The law will demand you from me,” Beatrice-Joanna says as she discourages Alsemero from fighting, “Pray, no more, sir. / Say you prevailed; you're danger's and not mine then” (II.ii.32-34).

The play's core tension arises from Beatrice-overzealous Joanna's pursuit of Alsemero's suit as well as her attempts to defend his honor. Beatric-personal Joanna's sovereignty does not make her farsighted, but rather myopic, and she insists naively that DeFlores will solve her problems and shield both herself and Alsemero from the consequences of wrongdoing.

8.2 Sweetness

Beatrice-Joanna does not come off as naturally malicious. Rather, she lacks reason and a sense of class dynamics as a result of her princess-like upbringing. Her assumption is that the aristocratic class system is totally set and rigid, with no social mobility mechanisms. That is why she thinks DeFlores is the one who is ordered to kill Alonzo: “I shall rid myself / Of two inveterate loathing at one time” (II.ii.144-145), because she cannot read DeFlores' mind to use murder as a means of social advancement. DeFlores recognizes the power that such an opportunity gives him, saying, "I was blest/ To light upon this minute; I'll make use of it" (II.ii.93-94).

Beatrice-dilemma Joanna's arises from her lack of communication, as she never expresses her displeasure because of her innocent and instinctive view of social systems. She wishes to be free of Alonzo's betrothal and marry Alsemero. But she is the daughter of a nobleman who feels compelled to marry for political reasons, claiming, "I'll like / My will else" (I.i.227-228). Vermandero's own honor will be greatly harmed by his utter disregard for a previously arranged marriage. Her fundamental ignorance of social systems, as well as her lack of social judgment, make her arrangement and affair with DeFlores an ideal convenience tool. She is unable to decipher his motives because she believes he requires what all men require: money. She is oblivious to the fact that he wants to sleep with her, an upper-class woman, and to his plans for clandestine social mobility. DeFlores' misplaced eagerness to assist her is utterly misunderstood by her. As he reminds her, "Peace and innocency has turned you out/ And made you one with me," the murder becomes the bond that connects the two, transcending social class (III.iv.139-140). Beatrice-rape Joanna's by DeFlores sets in motion a horrific chain of events that leads to her utter ruin. She becomes the focal point for a sexuality that is both ‘loved and loathed' by the end of the play. It is this dichotomy of being loved and despised that contributes to her own tragic realization of remorse, as she expresses in her final words, "It is time to die, when it is a shame to live" (V.iii.180).

What is the cause of Beatrice-devastation Joanna's and fall? Her moral compass is twisted. Burks accurately states that "her behavior is driven by flawed perceptions of her culture's gender roles"3. Her personal autonomy does not enable her to question social norms. Her lack of knowledge of social constructs leads her to believe that she has no social options for her imminent marriage to Alonzo other than to destroy him.

The naivete of Beatrice-Joanna is used to compare Isabella, whose social consciousness acts as a counterpoint to Beatrice- Joanna's. Isabella's character is intended to represent how other characters react when they are tempted. She ignores all enticements, demonstrating power and logic. She is more refined and reserved than Beatrice-Joanna. She doesn't have Beatrice-"princess" Joanna's

complex. She is well aware of the ramifications of having an affair. Her marriage secures her middle-class status while also providing her with Alibius' protection. Isabella's mastery of desire and love reaffirms and parodies the play's central themes. This focus is only reinforced at the play's conclusion, when Beatrice-Joanna is publicly humiliated as she shamefully admits her role in the murder and cries, "It is time to die, when it is shame to live," to which her father, Vermandero, responds, "Oh, my name is now entered in that record" (V.iii.181).

8.3 Poetic Naturalism

Characters in Thomas Middleton's dramas are often endowed with distinct signifying forms, private interests followed within social rules and values, and, at the same time, self presentations that influence their private values at the expense of public identity. Both private and public selves are ingeniously attracting each other within the social value structure, as it were, so that the scenes of self-creation established by Shakespearean heroes are much more sophisticated for Thomas Middleton. Public responsibility is often integrated into the attributes of Middletonian heroes and heroines.

As what Paul Yachnin terms "Middletonian irony," Middleton helps us think of how different people view the social value system. 4. Middleton's play engages and disables perception by rendering and undoing tragic manifestations of selfhood and building and deconstructing interpretive structures, according to Yachnin. 5. This essay investigates the public environment's private versions of self since it is believed that these private versions make characters' sense of behavior unstable and paradoxical. Indeed, Middleton beautifully portrays the collision between varying private ideals in the ways in which characters use their own agency in the world they live in. This which make a character's self-creation and self-hood more difficult.

Rather than yielding to ideological pressure by negotiating their subjectivities between the given and the produced, Middletonian characters attempt to revise their social roles and responsibilities. They consider themselves to be individuals rather than members of a community. In terms of private value and morals, The Changeling offers some valuable observations that would have gone unnoticed otherwise. The play depicts how other powers of value hinder Beatrice– Joanna's attempt at autonomy.

Beatrice–Joanna is rendered unfree by contingent conditions beyond her control, despite the fact that she acts according to her own will. As a consequence, the outcome of her decisions has a contradictory and insecure significance. The morality of the play is crucial. Characters' private principles often contradict societal moral codes and laws. Beatrice–Joanna, for example, considers her social position and duty as a daughter to be temporary and disposable. At various points in the play, her search for authenticity draws a distinction between sex and morality. Her process of self-creation, in particular, reveals a paradoxical sense of behavior, since public autonomy – for example, capitalistic, patriarchal, and bureaucratic systems – raises ethical issues rather than providing a foundational basis for assessing certain actions.

The morality of the characters in *The Changeling* is suspended in the sense that idiosyncratic standards of worth prevent us from offering a straightforward distinction between good and evil. So, in Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling*, Beatrice-search Joanna's for private desire or authenticity creates a paradoxical meaning between the expected consequence of action and the actual outcome, it is argued in this essay. Beatrice-sexual Joanna's appetite, which propels the plot forward, leads her to an unforeseeable disaster, even though she has the right to behave as she wishes at first. The disparity between her behavior and its result makes us doubt the significance of the action she planned. Furthermore, the fact that she eventually surrenders her subjectivity to an external force demonstrates that she is a creature of circumstance, when the conditions that underpin social interaction become something beyond Beatrice's control. Via Beatrice's method of self-creation, Middleton demonstrates the uncertainty of human purpose and humanity's submission to fortune. The three characters in the play, Beatrice's fiancé, Alonzo de Piracquo, her boyfriend, Alsemero, and a servant, De Flores, deftly create the tragic politics of desire and power in the play. Before the play begins, she has been betrothed to Alonzo de Piracquo, whose social status will help her father, Vermandero, further his ambitions. She, on the other hand, has fallen in love with Alsemero, whom she first saw in an Alicante temple. So Vermandero wants Beatrice to marry Piracquo, while Beatrice wants to marry Alsemero and De Flores wants to possess her. Characters' agencies are harmed by the flood of private passions that continually produce contingent circumstances in the intricate labyrinth of idiosyncratic selfhood and desire.

The dialogue between Vermandero, Alsemero, and Beatrice in the first scene appears to be a build-up to some rash action on her part.

Vermandero: Sir, I assure you, the gentleman is full. A nobleman and a courtier, he is well-versed in the arts of courtship and gallantry.

With a plethora of lovely and noble adornments;

I would not trade him for a son-in-law, for any he in Spain, the proudest he – and we have some fantastic ones, as you are aware. Alsemero:- He's very much a part of you, sir. Vermandero:- As fast as this tie can hold him, he shall be bound to me; otherwise, I will demand My will.

Beatrice: (aside) If you do it, I'll like mine. (218-226) (I.i.218-226) (I.i.218-226) (I.

Beatrice's current situation makes it clear that she will not be able to select her own husband at this time. Her aside, on the other hand, suggests that her willpower is high enough to fulfill private ambition on her own. Her zeal and one-of-a-kind personality prevented her from making an objective assessment of the situation. Beatrice, for example, deals with the relationship between sight and judgment in the first scene:

"Our eyes are sentinels for our judgments / And can give certain judgment what they see;/ but they are rash often, and tell us wonders / Of common objects, which our judgments may then search the eyes, and call them blind."74-78 (I.i.)

Her speech demonstrates how private emotion can overshadow logic and judgment. Following her impulses and passions could mean foregoing her social responsibilities and roles, which means she knows no other world but the one that can grant her wishes. Richard Levin states that her childish ability is confined to the visual concept of judgment that whatever she wants is right, owing to her distinct personality, which includes "an inherent delicacy of taste, a fine enjoyment of the surfaces, especially the visual surfaces, of life, on which her responses appear to center"6.

Beatrice-Joanna does admit that social codes and conventions are out of sync with her personal values. She claims that by revising what counts as a public field: her self-knowledge, she will build her life. She sees public autonomy as an insurmountable barrier to achieving true selfhood. Because of their lower social status, she may have believed that other people, especially De Flores and Diaphanta, belonged to her power. When Beatrice-Joanna attempts to seduce Alsemero, she creates her own model based on her own personal values. From her perspective, her father's will, which directs Beatrice to marry Alonzo, acts as a roadblock to her true self. To her, being who she really is entails rejecting who she isn't. Beatrice's will and preference are tested in the following circumstances.

De Flores' influence had been underestimated by Beatrice. She may have assumed he lacked masculine autonomy, which would be in line with feudal law. "Think but upon the gap that creation / Set 'twixt thy blood and mine," she says, referring to the natural order that draws a line between her and his blood (III.iv.131-132) She places herself in his control as a result of her erroneous decision, in the sense that her appetite causes her fate to be subject to De Flores', which means she becomes a victim of her own actions: "I am in a labyrinth" (III.iv.72). It also contributes to an unbridgeable gap between her goal and its consequences.

Beatrice's youth has turned her mind into a whirlpool of emotion, even though she is aware that her actions are morally questionable because she has committed a crime. Beatrice's remorse reveals a schism between sex and morality: "Oh agony of sin! Would I rather have been chained / To my living hatred/ in that Piracquo, than to hear these words" (III.iv.128-130). This may be a turning point, because her idiosyncratic selfhood is destined to form ideals and patterns of action. Furthermore, she is unaware of the attraction she is creating – for example, De Flores is enraptured when she brushes his face with her own hands. The phrase "You are the deed's creature" has a paradoxical significance in that Beatrice, who attempted to wield control, fails to do so. Her deliberate decision, in a sense, does not turn out to be significant for herself in the way she expected.

Beatrice-Joanna misinterprets the behavior of the woman who is waiting for her. She is furious with her waiting lady, referring to her as "this slut" (V.i.23). Since this behavior makes Beatrice more reliant on De Flores, and her harm contributes to Alsemero's suspicion, the unintended aspect of her action acts as a restraint on her willpower. "I'm compelled to love thee now / 'Cause thou provid'st so carefully for my honour," she tells De Flores (V.i.48-49). Her noble social superiority and female virtue are brutally broken in this scene. The virginity test, according to Swapan Chakravorty, shows "the standard of honour by which De Flores' social better lives." 7. Since the virginity test, administered by Alsemero, who is skeptical of Beatrice's virginity, fails her attempt at self-creation, she ends up dirtying herself with dishonour, something she never predicted. She's never wanted to be associated with the crimes she's committed, but she can't help herself because her odd nature and the circumstances that push her impulses never stop her from carrying out her scheme. Her current situation reflects the insecurity of her goals and ambitions. Beatrice's autonomy is called into question by the disparity between her intentions and the actual outcome.

8.4 Passion and Reason

This tragedy is guided by a struggle between reason and emotion, with passion triumphing. The core characters make poor decisions when it comes to sexual desire. All other factors pale in comparison to lust. In Beatrice's case, the reasons she gives herself for her shifting feelings are ironic to say the least. She is head over heels in love with Alsemero, but she convinces herself that she is making a rational decision. She rationalizes her abandonment of Alonzo by claiming that she was duped by appearances and lacked judgement when she fell for him. She also advises Alsemero about the importance of putting an emotion like love to the test with logic. However, she reveals her state of mind as she admits to a "giddy turning" in her affections when she switches from Alonzo to Alsemero in Act 1. This does not sound like the mental state that comes with rational decision-making. In reality, Beatrice is deceiving herself, pretending that her erratic behavior is due to something else. She also believes Alsemero is a wise man because she approves of his choice of Jasperino as a friend: "It is a sign he chooses wisely," she says. She deduces that she, too, is practicing a similar virtue by choosing a man of judgment: "Methinks I love now with the eyes of judgement, / And see the path to merit." Beatrice, on the other hand, is trapped in a state of self-delusion that she never challenges. When it comes to her dealings with De Flores, for example, she never considers that De Flores is after more than just money. She makes a mistake in judging his personality.

Alonzo is another character who, due to romantic or sexual attraction, loses touch with reality. He misses the fact that Beatrice does not welcome him warmly and shows little interest in him in Act 2, Scene 1. He ignores Tomazo's warning because he can't stand hearing something bad said about Beatrice, even though his brother can see her coolness toward him. "Why, here is love's tame madness: thus a man / Quickly steals into his vexation," says Tomazo, one of the few characters in the play who maintains his good judgment (because he is unaffected by love or passion), and he speaks a truth that the play will eventually reveal: "Why, here is love's tame madness: thus a man / Quickly steals into his vexation." He means that failing to see an ugly reality because of feelings of love is insane, because it can easily lead to distress. It leads to more than that in Alonzo's case—it leads to his death.

Diaphanta is also a victim of allowing desire to triumph over judgment. Beatrice overindulges in Alsemero's kisses on her wedding night and fails to return at the appointed hour. As a result, she perishes in a burn.

De Flores is another character in which desire triumphs over reason. He, unlike Beatrice, does not deceive himself into believing anything but the truth. He knows Beatrice despises him, but he keeps returning to see her whenever the opportunity arises, and he puts up with her threats. He understands that his decisions are illogical from a practical standpoint. But he also realizes that he lusts after Beatrice with such intensity that nothing else matters. He confesses that he "cannot help but love her," and that "I'd rather be hanged than not see her." De Flores has passed the stage where he can make rational decisions; he is enslaved by desire, which will not let him go.

The crimes that follow seem unavoidable once the protagonists have fallen under the spell of love, desire, or lust.

8.5 Reality vs. Appearance

There's a disconnect between what you see and what you get. Beatrice appears to be in good shape on the outside, but her lovely exterior conceals a greedy, ruthless, and aggressive existence. Throughout the play, she undergoes a series of internal changes that turn her into something very different from how she appears at first. She is in love with Alsemero early on, despite being betrothed to Alonzo; later, in the dumb display that opens act 4, scene 1, she appears as a humble, virtuous bride in a solemn wedding procession, when in fact, she is an accomplice in murder and has already been unfaithful to her husband. She passes the virginity test, giving the impression that she is a virgin although she is not. She'll soon make adulterers out of her maid and her unwitting husband, and then she'll switch her affections from her husband to De Flores once more. As a result, Beatrice is one of the play's "changelings."

Alsemero's deceit, in which he believes he is making love to his bride while his lover is Diaphanta, adds to the appearance versus truth theme. This is also a theme in the comic subplot, which is a commentary on the main plot. Antonio (the changeling, according to the dramatis personae) pretends to be a fool, while Franciscus pretends to be insane. Their outward appearances contradict fact, though they, like Beatrice, Alsemero, and De Flores, are crazed for Isabella, going to such insane lengths to gain access to her.

The trend of appearance versus truth continues with Lollio, who, like De Flores, appears to be his master's faithful servant but is actually plotting to take Isabella for himself. The appearance-reality theme is given a twist by Isabella. Alibius believes she is only noble on the surface, and that she would be tempted to seek sexual fulfillment elsewhere; he believes there is a disconnect in how she acts and who she really is. He is, however, mistaken in this regard. Isabella is what she appears to be: a virtuous wife, despite the fact that she engages in playful sexual innuendo with Lollio and Antonio.

8.6 Imagery

Many representations of eyes and references to sight are used by Beatrice with unconscious irony, as she points out that the eye can be deceiving when it comes to making reliable decisions about love and character. She reiterates Alsemero in scene I of Act I:

Our eyes are sentinels unto our judgements,

And should give certain judgement what they see;

"Sure, my eyes were mistaken," Beatrice says of her easily forgotten love for Alonzo, contrasting the superficiality of the eyes with the "eye of judgment" and "intellectual eyesight." Beatrice is never more blind than when she believes she is looking through the lens of judgment.

The play's themes are reinforced by images of disease, poison, and blood. "Unless there be any secret malady / Inside me that I do not understand," Alsemero says in the first scene, denying any notion that he is ill. He doesn't realize it yet, but the passion he's just conceived for Beatrice would turn into a sickness, a poison for him. De Flores is described by Beatrice as a "deadly poison" and a "basilisk" to her (a mythical reptile whose glance was said to be fatal). When Beatrice and De Flores' poison has taken effect, Jasperino describes the condition as a "ulcer" that is "full of corruption." De Flores uses the picture of sickness to describe his lust for Beatrice, referring to it as a "mad qualm" (a qualm is an illness).

Images of illness are counterbalanced by allusions to recovery. Beatrice tries to make a remedy to heal De Flores's skin, and Jasperino tells Diaphanta that sexual intercourse with her would cure him of the madness he jokingly claims to have. Alibius, a physician, claims to be able to heal both lunatics and fools. The irony is that he can't; the prisoners are beaten with whips rather than treated with medication. There is no treatment for the illness that Beatrice and De Flores are suffering from, which often affects the characters around them.

Blood images convey both desire and murder. Jasperino claims to have the "maddest blood in the town," which he interprets to mean the most lustful blood. De Flores uses the term in the same way as he exclaims, "O my blood!" after discovering he has a viable plan to possess Beatrice's body: "Methinks I feel her in mine arms already!" However, De Flores' use of the word is also connected to his understanding that he must shed blood (by murder) to fulfill his bloodlust (his lust). He tries to collect from Beatrice what his desire demands after killing Alonzo, and he uses the word blood to mean murder: "A woman dipped in blood, and speak of modesty?" The picture of blood

reappears later, when Alsemero tells his daughter that she should have traveled "a thousand leagues" to escape "This dangerous bridge of blood!"

Finally, Beatrice invokes the picture of blood, but not in the context of desire or murder, but rather in the context of the medical procedure of bloodletting to heal a patient. This links the picture of blood to the play's references to healing. Beatrice tells her father in Act 5, Scene 3:

I am the blood that was stripped from you.

For the sake of your own health. Don't look at it any more,

But, regardless, throw it to the ground;

Enable the common sewer to handle the distinction.

8.7 Lust and Judgment

This tragedy is guided by a struggle between reason and emotion, with passion triumphing. The core characters make poor decisions when it comes to sexual desire. All other factors pale in comparison to lust. In Beatrice's case, the reasons she gives herself for her shifting feelings are ironic to say the least. She is head over heels in love with Alsemero, but she convinces herself that she is making a rational decision. She rationalizes her abandonment of Alonzo by claiming that she was duped by appearances and lacked judgement when she fell for him. She also advises Alsemero about the importance of putting an emotion like love to the test with logic. However, she hints at her state of mind as she admits to a "giddy turning" in her affections when she switches from Alonzo to Alsemero in Act 1. This does not sound like the mental state that comes with rational decision-making. In reality, Beatrice is deceiving herself, pretending that her erratic behavior is due to something else. She also believes Alsemero is a wise man because she approves of his choice of Jasperino as a friend: “It is a sign he chooses wisely,” she says. She deduces that she, too, is practicing a similar virtue by preferring a man of judgment: “Methinks I love now with the eyes of judgement, / And see the path to merit.” Beatrice, on the other hand, is trapped in a state of self-delusion that she never challenges. When it comes to her dealings with De Flores, for example, she never considers that De Flores is after more than just money. She makes a mistake in judging his personality.

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The crimes that follow seem unavoidable once the protagonists have fallen under the spell of love, desire, or lust.

Summary

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's play The Changeling is a dark comedy. This Jacobean play, written in the early seventeenth century, was first performed in England in 1622. The story revolves around a woman who has been promised to a man she doesn't love, and the lengths to which she will go to marry her true love. The opening and closing scenes are commonly attributed to Rowley, although the main plot is attributed to Middleton. Middleton is regarded as one of the most prolific Jacobean playwrights, having written both tragic and comedic works.

Beatrice, the play's main character, is a young woman. Vermandero, the governor of Alicante's castle, is her father. Vermandero anticipates Beatrice marrying well in order to secure gold and wealth. He makes a vow to Alonzo de Piracquo, a nobleman Beatrice despises. Beatrice is desperate to get rid of Alonzo so she can marry the man she really loves.

Beatrice meets Alsemero, who is also a nobleman, one day. He catches Beatrice's eye and she falls in love with him. Beatrice despises turning down Alsemero's proposal. She explains that she wants to marry him, but she's already committed to another man. Alsemero is heartbroken and promises to marry her in some way.

Meanwhile, back at the castle, Beatrice is pursued by De Flores, her father's servant who is madly in love with her. Beatrice, on the other hand, can't bear him because he's unattractive and follows her around. She doesn't express her feelings to De Flores, but she makes it clear enough.

Tensions increase in the background when Alonzo visits the castle. All but Alonzo can tell that Beatrice isn't pleased to see him. Alonzo is head over heels in love with Beatrice, much to his brother Tomazo's chagrin. Tomazo believes Alonzo should end their relationship, but Alonzo refuses. He's certain that Beatrice will eventually fall in love with him, and that's enough for him.

Beatrice seeks out Alsemero after Alonzo's visit. They discuss how to get rid of Alonzo and be happy together. Beatrice realizes that killing Alonzo is the only way she can be with Alsemero. De Flores is the one man who would go to any length for her, including murdering others. She asks De Flores to kill Alonzo in exchange for money without Alsemero's knowledge.

De Flores believes that if he does this, he will win Beatrice's heart, and he readily agrees. De Flores has no idea that after he kills Alonzo, Beatrice intends to give him away so that she can get rid of both of them. De Flores stabs Alonzo three times and kills him. As his own reward, he steals Alonzo's pricey diamond ring.

De Flores returns to Beatrice with the ring when the castle is silent. She offers to reward him handsomely if he does a good job. De Flores, on the other hand, is uninterested in money. He wants to have sex with Beatrice, and if she refuses, he'll tell everyone what she's up to. Beatrice has sex with De Flores, terrified and helpless.

Everyone mourns Alonzo's death later, and Vermandero arranges for Beatrice to marry Alsemero. Just De Flores knows Beatrice isn't a virgin, and Alsemero isn't interested in her right now. Beatrice, desperate, arranges for Alsemero to have sex with another woman on their wedding night. Alsemero does not realize it's not Beatrice if they sleep together in complete darkness.

Diaphanta is the chosen woman. She's had a secret crush on Alsemero for a long time. Even if he won't know it's her, she leaps at the opportunity to have sex with him. She's still overjoyed at the prospect of having anything to use against Beatrice. Beatrice later tries to fake her own virginity and take a virginity test in front of Alsemero so Diaphanta doesn't have to sleep with him. Diaphanta, on the other hand, persuades her otherwise.

Beatrice is irritated because Diaphanta spends the whole night with Alsemero. She realizes Diaphanta is having fun sleeping with Alsemero and that she has been duped. Meanwhile, Tomazo creates havoc in the castle because he thinks Vermandero is responsible for Alonzo's death. In shame, Vermandero dismisses him.

It's almost morning now. Alsemero will find out he's sleeping with the wrong woman, and everything will be destroyed, Beatrice is terrified. Alsemero will never talk to her again, she fears. De Flores claims he'll set fire to Diaphanta's chambers to force her to return to them. De Flores will kill Diaphanta when she arrives. In the meantime, Beatrice will retire to Alsemero's room. Beatrice expresses her gratitude and considers whether she could love De Flores after all.

Vermandero discovers that De Flores has murdered Alonzo in the morning. He does, however, want to protect his dearest and oldest servant. He locates men in a mental institution that he believes are responsible for the murder and turns them over to Tomazo, who is eager to see justice

served. All hell breaks loose in the castle before Tomazo can kill them, and Tomazo learns who Alonzo's true killer is.

Alsemero discovers what Beatrice has done and imprisons her along with De Flores. In a fit of fury, De Flores murders Beatrice before stabbing himself. Tomazo is irritated because he is not allowed to destroy De Flores. Everyone pities Alsemero for marrying such a depraved, evil woman. He is sorry for what happened to Diaphanta, particularly because she was completely devoted to him.

Closet dramas are plays written for the purpose of being read but not performed. The play itself, not the success of the play, is what makes them valuable. Writers like Robert Browning and Goethe popularized this art form during the Romantic period. Plays are usually designed to be performed, and the playwright relies on the actors and actresses to elevate his script. The playwright's intention with closet dramas is the polar opposite. There will be no score, and the play will be judged on its own merits. A closet drama, in a nutshell, is intended to be read but not performed.

History is a fascinating topic.

The majority of plays produced in the early 1800s were melodramas or burlesque. Serious writers like Browning and Byron attempted to elevate the art form by withdrawing it entirely from the stage by writing closet dramas. It was a natural reaction to the day's spectacular results.

Since the plays were written by Romantics, we must note that they were progressive thinkers. In some respects, the Romantic was a revolutionary writer, so it's no surprise that historical events like the American and French Revolutions inspired these authors, including those listed above as well as John Keats and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as well as women like Joanna Baillie.

In fact, in 1794, Coleridge and Southey collaborated on The Fall of Robespierre, a play about the French Revolution, while Wordsworth's only play, The Borderers, was also about the French Revolution. The plays were used by Romantic playwrights to express their radical political and social views. As a result, some theaters were hesitant to stage them.

The hegemony that the two most famous theaters in England, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, had over everyone else at the time was another driving factor for making closet dramas. From 1737 to 1843, a 'Licensing Act' was passed requiring that only plays produced between September and June be performed at one of the two theaters. It would not even be enough to be a Romantic to defy the law. But, even more importantly, the closet drama allowed the Romantic writer complete power over his or her play; it was free of the 'judgment' of others, as Byron claimed.

Why Did Romantics Write Them?

Imagination was almost sacred to the Romantic. There could be no greater stage if a play could be read and then imagined on the mental stage. The reader's own inner understanding and vision of Romantic plays was more valuable than what was presented on stage by anyone else.

Closet Dramas Examples

Robert Browning's Pippa Passes and My Last Duchess, and Shelley's Prometheus Unbound.

Self Assessment

1. Beatrice, on an aside, realises that she can use De Flores:

A. to steal a golden casket
B. to kill Alonzo
C. to kill Alibius
D. to kill Diaphanta

2. Beatrice decides to flirt with:

A. De Flores
B. Jasperino
C. Alibius

D. Antonio

3. Beatrice promises De Flores some medicine that will cure:

A. his ailing brother
B. his bad skin
C. his friend
D. none of the above

4. De Flores realises that Beatrice wants him:

A. to persuade her father for marriage
B. to murder Alonzo
C. to guide Diaphanta
D. to kidnap Alonzo

5. How many times was Alonzo stabbed?

A. One
B. Two
C. Three
D. Four

6. What was stolen from the dead body of Alonzo?

A. A pendant
B. A Necklace
C. A watch
D. A diamond ring

7. Isabella asks Lollio why she has been locked up. Lollio claims:

A. It is his master's wish
B. She has stolen money
C. She has cheated him
D. None of the

8. Lollio whips Franciscus:

A. for insulting him
B. for making advances towards Isabella
C. both of the above
D. none of the above

9. Lollio brings Antonio to meet

A. Beatrice
B. Isabella
C. Diaphanta
D. None of the above

10. Beat rice asks De Flores to take Alonzo's ring as it is worth:

A. two hundred ductas
B. three hundred ductas
C. four hundred ductas
D. five hundred ductas

11. Closet dramas are plays that have been written:

A. to be read
B. not to be performed
C. both the above
D. none of the above

12. During the early 1800s, most plays that were performed were

A. Melodramas
B. Burlesque.
C. Both
D. None of the above

13. The Closet Drama was popularized during the _____ period.

A. Romantic
B. Victorian
C. Elizabethan
D. Classical

14. To the Romantic writer, the best kind of stage was _____ .

A. Drury Lane
B. Covent Garden
C. one's own mind
D. outdoors

15. An author who wrote Closet Dramas was _____ .

A. Shelley
B. Browning
C. Byron
D. All of the answers are correct

Answers for Self Assessment

1.	B	2.	A	3.	B	4.	B	5.	C
6.	D	7.	A	8.	C	9.	B	10.	B
11.	C	12.	C	13.	A	14.	C	15.	D

Review Questions

1. Examine the ways in which connections are made between love and madness in the play and consider what view or views of love are conveyed by these connections.
2. Though love seems to be a major concern, to what extent might *The Changeling* be said to be more about the emotions of lust and fear?
3. To what extent is it possible to separate comic and tragic elements in the play?
4. Consider the varied ways in which irony is used in the play and the dramatic effects created by it.
5. Examine the ways in which the theme of 'secrets' is presented and developed.
6. What different types of contrast and reversal are to be found in *The Changeling*, and what is conveyed through the use of these dramatic techniques?
7. Some critics believe Beatrice has an unconscious attraction to De Flores from the start. Is there any proof in the play to back up this theory? What is it about De Flores that she finds appealing?
8. Characters that serve as foils for other characters are common in dramas; they balance each other out, giving the viewer a study in contrasts. Isabella is a foil for Beatrice in what way? Is Alsemero a De Flores foil?
9. Middleton wrote the majority of the main storyline, while Rowley handled the comedic subplot. What evidence can be provided to demonstrate their near collaboration? To put it another way, how do the two plots compare and contrast in terms of themes and language?
10. Investigate and explain the main characteristics of Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses. What was the theaters' physical structure, i.e., how did they appear?
11. In what ways were the audience members more engaged in the action than a modern audience? What was the process of putting on a play? What was the social status of the audience at the plays?

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Unit 09: The Beggar's Opera

CONTENTS

Objective

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the literary contribution of John Gay
- explore the plot construction of the play The Beggar's Opera
- analyze the characters of the play
- evaluate the genre of the play The Beggars Opera

Introduction

The Beggar's Opera is a ballad opera written by John Gay. Ballad operas peaked in popularity in England in the early eighteenth century. The style is a cross between an opera and a satirical play, and while it followed many operatic rules, it did not have a recitative. The Beggar's Opera is a great example of this form, with music based on broadsheet ballads, church hymns, opera arias, and even folk songs. In 1728, John Gay co-wrote The Beggar's Opera with Johann Christoph Pepusch, who also organised the music.

With 62 consecutive performances in 1728, the Beggar's Opera was England's longest-running production at the time. It was recreated almost 200 years later for approximately 1,400 performances. The Beggar's Opera satirises Italian opera, which was a popular fad in the early 1700s, touching on poverty, injustice, politics, and, above all, corruption. Gay wasn't the first to think of a ballad opera; he was inspired by his friend Jonathan Swift (renowned for a variety of writings, including Gulliver's Travels), who felt a pastoral about Newgate jail would be intriguing to write. The songs were originally intended to be played without accompaniment, but Pepusch changed his mind.

Satire is the use of comedic methods such as irony to draw attention to other people's vices and follies, and it is frequently used in political commentary. Gay's work, which is divided into three acts, mocks both the upper classes' love of Italian opera and Robert Walpole, a prominent Whig politician. Walpole had a large number of fans in the United Kingdom, but he also had a large number of enemies. Gay wasn't the only one who mocked him during his tenure as Prime Minister. Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, and Alexander Pope were among others who joined him.

9.1 Plot Summary

Peachum, a thief-catcher, begins the storey by speaking out against a group of ineffective thieves. A thief named Bob Booty, a nickname for Robert Walpole, is one of them. Peachum and his wife,

Mrs. Peachum, learn that their daughter Polly has married Macheath, a highwayman. They determine that if Macheath dies, this marriage will be advantageous for them, so they go to plan his assassination. They have no idea that Polly has safely hidden Macheath.

However, her hiding location for him is in a tavern, where he'll be surrounded by women of dubious morality. They compete with one another, comparing their thievery and pick pocketing skills. Mr. and Mrs. Peachum employ two of them, Jenny Diver and Suky Tawdry, and they arrest Macheath and transport him to Newgate jail, which is managed by Peacham's associate Lockit. Macheath and Lockit had decided to marry Lucy, Lockit's daughter. She is enraged with him and wishes to see him tormented for not keeping his pledge and instead marrying Polly.

Polly arrives and claims Macheath is her husband, and Macheath tries to calm her down. Macheath objects and tells Lucy that Polly is insane, so Lucy decides to assist him by stealing her father's keys. Lockit learns of Macheath's promise to marry Lucy, but is concerned that if he is hung, Peachum will get Macheath's wealth. So Lockit goes to Peachum and they make plans to share Macheath's fortune when he dies.

Meanwhile, Polly goes to Lucy to try to arrange a truce, but Lucy poisons her. Polly manages to elude Lucy's schemes, and the two of them find that Macheath was apprehended shortly after his escape, this time by Mrs. Diana Trapes, a drunk woman. Lucy and Polly plead with their fathers to save Macheath's life. Macheath, on the other hand, is outraged after discovering four pregnant women claiming to be his wife. He makes the decision to be hanged. His request, however, is denied because he has been reprieved. At the conclusion of the ballad opera, everyone joins in a dance to celebrate his marriage to Polly.

Gay's satire on equality is one example of satire in The Beggar's Opera. He produces irony in his satire by repeatedly matching the noble with the traditionally ignoble and having them behave in the same manner. His ridicule of marriage is another example. Marriage in The Beggar's Opera is based on lust, both material and sensual, rather than love. In marriage, women have the freedom to do and say whatever they want without jeopardising their reputations.

By rendering all of the characters in The Beggar's Opera hypocrites, Gay satirises the contemporary political milieu. In doing so, he implies that everyone in politics rose to power by hypocrisy rather than virtue or ability.

9.2 Characters in the Play

Peachum

Peachum is a man of immense responsibility, as the runner of a criminal highwaymen gang and the father of Polly. Because he frequently utilises his contacts to send a guy to the gallows in exchange for reward money, his subordinates rely on him for their freedom or imprisonment. He is also the "common-law" husband of Mrs. Peachum and Lockit's frequent partner.

Lockit

Lucy's father, Lockit, is the jailer of Newgate Prison. He is Peachum's business partner, and he runs a smaller syndicate with his minions than Peachum does.

Macheath

Captain Macheath is a charming highway robber who is adored by both his fellow soldiers and the ladies. He married Polly Peachum before the show began. He has a generous spirit and exudes remarkable sangfroid.

Filch

Filch is Peachum's inferior henchman and Polly and Mrs. Peachum's confidante. He isn't very good at keeping secrets.

Jemmy Twitcher

Jemmy is a criminal in Macheath's gang.

Wat Dreary

Wat is a criminal in Macheath's gang.

Robin

Robin is a criminal.

Nimming Ned

Nimming is also a criminal in Macheath's gang.

Henry Paddington

He is also a criminal in Macheath's gang.

Matt of the Mint

Matt is a member of Macheath's gang and a close buddy of Macheath's. He delivers a stirring, Robin Hood-like speech about the link between thievery and wealth redistribution.

Ben Budge

Ben is a criminal in Macheath's gang, and a close friend to Macheath. He supports Matt of the Mint in Matt's socialistic sentiments.

Beggar

The Beggar is a proud man of the streets and the author of the opera (inside the play). He and the Player begin the piece by introducing it, then return in the penultimate scene to discuss and rewrite the story's conclusion.

Player

The Beggar's companion and supporter is the Player. They introduce the play together, then reappear in the penultimate scene to discuss and revise the story's conclusion.

Mrs. Peachum

Wife of Peachum and mother of Polly, Mrs. Peachum understands and reinforces her husband's authority. She is pragmatic and rarely gets emotional, though there are notable exceptions to this.

Polly

Macheath's bride, Polly Peachum, is the lovesick daughter of Peachum and Mrs. Peachum. Her attachment to Macheath remains unwavering throughout the play. She is ignorant and conceited about herself.

Lucy Lockit

Lucy is Macheath's jilted ex-lover and the jailer Lockit's daughter. Despite her hatred for Macheath for damaging her without marrying her, she is constantly attempting to reclaim him at Polly's expense. Her ferocious zeal is usually channelled into vengeance.

Diana Trapes

Diana is a female member of Peachum's gang and Macheath's companion. She is the matriarch of the female gang and acts as a sort of madame. She is astute, self-serving, and patient.

Mrs. Coaxer

Mrs. Coaxer is a female member of Peachum's gang and Macheath's companion. When Macheath is ultimately captured, he is a customer in her bed.

Dolly Trull

Dolly is one of the women in Peachum's gang, and a companion to Macheath

Mrs. Vixen

Mrs. Vixen is a female member of Peachum's gang and Macheath's ally.

Betty Doxy

Betty is one of the women in Peachum's gang, and a companion to Macheath.

Jenny Diver

Jenny is a female member of Peachum's gang and Macheath's partner. She, Suky Tawdry, and Peachum plan to capture Macheath. She is evasive and self-centered.

Mrs. Slammekin

Mrs. Slammekin is one of the female members in the gang of Peachum, and a companion to Macheath.

Suky Tawdry

Suky Tawdry is a female member of Peachum's gang and Macheath's partner. She, Jenny Diver, and Peachum plan to capture Macheath.

Molly Brazen

Molly is one of the women in Peachum's gang, and a companion to Macheath.

Drawer

The drawer is a minor character who attends Macheath inAct II.

Summary

Act I

The Beggar's Opera begins with a "introductory" scene featuring the Beggar and the Player. They speak directly to the viewer about the story's origins, purpose, and structure. Even though there are no recitatives, epilogues, or prologues, it is critical that the piece be understood as opera. The Beggar — the piece's "creator" — informs the audience that his play adheres to all other conventions of the day's popular operas.

Peachum is flipping through his account book in his house when the storey begins. Peachum is a professional "impeacher" who owns and operates a gang of thieves, highwaymen, and prostitutes. He betrays his associates to the criminal court system for a tidy reward when they are no longer useful. To put it another way, he impeaches them.

Peachum asks his wife, Mrs. Peachum, if she has seen Captain Macheath, one of their more illustrious highwaymen, recently. She's done it. More importantly, she suspects that their daughter Polly is having an affair with the Captain. Peachum is enraged by the news. It is critical that they intervene to put an end to the romance. Above all, Polly must not marry Macheath, or else Macheath will inherit her money and potential earnings.

Mrs. Peachum inquires about the romance with Filch, one of the lesser henchmen. Filch is divided between protecting Polly's trust and remaining faithful to Mrs. Peachum. Mrs. Peachum goes off with Filch to bribe him with booze.

In the meantime, Peachum has tracked down Polly, who arrives on the scene to reassure her father that she is only dealing with Macheath for goods and gifts. Mrs. Peachum storms in to declare that Macheath and Polly have married, and this is discovered to be a falsehood (information she has gotten from Filch). Both of their parents are furious.

Polly admits that she married Macheath to protect her reputation after her sexual arousal became too strong.

Macheath, Peachum believes, married Polly to acquire control of her family's finances. Regardless, he sees the potential for this combination to be beneficial. If Polly is able to obtain a jointure, which is a guarantee of property given to a widow upon her husband's death, he may be able to gather evidence against Macheath and then betray him to the authorities. The Peachum family will then be given the prize money as well as Macheath's property, while Macheath will be hanged. Polly is adamantly opposed to this scheme. Macheath was the man she married for love, not money.

Polly makes the decision to warn Macheath of her parents' cruel intentions, so she lets him out of her bedchamber. He pledges oaths of fidelity to Polly as he walks in. Polly urges him to escape, believing that they will meet again when the way is safer.

Act II

The thieves of Peachum's gang drink, smoke, and wax poetic about their depth of friendship towards one another in a tavern near Newgate jail. The Mint's Matt delivers a short, passionate speech supporting their trade as a way of wealth transfer.

Macheath enters the tavern and orders the men to persuade Peachum that he has abandoned the group and gone town. Macheath is left alone in the tavern as the rest of the men go for 'work.' He isn't alone for long before several female consorts, the gang's female counterparts, pay him a visit. Despite their attempts to adopt the airs of the nobility, the women are raucous and obscene. Macheath flirtatiously jostles with them, and two of them, Jenny Diver and Suky Tawdry, wrestle him into a sexually compromising position. They draw their pistols on the unwitting victim and signal to Peachum, who arrives with the policeman. Macheath is apprehended and taken to Newgate Prison.

At Newgate, the jailer Lockit presents his beautiful collection of fetters, from which Macheath can choose the most comfortable pair for the correct price. Peachum's most important business partner is Lockit. They're plotting to split the spoils from Macheath's death.

Macheath laments his attachment with Polly while alone in his cell. Enter Lucy, Lockit's daughter and Macheath's jilted lover. Lucy is furious because Macheath pledged to marry her but instead married Polly. Lucy softens when Macheath lies and convinces her that he has not married Polly.

When Peachum accuses Lockit of stealing money, the two come to blows in a different part of the prison. They quickly come to an agreement, thinking that they need each other. Lucy enters and begs her father to free Macheath, but Lockit refuses. Lucy goes back to Macheath to break the dreadful news.

Polly has arrived to pay a visit to her jailed husband. Macheath completely ignores Polly in order to maintain Lucy's good faith — after all, she has more influence to arrange his release than Polly. The women's hatred for one another is heating up. Peachum eventually bursts in and rips Polly from Macheath.

Lucy comes up with a plan to free Macheath: her father has a habit of drinking with the inmates and then sleeping for several hours. She'll take the keys from him when he's asleep.

Act III

Lucy's scheme has worked, and Macheath has escaped the prison (in between Acts). Lockit recognises his daughter's role in the escape right away. There is no harm done if she has received a price from Macheath for her services, as long as Lockit gets half. Lucy, on the other hand, has only behaved in the name of love. Enraged, Lockit banishes Lucy from his sight. Lockit realises that if he is left alone, Peachum will gain the full benefit of Macheath's capture, for Macheath will undoubtedly return to Polly.

Meanwhile, Macheath has fled to a gambling establishment, where he reunites with his crew. Macheath provides money to his buddies who owe him money. The men then talk about their theft intentions for the evening.

Peachum's stolen-goods warehouse has been tracked down by Lockit. From the beginning of the day until Mrs. Diana Trapes arrives, the two discuss their profits. She is a thief's manager and a madam of working ladies. Mrs. Coaxer, one of their mutual employees, is behind on a repayment, and she is distraught. Mrs. Trapes has made Mrs. Coaxer 'work' with a guy for the night until the debt is paid. This gentleman is referred to as "Captain" by her. Peachum recognises this captain as Macheath right once and offers to pay off Coaxer's debt in exchange for access to the Captain.

Lucy has summoned Polly back to Newgate under the guise of reconciling with her. Lucy's true motivation is to poison Polly. Lucy's enticement makes Polly suspicious, so she refuses to drink. The two women's conversation is cut short when the chained Macheath is carried back into the prison hold after being apprehended at Mrs. Trapes' house.

The women rush to Macheath, seeking for a sign of devotion, each believing she is (or will be) his one and only genuine wife. Peachum wants Macheath to settle the dispute so that they can avoid a lawsuit after Macheath's execution. Macheath will not make a decision. The women beseech their fathers for forgiveness once more, but the men disregard their pleadings.

Macheath drinks heavily in the condemned-hold man's and prepares himself for his impending execution. Ben Budge and Matt of the Mint, two of his buddies, enter to bid him farewell. Lucy and Polly rush in, weeping and pledging their love once they've left.

A jailer comes to herald the arrival of four additional ladies, each of whom is carrying a child and claiming to be Macheath's wife. Macheath orders the hangman to be summoned, and he is brought away.

In the play's penultimate scene, the Player and the Beggar reappear. The Player questions the Beggar's intended ending, claiming that if Macheath died, the opera would become a tragedy rather than a popular comedy. The Beggar admits that today's popular operas always end nicely, and he agrees to follow that model. The rabble is subsequently told to "cry reprieve" for Macheath.

Macheath is pardoned from hanging in the closing scene. He enters in great spirits, accompanied by the rabble and the women. Macheath openly declares Polly to be his one and only genuine wife, and the play concludes with a carefree song and dance.

Self Assessment

1. The introductory scene features which characters:

A. Peachum and Mrs. Peachum
B. Peachum, the beggar and the player
C. Peachum, alone
D. The beggar and the player

2. The Beggar states the play was originally written to celebrate:

A. The coronation of George III
B. The marriage of two ballad-singers
C. The coronation of George II
D. London's two most famous sopranos

3. The Beggar's stated purpose for writing the play should be understood as:

A. Throne-approved propaganda
B. Ironic
C. Loosely based on fact
D. Straightforwardly true

4. When the Player says "Play away the ouverture," he means:

A. Begin the prologue
B. The play has reached its conclusion
C. Rise for the singing of "god save the king"
D. Strike up the musicians

5. Act I takes place entirely in:

A. An alehouse tavern
B. Peachum's house
C. Newgate prison
D. Peachum's stolen-goods warehouse

6. Peachum is first shown examining:

A. A marriage certificate
B. A dowry agreement
C. His accounts book
D. The bible

7. When Peachum tells Filch that Black Moll may "plead her belly" at trial, he means:

A. She may pretend to be pregnant to avoid hanging.

B. She may cry hysterically to win sympathy.

C. She may plead hunger as a reason for her thieving.

D. She may offer her body to the prosecutors in exchange for leniency.

8. In terms of punishment, "transportation" entails:

A. Service to the nobles' palanquins

B. Railroad construction for no pay

C. Labor in the west indies

D. Confinement at a local prison camp

9. Filch is:

A. Macheath's best friend

B. A go-between for several characters

C. Polly's secret lover

D. Lockit's apprentice

10. Newgate is:

A. London's most notorious prison

B. A fashionable district of London

C. The grounds of Buckingham palace

D. London's most famous racetrack

11. According to Peachum, why would a woman want to marry?

A. To gain a man's property through widow-hood

B. To share in the burden of taxation

C. To produce a son

D. To have children who take care of their elderly parents

12. After learning about Polly's marriage, what does Peachum plan?

A. To test Macheath's fidelity by leaving him alone with a group of attractive prostitutes

B. To secure an inheritance and then have macheath hanged

C. To annul the marriage and then betray macheath

D. To have Polly feign pregnancy to scare him away

13. What does Polly mean when she refers to the "cart"?

A. The carriage macheath will ride to prison

B. The train car leading macheath to a distant work camp

C. The cart leading macheath to his hanging

D. The cart macheath will load wheat upon when they live together on a farm

14. What is the name of the hill and tree where hangings occur?

A. Topamax
B. Holborn
C. Tyburn
D. Newgate

15. When Peachum speaks of "Sessions," he's referring to:

A. Tutoring sessions for his daughter, Polly
B. Musical lessons for his wife, Mrs. Peachum
C. Weekend evenings reserved for burglary
D. Quarterly meetings of the criminal court

Answers for Self Assessment

1.	D	2.	B	3.	B	4.	D	5.	B
6.	C	7.	A	8.	C	9.	B	10.	A
11.	A	12.	C	13.	C	14.	C	15.	D

Review Questions

Q1. Which character do you like most in the play and why? Give a reasoned answer.

Q2. What is the significance of the title *The Beggar's Opera*?

Q3. Discuss the plot construction of the play The Beggar's Opera.

Q4. Show your acquaintance with John Gay as a dramatist.

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Unit 10: The Beggar's Opera: Introduction, and Act I, Act II, Act III, Conflict and Themes, Motifs and Symbols

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the themes of the play *The Beggar's Opera*
- explore the motifs and symbols of the play *The Beggar's Opera*
- analyze the literary devices used in the play
- evaluate the social, economic and political conditions in the play *The Beggar's Opera*

Introduction

The Beggar's Opera was a double satire on the Italian opera tradition and incumbent Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole's government's political corruption. Gay made fun of the Italian opera tradition in a variety of ways:

Gay chose simple, popular tunes to mock what many British saw as Italian opera's overly virtuous and artificial airs.

Recitative was dropped entirely in favour of spoken dialogue by the composer.

Rather than the heroes and kings of Italian opera, Gay's main characters are thieves and bawds.

Finally, he mocks the widely despised Italian divas. The two leading prima donnas in London, Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, were well-known rivals a year before John Gay's opera premiered. Their feud reached a head in 1727, when the two divas scratched and pulled out each other's hair on stage! Gay's leading female characters, Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockit, and their quarrelling scenes were inspired by their rivalry.

The ballad opera not only mocked Italian opera, but it also gave new life to native music that the general public already knew and enjoyed.

Walpole and his government were also mocked in Gay's ballad opera. Macheath and Peachum, the main characters, were based on well-known criminals John Sheppard and Jonathon Wild, a

notorious informer who was executed in 1725. 15 Sir Robert Walpole was also satirised in Peachum. Peachum's actions as a thief, womaniser, and double-dealer were a direct stab at Walpole, who was known for being both a corrupt leader and an adulterer. 16 Many times, Walpole attempted to suppress the free press using "spies, bribery, imprisonment, and the purchase of journalists and journals." 17 The most contentious newspaper of the period, "The Craftsman," published multiple reviews praising Gay's ballad opera and noting its popularity when it opened. Sir Walpole saw Gay's opera and, predictably, despised it. 18 In 1729, Walpole outlawed John Gay's sequel, Polly. Polly was prohibited from theatres, but it was reprinted and extensively distributed in bookshops, allowing John Gay to profit handsomely.

The Beggar's Opera is still the most popular ballad opera of all time. Many authors attempted to contribute to the genre after John Gay's triumph in 1728, in addition to John Gay.

The Devil to Pay, by Irishman Coffey, was the only ballad opera that came near to matching Gay's triumph. Ballad operas benefited greatly from Henry Fielding's contributions. Henry Fielding was a successful dramatist in his day, and he created thirty plays, including ten ballad operas. He is best known today for his books Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. The Author's Farce (1730), The Welsh Opera (1731), and Don Quixote in England are only a handful of his ballad operas (1734).

The success of the ballad opera not only inspired other writers, but it also helped to broaden the theatre audience to include people from all walks of life. This increased the demand for theatres, resulting in the increased use of the Haymarket Theater, the use of the Goodman's Fields Theatre, and the construction of Covent Garden in 1732.

The ballad opera genre likely influenced Gilbert and Sullivan, a British librettist and composer who created over 20 satirical operettas that are being performed today. Gay's opera had a lasting impact well into the twentieth century. Bertold Brecht's adaptation of The Beggar's Opera, The Three penny Opera, was published in 1928 and featured Kurt Weill's music. 23 The fact that Gay's opera is still the most famous ballad opera in existence, and some claim it is the only notable one, attests to its enduring influence.

The Beggar's Opera was an instant hit and became the most performed play of the 18th century. Moira Goff explores the elements that made up John Gay's work, from its popular tunes and dances to its satirical targets and depiction of a criminal underworld.

The Beggar's Opera had its first performance at London's Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre on Monday 29 January 1728. It was a sensation, drawing enormous audiences and enjoying a record of 62 performances before the end of the 1727–28 seasons that June. This first ballad opera established a new dramatic form on the London stage, inspiring many similar works in the following years. It continued to be played in London's theatres every year into the 19th century, reached many theatres elsewhere over that period and influenced stage musical works into the 20th century, most notably Brecht and Weill's The Three penny Opera. The Beggar's Opera was undeniably successful in its day and remains influential.

The ballad opera

The ballad opera was the idea of the writer and dramatist John Gay (1685–1732). He wrote the play and chose a wide variety of popular tunes for the ballads for which he provided the words. London audiences were used to evenings of mixed entertainments, in which tragedies or comedies (sometimes both) had singing, dancing and specialty turns between their acts. Some plays included interludes of singing and dancing, but a play with songs throughout, which were also an integral part of the drama, was entirely new.

The Beggar's Opera is set in and around New gate Prison in London. The play begins with a scene in which the Beggar defends the term "opera" to a Player. Peachum and his wife (thief-takers and receivers of stolen goods) find out that their daughter Polly has married the highwayman Macheath in the first act. They decide to hand him over in exchange for a reward, but Macheath manages to flee. Macheath diverts himself among his favorite harlots in Act 2. He is arrested and taken to new gate after one of them betrays him. He is confronted there by Lucy Lockit (the prison-daughter), keeper's whom he has made pregnant and promised to marry. Polly shows up to claim Macheath as her husband, and the two women get into an argument. Mache this able to flee for the second time thanks to Lucy's assistance. Lucy tries but fails to poison Polly in the third act. A confederate discovers Macheath's hiding place, and he is arrested once more. Polly and Lucy plead with their fathers to spare Macheath as he is brought back to new gate, but he is tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. When the Player from the opening scene objects to the tragic ending, and the Beggar agrees that a 'opera' must end happily, he is spared execution. Macheath is given a reprieve in order to see Polly and his doxies in the opera's final scene.

Popularity, publication, and staging

The first edition of the ballad opera was released less than a fortnight after the first performance, and a second edition was published less than two months later. The music for the songs was included in both editions, but it wasn't until the third edition of 1729 that they, as well as the overture, were fully realised. The Beggar's Opera included a number of dances that quickly became a favorite feature of productions, in addition to the ballads to well-known tunes that ran throughout the action. Macheath and his whores performed a cotillion, a 'Dance of Prisoners in Chains' (eventually replaced by a hornpipe, usually performed as a solo by a popular performer), and the opera's cast performed a country dance at the finale of the play.

Macheath was played by Thomas Walker, and Polly was played by Lavinia Fenton. During the first run of the ballad opera, both were represented in popular prints. Not least because she became the mistress of the Duke of Bolton and left the stage entirely before the end of the year, she was the subject of a biography, The Life of Lavinia Beswick, Alias Fenton, Alias Polly Peachum. Walker's character Macheath was given the Memoirs about the Life and Manners of Captain Mackheath, but Walker was not considered worthy of a biography. In 1728, both of these anonymous works were published, marking a turning point in the evolution of celebrity culture.

The Beggar's Opera also drew the attention of artist William Hogarth (1697–1764), who depicted Polly and Lucy pleading for Macheath's life in a number of paintings. Gay's satirical approach to politics and fashionable life, as well as his use of both high and low culture, echoed Hogarth's own practice in his visual satires, which can be seen in series like A Harlot's Progress (1732) and individual prints.

Satire's targets

Gay's satire's most direct and obvious target was Italian opera. This was introduced to London in the first decade of the 18th century and quickly became a symbol of upper-class culture. It was exorbitantly priced and incomprehensible as well as absurd to most English ears. The Beggar pleads for forgiveness in the first scene of The Beggar's Opera, saying, "I hope I may be excused, that I have not made my opera entirely unnatural, like those in vogue." The German composer George Frederic Handel was the most popular Italian opera composer in London. Gay took advantage of operatic divas' extravagant behaviour. He was reminding audiences of the quarrels between Faustina and Cuzzoni that had plagued both Handel's and Bononcini's operatic productions the previous year when he had Polly and Lucy quarrel in Act 2. In The Beggar's Opera, Gay used music by both composers.

Following the 1720 financial crisis known as the South Sea Bubble, Sir Robert Walpole rose to power. Walpole had clung on with the queen's support when George II succeeded George I in 1727. Walpole was widely regarded as corrupt (even by the notorious standards of the time) and had a slew of opponents, particularly among the literary establishment. The Beggar's Opera was quickly interpreted as a slam against Walpole; although he is not directly depicted, Peachum, Lockit, and Macheath all have aspects of his personality. Walpole retaliated by halting the production of Polly, Gay's sequel to The Beggar's Opera, which was scheduled for the following season. Despite the fact that this new ballad opera was not performed until 1777, Polly was published in 1729 and became a best-seller.

Peachum is widely thought to be based on Jonathan Wild, the notorious 'Thief-Taker General,' who was hanged at Tyburn in 1725. Wild's life was immediately immortalised in a number of biographies and fictional accounts, including Daniel Defoe's A True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild (1725). The thief, gaol-breaker, and occasional highwayman Jack Sheppard was Gay's main inspiration for the character of Macheath. Sheppard had become a celebrity in 1724 after four daring prison escapes, including two from New gate, before being executed at Tyburn on November 16th. Sheppard received even more media attention than Wild. Many editions of A Narrative of All the Robberies, Escapes, and Other Adventures of John Sheppard, also attributed to Daniel Defoe, were published. The rivalry between Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane in the 1720s was enacted through competing pantomime productions, which were a new dramatic form at the time. The Drury Lane Theatre used Sheppard's storey for a new pantomime, Harlequin Sheppard by John Thurmond junior, which premiered less than a fortnight after Sheppard's execution. Jonathan Wild was also mentioned in the article, which was published to capitalise on the public's insatiable curiosity.

Many more early-eighteenth-century works focused on London's criminal underworld. When he wrote his scenes for the 'Women of the Town,' Gay, like Hogarth with A Harlot's Progress, certainly had the bawd Elizabeth 'Mother' Needham and the famed prostitute Sally Salisbury in mind. A

New Canting Dictionary, a handbook to underworld terminology published in 1725, lists many of their names (including those of Peachum's group), indicating their lowlife rank and criminal calling. The political setting for The Beggar's Opera quickly faded from memory, but the play itself endured and continues to be resurrected due to its colorful picture of lowlife characters and the timeless relevance of Gay's vivid and sharp condemnation of the wealthy and powerful. The ballad opera format, which debuted in 1728, has proven to be enduring. It is the forerunner of today's ever-popular musical.

10.1 Equality

Gay's examination of equality is laced with irony, and grasping this irony is crucial to appreciating the sharpness of his satire. Gay criticises the outright inequality between the rich and the poor both explicitly and implicitly through dialogue and the storey. What makes the work stand out, however, is that he constantly draws parallels between the powerful rich and the desperate poor. His basic premise is that all men are naturally self-interested and corrupt, regardless of social class. The text is full of amusing analogies between statesmen and criminals, lawyers and impeachers, highwaymen and courtiers, all implying that inequality is due as much to a man's willingness to be hypocritical as it is to his virtue.

10.2 Marriage

Marriage in The Beggar's Opera has nothing to do with the romantic notion of a holy union between two soulmates. Gay, on the other hand, constantly mocks this notion, claiming that love is more closely associated with lust and self-interest than with selflessness.

The closest Gay comes to representing the idealised conception is in the profuse professions Polly and Lucy make for Macheath. Both women, however, are equally focused on physical intimacy as they are on a transcendent union. Polly's marriage means little to Macheath in the end, and most characters only consider it in terms of its financial benefits, with little regard for her feelings. The girls' notion of romantic love, so misplaced upon an obvious cad, renders the romantic ideal ludicrous.

For the rest of the characters, a woman's only reason for marrying is for financial security, which is predicated on the male's impending death.

She might inherit from her spouse. Freedom of sexual expression is also promoted as a possible benefit of marriage, which is in stark contrast to the romantic notion of monogamy. A wife's reputation is guaranteed by her husband once they are married. As a result, she is free to act as she pleases. All of these representations were one-of-a-kind at the time, and they contributed to Gay's work's transgressive nature.

10.3 Friendship

In the opera, there are numerous instances of friendship, but none of them conform to the ideal of selfless affection for another. Instead, the majority of the characters are quick to betray even the deepest of bonds. Peachum for Lockit (and vice versa); the highwaymen for each other; the harem of ladies for each other; Mrs. Peachum for her favorite gang members; and even Lucy for Polly espouse friendship as a virtue. In each case, however, the affection is at best a fleeting form of loyalty dictated solely by self-interest. The highwaymen pat themselves on the back for their valiant allegiance and dedication to one another, but then plot to "befriend" unsuspecting victims around town in order to rob them. Mrs. Peachum in quires about the well-being of her favorite gang members, extolling their virtues, but her concern fades when she learns that her husband has chosen them for impeachment in the current session. Friendship is a self-consciously insincere tool for Peachum and Lockit, as it is for Lucy and Polly. Peachum and Peachum

Despite the fact that Lockit are business partners and self-proclaimed friends, each man is out to defraud the other. In an attempt to forgive the past and forge a future friendship, Lucy offers Polly a conciliatory glass of cordial...but the cordial is poisoned.

10.4 Hypocrisy

In the opera, hypocrisy is arguably Gay's most important target. He makes fun of statesmen who rise to great heights not through virtue but through hypocrisy, both implicitly and explicitly. In fact, hypocrisy pervades every character, action, and occupation, implying that it is an inherent, unavoidable human trait. The best place to find witty articulations of his time's hypocrisy is in Gay's lyrics. When Peachum suggests that their line of work might be considered dishonest, Lockit responds with an outburst of indignation, singing:

When you censure the age
Be cautious and sage,
Lest the courtiers offended should be;
If you mention vice or bribe,

'T is so pat to all the tribe;

Each cries – That was levell'd at me. (p. 42)

Lockit's attitude reflects the basic truth that every heart contains falsehood, which is confirmed by the fury of its denial.

10.5 Today is all that matters.

The belief that tomorrow may never come strengthens the criminal mindset. Of course, criminals aren't the only ones who employ such reasoning to rationalise morally dubious conduct. Instead, Gay contends that we all face moments in which we must compromise ourselves for the sake of immediate enjoyment. (Think of Lucy and Polly's encounter.) The morally bankrupt characters in The Beggar's Opera, on the other hand, are upbeat about the situation: the noose is coming for everyone. As a result, let us live for the present. While Gay does not specifically address how to live one's life according to this philosophy, he does imply that it is a natural human rationalisation.

10.6 The Rule of Law

The profession that receives the worst review in The Beggar's Opera is without doubt law enforcement. The Court's officers are bribable guys who routinely suppress evidence in criminal prosecutions for a fee. Justice is explicitly for sale, and at best, a malleable concept. Worst of all are the lawyers, who are often mentioned throughout the play as outstanding examples of individuals who profit off others' vice. They shield the bad guys one day and persecute them the next. Everything is determined by the cost. In The Beggar's Opera, the natural law of human selfishness functions as an immutable law.

10.7 Self-Awareness

In The Beggar's Opera, the characters are prone to philosophical defenses against their own dishonesty. It's as though they're aware of and prepared for the audience's gaze. This defensiveness is based on deflection: the characters frequently admit to moral flaws or betrayal, but then shift the blame to their social superiors. If murder is unethical, for example, look to the "gentlemen" with the financial means to hire assassins or buy off the cops. If Macheath has a gambling issue, it's the gentlemen at the next table, whose educations have better prepared them for the games and whose wallets are more susceptible to losses. Gay's play implies that we would all be better off examining ourselves rather than allowing others to define us, because others would naturally and frequently offer us ample opportunity to defend our own vices and shortcomings.

Summary

Gay was much associated with other intellectuals of the time such as Swift but his lifestyle caused some concern – he was keen on gambling and drinking and was quite at home in the tavern world he depicts in the play – rather keen on researching the effects of alcohol! The epitaph he prepared for himself is representative of his humorous attitude to life and its foibles:

'Life is a jest, and all things show it;

I thought so once – and now I know it'.

The Beggar's Opera (1728) is by far his most important work and was immensely successful.

New gate Pastoral

Swift recommended to Gay in 1716 that he compose a 'New gate pastoral, among the whores and thieves there'. The term 'New gate pastoral' combines the urban and burlesque pastoral, 2 literary forms which were being developed at the time.

Pastoral tradition: presents a rather idealised view of rural life, concentrating on the lives and loves of shepherds and shepherdesses who seem to spend all their time singing and dancing rather than mucking out after sheep! Rural idylls constitute an alternative moral universe. The moral implication of the pastoral tradition is that rural life is simpler and more wholesome than that experienced in the court or city.

The pastoral traditionally celebrates country idylls and old values, stability, both political and domestic eg in marriage, reconciliation of long lost family members.

The apparent incongruity of taking the pastoral form and applying it to a corrupt urban environment, suggested in the seemingly mutually exclusive words of the term 'New gate pastoral', provides a suitably comic context for satirising contemporary political and legal corruption.

Politics

The recent Walpole government provides the present political environment. 'Does Walpole think you intended an offence to him in your opera?' Swift wrote to Gay. I pray to God that he will'. Walpole famously applauded at an early performance of The Beggar's Opera, despite any resentment he may have had. He did, however, prevent Gay from performing Polly, the sequel to Beggar's Opera.

From 1721-42, Walpole was a key Whig minister, dubbed "prime minister" despite the fact that the position didn't exist at the time. The political system of the eighteenth century was vastly different from our own. Women, of course, were not allowed to vote until 1929, when they were granted the right to vote if they were over the age of 21. Every male freeholder earning 40 shillings a year was eligible to vote in the 18th century. Freeholders were mainly tenants, and voting was done openly so squires could see if their tenants had voted according to their landlord's preferences - which they usually did, especially when offered large amounts of free steak and beer!

There were two main political parties: the Tories and the Whigs.

Because political power was in the hands of powerful men, there was bound to be a sophisticated system of bargaining and blackmail. As a result, there is a consistent comparison between thieves and statesmen throughout the Beggar's Opera.

Walpole

By avoiding war and striving for low taxes to guarantee stability and prosperity, he backed the interests of the wealthy. He had a voracious thirst for power and a mastery of manipulating others, flattering and rewarding or removing them as needed. The last paragraph of J Wild Book 2 Chapter 5 is ostensibly a description of Wild, but it clearly fits Walpole: 'With such infinite address did this truly great man know how to play with men's passions, to set them at odds with each other, and to work his own purposes out of those jealousies' (p.102). In case you missed it, Fielding compares Wild to a prime minister, describing him as "with that heroic, daring, tremendous confidence with which a prime minister informs his dependent that the place he promised him was disposed of before" (p.108).

Perhaps not much has changed: Conservative MP Alan Clark once asked a Whip how he kept the incoming MPs under control, and the Whip replied, "By offering them your job." 'There are no actual pals in politics,' Clark wrote in his diary. We're all sharks circling and waiting for blood to show up in the sea.' What a rare moment of political candor!

Walpole wielded power over the Crown's patronage in determining who was appointed to political positions. Walpole's evident abuse of the system for personal gain cast the government's institutions into contempt. As a result, Walpole and men like Peachum and Wild, who ran criminal gangs, have a lot in common. In Book 3 ch 11, p.154, Wild is accurately defined as a puppet master, which is evident relation to senior political figures like Walpole, who had a network of spies and informers.

There are other characters in The Beggar's Opera who might remind a modern audience of Walpole, such as Peachum's ally, Robin of Bags hot, alias Bob Booty. Walpole was frequently accused of profiting himself at the expense of his country; the moniker "Bob Booty" was apt and stuck with him for the rest of his life. Bob Booty, according to Peachum, "spends his life among ladies" (I, IV); Walpole had a reputation as a womaniser, and Macheath's love triangle with Polly and Lucy was widely interpreted as a reference to Walpole's relationship with his wife and mistress, Maria Skerrett.

The Name

The term 'Beggar's Opera,' like 'New gate pastoral,' alerts the audience to Gay's intention to challenge and subvert traditional practices: opera was concerned with elevated characters who lived and loved heroically – the world of beggars, taverns, and New gate prison could not be more different. Gay purposefully blends high and low culture ideas. The beggar and the actor's first conversation make us aware of the incongruity and remind us that this is the word of the burlesque; thus it begins and ends with the absurd.

Although opera was popular at the time, it was not without criticism. See Swift's remark on the handout. The stunning costumes and stage effects, as well as the exoticism of the Italian singers, contributed to the show's success. Dramatists of the day were worried that the popularity of Italian opera would cause a fall in English theatre. Gay mocks the imported fashion for opera, as well as its artificiality and disconnection from reality. Rather of praising the lives of the great, he parodies and inverts the operatic world's principles by transferring duplicity, intrigue, and power struggles from polite society to the criminal underworld. This is accomplished in part through the use of complex parallels between criminal underworld figures and contemporary political figures, as well as through the use of music. In contrast to Italian opera, Gay celebrates English ballads by utilising popular airs such as Green sleeves, which are associated with traditional English values. The play's lyrical qualities, according to David Nokes in Raillery and Rage, give it the "humour of a broader humanity, which transform[s] the attacks on individual politicians into a festival of traditional values" (p.138). The play works on a contemporary level as well as a more universal, timeless level.

Act I Scene 1

The Peachum family is introduced to us. Peachum's name refers to his profession, i.e. "peach 'em." Impeachment is the practice of using King's testimony against one's own allies in exchange for a reward or pardon. Impeaching is a central device in both Beggar's Opera and Fielding's Jonathan Wild.

Peachum buys stolen goods from thieves and, if they don't make him enough money, he sells the thieves to the law and pockets the reward for impeaching, just as Jonathan Wild did in reality.

Peachum's mindset is essentially pragmatic and business-like, weighing everything in terms of profit. He's sitting with a book of accounts in front of him when we first see him, which is fitting. There is a clear parallel with merchants, with the implication that, just as he is both a criminal and a businessman in some ways, merchants can be both. There's also a clear parallel with politicians like Walpole, who operated on commercial principles; Walpole was frequently depicted as a criminal in the 18th century. The first song takes advantage of a commonly held comparison between politicians and criminals: 'And the statesman, since he's so great, thinks his job is as honest as mine,' says the poet.

The Fable of the Bees, reprinted in 1724 by Bernard Mandeville, ironically argued that the public benefit of commercial growth was dependent on private vices: trade is motivated by avarice, not virtue. The Beggar's Opera takes advantage of the apparent paradox that, while commercial values provide employment, wealth, and stability, they also involve varying degrees of exploitation.

Macheath humorously symbolises the contradiction between mercantile and aristocratic principles: on one hand, he is involved in the "trade" of highwaymen, characterising his activities in business terms; on the other hand, he seeks to position himself as a hero embodying aristocratic ideas of honour. We see the ironic tension between ideals of 'honour' and mercantile gain throughout his dealings with his criminal associates. There's no tension in Peachum's life because he's driven solely by money!

Scene II

Peachum's power is revealed when he promises to 'soften the evidence' for Black Moll and keep Betty Sly from detention because they steal well for him; Tom Gagg brings in less, so he'll gladly sell him to the authorities. Every aspect of the world depicted in B's Opera, including domestic relationships, is ruled by money. Macheath is a stark contrast to Peachum: both men are criminals

in one sense, but Macheath is far more human than Peachum, who is cold and calculated. Macheath embodies a sense of liberation and bravery; he may be inebriated, but he at least exudes human warmth.

Throughout the play, a contrast exists between the idealism associated with the highwayman as hero and the love motif, and Peachum's excessive financial pragmatism, who will sentence a man to death for money: 'What would you have a gentleman do if business could not be conducted without murder?'

Macheath

Gay takes advantage of the popular stereotype of the highwayman as a hero. 'There is no finer gentleman on the road than the captain,' Mrs Peachum declares (Act I sc.iv).

Consider Kevin Costner's Robin Hood film: no one wants such a character to perish; we admire his ingenuity and daring; half the audience wants to be him, and the other half is likely in love with him. Please excuse me if I'm displaying my age here, but you get the idea! Consider Brad Pitt or someone similar. What matters is how we idolize particular individuals — the name outlaw still has a romantic ring to it – and the connotation of law breaking is secondary, even accidental, in the public awareness. We also have a tendency to pass moral judgment on crime: we forgive Robin Hood for robbery and murder since legend has it that he gave the proceeds to the needy and was battling tyranny. Macheath and his followers justified themselves in the same way, frequently referring to their code of honour and seeing themselves as redistributing wealth - taking from the rich and giving to the needy – ie themselves! They regard themselves as less criminal than the politician who effectively robs the people but does not admit it since they are in some ways honest about what they do. Some highwaymen were aristocrats whose estates had been confiscated because they were Catholic, so the term "gentlemen of the road" has some validity.

Criminals are still frequently portrayed as heroes or monsters in the media: great train robbers are frequently portrayed sympathetically in films, while mass murderers are portrayed as monsters. Consider Jack the Ripper in 19th century London and the numerous films and documentaries about him, or the film Silence of the Lambs, which is based on a genuine serial killer.

In the 18th century, it was much the same. We watch movies about criminals; they read or watched trials or went to see hangings. Attractive highwaymen had a cult following, especially if their crimes were daring – they were the media stars of the day and drew a lot of sympathy. Crowds would swarm the road to the gallows, cheering them on as heroes, shouting encouraging or kind remarks, and praying for them.

In Act I sc 12, Polly imagines a scene like this:

'I think I see him already in the cart...I hear the crowd praising his fortitude and bravery! What sighs are sent...that such a lovely young lady should be brought to shame! He's up in the tree, I see him! Everyone in the circle is crying! Less appealing criminals may be mocked, while those who have committed extremely heinous crimes may be booed and stoned. The Beggar's Opera is entrenched in this dramatic and colorful world of crime, a setting designed to appeal to the audience while also allowing for satirical treatment of some of the most pressing topics of the day, such as governmental and legal corruption.

Polly

Audiences gravitate to romanticised Robin Hood heroes partly because of their bravery, and partly because of the accompanying love interest: Marion for Robin, Polly for Macheath (not a classic 'heroinely' name – it's really homely and more fitting for a milkmaid than a heroine). Of course, Romantic heroines and their parents are always concerned about their honour. 'If soon she be not made a wife, / her honour's singed,' Mrs Peachum says, as one might imagine (Act I sc 4)

'If I grant Captain Macheath some minor liberties, I have this watch and other outward tokens of his favour to show for it,' Polly informs her father in scene 7. Peachum's approach is extremely unconventional, inverting the moral principles that dictated that women should be virtuous and that marriage was financially advantageous — the underground operates in a different way. 'If I find out you've fooled the fool and are married...I'll slash your throat, hussy,' he warns her (end of sc 7).

When Polly's parents learn that she is married to Macheath, they chastise her as they would if she had not married him; the word "ruin" normally refers to tainted virtue, not marriage! Polly is mocked for wanting to marry like the gentry, despite the fact that her parents aren't married. 'Can

love be controlled by advice?' Polly responds in a romantic idealist song. Will Cupid be obedient to our mothers? '

We sympathise with her, but it's silly — it's burlesque, after all. 'If she had simply had an affair with the fellow, well, the very finest of families would have pardoned and cuddled up a frailty of that sort,' Mrs Peachum observes. 'It is marriage, husband that makes it a blemish.' A modern audience would have laughed at the dig at the upper classes who could afford to hide their indiscretions. When Polly's parents try to force her to sell Macheath to the authorities, they want her to kill her husband for a profit: 'Hang your spouse, and be dutiful,' they say (end sc 10).

The Beggar's Opera presents a dramatic portrayal of the practice of selling criminals to the gallows; Macheath is a colorful and appealing character; even Peachum admits, 'When I consider his personal bravery, his fine stratagems, how much we have already gotten by him...I can't find in my heart to have a hand in his death,' despite his apparently fine sentiments being undercut by his final statement, The audience will inevitably revolt against such a legal system because even Peachum has reservations about betraying Macheath.

Macheath and Polly contrast with the older, corrupt, and calculating figures of her parents and the aspects of the legal system they represent, and Peachum's habitually materialistic language is calculated to alienate the audience from his views; youth and love in the form of Macheath and Polly contrast with the older, corrupt, and calculating figures of her parents and the aspects of the legal system they represent.

Young lovers and their parents, who represent systems that have failed in some way, are frequently pitted against each other in the romance tradition. The young lovers are often of noble birth and thus represent future power; the marriage suggests social as well as domestic harmony: for example, the son and daughter of two feuding rulers may marry and thus ensure future political stability: Miranda marries Ferdinand in Shakespeare's The Tempest; Perdita marries the unfortunate name. The world of B's Opera is less secure and comforting: the motif of youthful loves encountering parental opposition is turned into a corrupt world where decisions are made based on money gain.

Macheath's declaration of love includes references to pistols and horses, reinforcing the idea of youthful vigour and heroism, but this is undermined by Polly's naive remark, "I have no reason to doubt you, for I find in the romance you lent me, none of the great heroes were ever false in love." Gay uses this widespread criticism as a source of hilarity. The silliness of their love declarations, as well as their juvenile diction, undercut potential tragedy while reinforcing satiric comedy's demands on the audience's consciousness.

Act II, Scene I

The setting shifts to a tavern near new gate. Highwaymen and prostitutes surround Macheath, all societal criminals in their own right, but they romanticise themselves as heroes, "sound men and loyal." They see themselves as not just beyond the law, but above and beyond it, and consider their alternative society to be ethically superior to the so-called "respectable" one in some ways.

'Are we more dishonest than the rest of mankind?' Jemmy says rhetorically. Gentlemen, anything we win is ours, by the law of arms and the right of conquest,' implying that they follow an ancient code of honour. Gentlemen who insisted on resolving disputes through duels rather than the courts would turn to 'the law of arms' — the law of the sword. Jemmy is adopting (or hilariously mis adopting) the language of honour.

Scene IV

Mrs Vixen quietly takes comments on her prowess as a shoplifter — not the type of 'accomplishment' ladies were supposed to be proud of! Macheath is surrounded by prostitutes who spoof the civilised world of lovely women. In this topsy-turvy burlesque world, Gay mixes high and low culture: in Act 2, the highwaymen ride off to the refined strains of Handel's Renaldo, while the prostitutes dance a popular dance that had only recently been imported to England from the Continent. Such behaviour would ordinarily associate characters with high culture; in this environment, it's ludicrous, but the incongruity has a benefit in that it highlights how superficial the upper classes' cultural "accomplishments" were.

Miss Bingley, in Pride and Prejudice (1813), advises that a lady must possess a particular something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address, and expressions in order to be completed (ch 8). Prostitutes imitate upper-class behaviour in this scene, and both groups end up looking silly.

Scene V

Macheath's arrest, which was betrayed by his pub buddies usually regarded as the play's primary event Macheath's retort mocks traditional romantic roles,: he is the noble ranting warrior, with a tinge of Restoration heroism in his vitriol against women as "jilts, harpies, furies, prostitutes." While a frequent way of assaulting women in general and excellent for cheap laughs, the comparison to whores is literally appropriate here and deflates his heroic posture. The juxtaposition of what should be tragedy with ludicrously improper language is unsettlingly hilarious.

The fact that Peachum refers to Macheath as one of the world's "greatest heroes" is ridiculous, but other aspects of the action have important implications. In some ways, the arrest dramatises the triumph of economically motivated legal norms over romantic heroic beliefs. Macheath is a martyr in certain ways, regardless of how we consider him; hence the kiss of betrayal and the reference to suffering on the tree. There is clearly a religious overtone, but don't over think it — religious overtones generally give a drama dignity and depth, but what could be a sad and terrible occurrence is undercut here by the burlesque presentation, which prevents the audience from empathising with Macheath too deeply.

Scene 7:

The second half of the play is mostly set at new gate prison; therefore the tone is more ominous. Of course, the underworld of new gate mirrors civilization as a whole in microcosm. Gay depicts a world where money dominates (as it does in the real world) and one's ability to pay dictates how difficult one's prison experience will be. Macheath arrives in New gate and negotiates for lighter fetters in exchange for a price - such methods were prevalent in jails at the period; such bribes were known as 'perquisites,' and Macheath refers to them in sc 12, 'Money, well timed, and well employed, will do anything.' Gay is addressing some of the most significant abuses of the jail system at the time, themes that were later tackled by writers like Fielding in J Wild and Amelia and Godwin in Caleb Williams (1794). The issue was that officials bought their jobs: the Keeper of New gate, for example, would have spent around £5,000 for his position, which is roughly £100,000 in today's money. Men were obviously eager to obtain as much as they could from the captives in their care, especially with such a large investment.

Scene 8:

Macheath tempted Lucy Lockit (the jailer's daughter) by promising marriage - typical Restoration rake behaviour, but also a serious concern in the 18th century: a lady who had "lost her virtue" would find it nearly impossible to find a spouse. Consider Moll Flanders' elder brother seducing her and then abandoning her.

Scene 9

Macheath flatters Lucy by claiming that he is her husband in all but name, as if their relationship is more than just legal. 'For a man of honour, his word is as good as his bond,' he says — another rakish justification! He tries to persuade her that he isn't married to Polly, promising, "If we can find the usual (chaplain), I shall have no scruples of making you my wife; and I know the penalty of having two at the same time," referring to the fact that bigamy was punished by death at the time.

Scene 10

Peachum and Lockit agreed to split the reward for Macheath's capture. Peachum compares their job to that of politicians, saying, "We promote people who betray their friends, just as great statesmen do." Lockit cautions him that corruption is so widespread that if he criticises any component of the system, everyone will assume his complaints are directed at them, and he will make a lot of enemies. They debate over claims that they have acted corruptly themselves: Lockit accuses Peachum of taking Ned's money but failing to provide the promised security; Lockit also accuses Mrs Coaxer of not receiving her portion of the money for apprehending a thief. Peachum reminds the audience of their power: "We have the power to hang each other," implying that they could impeach one another. They come to their senses and make amends.

Scene 11

Lockit addresses Lucy as if she were Macheath's wife, encouraging her to "moan over your dying husband" and then "enjoy his money after he's dead," as other widows do. Widows were in a relatively fortunate position after the death of their husbands since they enjoyed some financial independence. Unmarried women under the age of 21 were financially reliant on their fathers; when they married, any money they had became the property of their husbands, and they would only gain financial independence if they were widowed. As a result, widows in 18th and 19th

century literature are frequently depicted as being in a privileged position. The image of the jovial "merry widow" spending her late husband's money was popular.

It may not have been shocking to hear a man counsel his daughter to take advantage of her husband's death in the criminal underworld, but a modern audience would have recognised that this was similar to polite world customs.

Scene 13

Polly and Lucy strive to establish their relationship with Macheath, who refuses to say whether he's married to Polly (he doesn't want to enrage Lucy because she's the jailer's daughter).

Scene 14

Polly is taken away from Macheath by her father, who expresses conventional romantic laments: 'No force on earth will ever divide / The knot that sacred love has tied.'

Scene 15

Polly and Macheath are hardly models of sacred love; Macheath refers to Lucy as his wife and promises, "I would rather die than betray thee." Despite this, he uses her affection for him to persuade her to assist him in escaping, claiming that it isn't safe to go off together but pledging to send for her. Famous criminals like Jack Shepard escaping would have sprung to mind for a contemporaneous audience — reports of such escapes were immensely popular, especially if there was a love relationship involved.

Act III, Scene 1

Lockit isn't enraged that Lucy assisted Macheath in escaping; he just wants to make sure she got paid for it and that he gets his part!

Scene 2

Lockit believes Peachum organised Macheath's escape in order for Polly to acquire Macheath's money, and that he will then recapture him and hang him in order to obtain money. Lockit seeks vengeance by enlisting the help of Peachum's own people.

Scene 3

Lockit encounters Filch, who works as a 'child-getter' to supplement his income. This relates to the actual practice of getting female inmates pregnant in order for them to request a reprieve or delay in judgment until after the birth, at which point they could hope to be pardoned. Male convicts did fee for their services, but others were public-spirited enough to do it for no charge! Gay makes light of the issue by saying, "Since the favorite child-getter was incapacitated by a catastrophe, I've made a little money by assisting the ladies in getting pregnant." Filch is plainly exhausted: 'I am confident this is something I won't be able to do in another session.' 'The vigour and prowess of a knight-errant never saved half the ladies in need that he hath done,' Lockit observes, highlighting the humorous contrast between romantic conceptions of chivalry and the wretched world of New gate and its inmates.

Scene 4-6

Macheath gives his buddies money because they haven't been able to take much, painting a picture of honour among thieves. He portrays himself as more honorable than many gentlemen, saying, "I am not a mere Court friend, who professes everything and will do nothing" – a sly reference to the political patronage system, in which people competed for the attention of powerful men who could get them positions in government or the church. Those who had devoted their time and money to guys who promised an excellent job but eventually delivered little were bound to grumble. Gay had gone through a similar ordeal.

Scene 7

Lucy and Polly are back. Polly will be poisoned by Lucy. 'Revenge, revenge, revenge, / shall satisfy my restless sprite,' she rants in a way worthy of a traditional heroine in Greek play. Of course, such rhetoric is completely out of place in this context.

Scene 8-10

Lucy and Polly lament men's inconstancy, but their sisterly feelings are laughably shallow: Lucy tries to persuade Polly to drink poisoned cordial, but Polly notices something is wrong and refuses, saving another potential catastrophe.

Scene 11-12

Polly and Lucy both seek recognition from Macheath. 'Sink the material evidence, and bring him off at his trial,' Polly urges her father to preserve Macheath. 'I know the evidence is in your power,' Lucy urges her father. It may seem silly to have two women claiming to be Macheath's wife and begging for his life, but it serves as a reminder of the men's power and the corruption of a system that could be easily manipulated, a system based on money and power rather than principles of justice.

Scene 13

Macheath alternates between courage and sadness as he drinks and remembers his precarious circumstances, balancing possible tragedy with humour once more. He says valiantly, "Since I must swing [or hang] – I scorn to wince or whine," And then acknowledges, "But now my spirits droop, / I'll boost them high with wine," arguing that "a man can die / Much bolder with brandy."

He concludes with a condemnation of the criminal justice system, which punishes persons based on their riches rather than their crime, claiming that if the law were to reach both the elite and lower classes, there would be many more executions!

'If rich men like us started swinging,

Such numbers to string would think the land.

Upon the Tyburn tree', says the narrator.

Tyburn was the most well-known hangman's hangman's hangman's hangman' Even the method of death differed depending on one's social status: the upper classes were decapitated rather than hanged. Of course, convicting a member of the upper classes of anything was exceedingly difficult, owing to the fact that they were almost certain to know the Judge (all Judges were from the landed classes), and if they didn't, they were almost certain to have a friend or political associate who did.

Scene 14

Because Macheath fled from prison, he has been sentenced to death. He begs his remaining allies to use evidence against Peachum and Lock it in order to avenge him in the same way that Peachum and Lockit engineered his downfall.

Once again, potential tragedy and comedy collide. Lucy, distraught, laments seeing Macheath as a "great man in trouble" and declares her desire to die with him, but as the scenario unfolds, it becomes more ludicrous, with not only Polly as a rival in expressing undying love for Macheath, but four additional ladies, each with a child in tow, entering. Macheath can't stand all these "women" and declares that he wants to die! Macheath is shown preparing to leave to do just that at the end of the scene.

Scene 16

Macheath's escape and recapture, the animosity between Lockit and Peachum (like criminal gang leaders; 18th century spectators would have drawn a comparison with a famous conflict between Walpole and Townshend), and Lucy and Polly's rivalry all contribute to the play's dramatic intrigue.

Despite this, we have a complete break from the action in this scene, which removes all suspense. The beggar reappears to speak with the player about the game. 'I hope you don't mean for Macheath to be truly executed,' the player says, expressing the thoughts of the audience. The Beggar responds that he had intended "strict poetical justice," with all of the characters "either hanged or transported," but the player objects that this would be "a downright deep tragedy," arguing that "an opera must end happily," explaining, "All of this we must do, to comply with the town's taste." The play comes to a conclusion not by rational means, but through a ridiculously implausible respite - as the Beggar reminds us, 'it doesn't matter how bizarrely things are brought about in this form of theatre.' Perhaps it's also a darkly comedic reminder that while poetic justice in the form of punishing sin and rewarding virtue is excellent in neo-classical play, it's all too frequently determined by riches and power in real life.

The beggar gives a brief didactic lecture about the implications of his work, remarking that it demonstrates "a similarity of manners in high and low life." However, the poem concludes with a burlesque declaration of hope, symbolised by Macheath's marriage to Polly, whom he acknowledges as his wife.

Beggar's Opera is a vehicle for Gay's satiric wit as he attempts to expose his society's vices and hypocrisies. The critique is broad, spanning popular culture, politics, law, class, and morality, with

the goal of debunking respectability myths and exposing the double standards of a society that assesses people based on their position and, in particular, their wealth.

The subject matter is serious, and the criticism can be harsh, but this isn't a polemical book — Gay is trying to get us to think about the less appealing elements of human nature and the social systems we construct, but he does so with a smile. His boldly funny exposition of his society's oddities and inconsistencies compels the audience to laugh along with him, and via our appreciating laughter, to agree with his critique. Laughter is a subversive and alternative way of looking at the world, and Gay invites us to share both the humour and the morality of that perspective.

Keywords

- **Air** In Elizabethan and Jacobean music, an accompanied song or melody, usually in strophic form, is referred to as an air; the terms are interchangeable.
- **Arrears** the state of not being able to meet one's obligations, generally a debt
- **Ballad** a simple and well-known tune
- **Catches** popular songs, frequently vulgar or bawdy
- **Coquette** a lady who is openly flirty
- **Covent Garden** Covent Garden is a theatre in London. The largest public gardens in London and, in previous ages, a notorious prostitution hotspot.
- **Doxy** a prostitute or floozy
- **Drawer** A serving man is a character in the opera.
- **Drury Lane** Drury Lane is a street in Drury Lane, London The theatrical district of London was once known as a haven for streetwalkers.
- **Fetters** a form of restraint, most commonly in the form of chains or shackles
- **Filch** to snare or nab, usually a small item
- **Guinea** a gold coin minted in England from 1663 until 1813, with a face value of 21 shillings in 1717.
- **Jointure** In the event of her husband's death, a widow's estate or property is established.
- **Lock** a warehouse for storing stolen items in the setting of the opera
- **Maxim** A cliché is a succinct representation of a broad truth, fundamental principle, or code of conduct.
- **Mercer** a retailer of dry goods
- **New gate** The most notorious prison in London, which was demolished in 1902.
- **Perquisite** a gratuity or a tip
- **Recitative** a sung section presented in a rhythmically free vocal manner, emulating the natural inflections of speech; these parts are frequently utilised for conversation and narrative in operas and oratorios.
- **Sessions** In England, there are meetings of the criminal court.
- **Tipple** to overindulge in alcoholic beverages, but only in little amounts

Self Assessment

1. What does Peachum say is "as fashionable a crime as man can be guilty of"?

A. Blackmail
B. Adultery
C. Murder
D. Larceny

2. At the beginning of the play, Mrs. Peachum identifies which vice as Macheath's undoing?

A. Lechery
B. Gluttony
C. Drinking
D. Gambling

3. From whom does Peachum first learn of his daughter's relationship with Macheath?

A. Lockit
B. Mrs. Peachum
C. Polly Herself
D. Filch

4. Peachum's first objection to the concept of marriage is that:

A. It brings on early aging.
B. It limits a person's amorous possibility.
C. It puts a man in his wife's power.
D. It puts a woman in her husband's power.

5. Mrs. Peachum accuses Polly of imitating whom in the girl's pursuit of marriage?

A. The Highwaymen
B. The Russian Czarina
C. Her Parents
D. Fine Ladies

6. Quadrille is:

A. A fashionable hat
B. A popular dance
C. A horse-drawn carriage
D. A popular card game

7. Who betrays Polly's confidence to Mrs. Peachum?

A. Suky Tawdry
B. Black Moll
C. Filch
D. Macheath

8. When Polly first appears, she tells her father what about her relationship to Macheath?

A. That they have already eloped
B. That she has had to rebuff macheath's attention
C. That the entire matter is pure gossip
D. That she's toying with him for profit

9. Who first reveals to Peachum that Polly and Macheath are married?

A. Macheath
B. Polly
C. Filch
D. Mrs. Peachum

10. How does Polly finally admit the truth of her marriage?

A. Through an air
B. Through a letter to her parents
C. Through a monologue to the audience
D. Through an opinion piece in the London paper

11. In *The Beggar's Opera*, Gay critiques the outright inequality between:

A. The rich and poor
B. The male and female

C. The upper and middle class
D. The blacks and whites

12. According to Gay, all men are naturally:

A. Self-Interested
B. Corrupt
C. Both
D. None of the above

13. *The Beggar's Opera* is rife with humorous equivalencies drawn between:

A. Statesmen and criminals
B. Lawyers and impeachers
C. Highwaymen and courtiers
D. All the above

14. As per the play *The Beggar's Opera*, a woman's only use for marriage is:
A. Permanent love
B. Financial security
C. True union
D. Happy life

15. For Peachum and Lockit, as for Lucy and Polly, friendship is:

A. A self-consciously insincere tool
B. A way of life
C. A permanent relationship
D. Better than blood relationship

Answer for Self Assessment

1.	C	2.	D	3.	B	4.	D	5.	D
6.	D	7.	C	8.	D	9.	D	10.	A
11.	A	12.	C	13.	C	14.	B	15.	A

Review Questions

1. How does Gay depict the differences between male and female sexuality?
2. How does friendship operate in The Beggar's Opera?
3. What does Macheath mean by "the world is all alike," and where else in the play may we find proof of it?
4. How do the lyrics of Gay's airs reinforce his themes?
5. Gay's play introduced a new form, the "ballad opera." Discuss this form and consider how its uniqueness may have impacted the 18th century audience.
6. How does Gay employ the literary burlesque in The Beggar's Opera?
7. Discuss the revised ending of the opera. Why do you think Gay has the Player succeed in convincing the Beggar to change the 'original' ending?

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Unit 11: Oliver Goldsmith-She stoops to conquer

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the literary contribution of Oliver Goldsmith
- explore the elements of restoration comedy, comedy of manners, and she-comedy
- analyze the plot of *She Stoops to Conquer*
- evaluate the merits and demerits of the characters of the play

Introduction

She Stoops to Conquer is a comedy of manners stage play that mocks the manners (style of life, social traditions, etc.) of a particular social class, in this case the upper class. A drawing-room comedy is another term for the play. The play employs farce (including many mix-ups) and satire to mock eighteenth-century Englishmen's class consciousness and criticise what Goldsmith referred to as the "weeping sentimental comedy so much in fashion at the moment."

11.1 Setting

The majority of the action takes place in the Hardcastle mansion, which is located around sixty miles outside of London in the English countryside.

The mansion is an old, cozy home that looks like an inn. The Three Pigeons Alehouse, a nearby bar, provides the setting for a brief episode. It's the eighteenth century, and you're in it.

11.2 Title

The term alludes to Kate's deception of posing as a barmaid in order to achieve her aim. It comes from Dryden's poetry, which Goldsmith may have heard misquoted by Lord Chesterfield. The lines in question in Chesterfield's version are as follows:

"When a prostrate lover is at his most vulnerable, he stoops to conquer, and kneels to rise."

11.3 Summary of the Plot

Dorothy Hardcastle tells her husband in a downstairs room of their ancient home that they need a little diversion—specifically, a trip to London, a city she has never visited. Every winter, their next-door neighbours, the Hoggs sisters and Mrs. Grigsby, spend a month in London. It's the place to go if you want to be noticed. But, comfortable with his boring country existence, old Hardcastle claims that visitors to the big city merely bring back its ridiculous trends and vanities. He claims that it used to take a long time for London's affectations and fripperies to reach the country; now they arrive in coachloads.

Mrs. Hardcastle, eager for new faces and conversation, claims Mrs. Odd fish, the wife of the village minister, and Mr. Cripple gate, the crippled dancing teacher, are their only visitors.

Furthermore, Mr. Hardcastle's old stories about sieges and battles are their only source of entertainment. Hardcastle, on the other hand, says he enjoys everything old, including friends, times, manners, books, wine, and, of course, his wife.

Their daughter, Kate, a lovely young lady of marriageable age, and Tony, Mrs. Hardcastle's son by her first husband, Mr. Lumpkin, live with them in their home. Tony tormented his stepfather, Mr. Hardcastle, as a child, burning a servant's shoes, scaring the maids, and other shenanigans.

Tony has grown into an obese slob who spends much of his time at the local alehouse as a young guy. He will soon reach the age of majority, making him eligible for an inheritance of 1500 pounds a year to fund his whims. Mrs. Hardcastle wants Tony to marry Constance Neville, her niece and ward, who has received a casket of diamonds from her uncle. Mrs. Hardcastle, as Miss Neville's guardian, keeps the jewels under lock and key until Constance is able to take legal custody of them.

While Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle discuss the cancelled London trip, Tony slips between them and heads to The Three Pigeons, a local alehouse. Mrs. Hardcastle follows him out the door, telling him he should do something other than hang out with the riffraff.

Mr. Hardcastle, alone, bemoans the follies of the age. Even his beloved Kate is succumbing to the virus, since she has developed a taste for "French frippery." When she enters the room, he informs her that he has arranged for her to meet Mr. Charles Marlow, an eligible young man with many fine qualities who "is destined for employment in the service of the country." Mr. George Hastings, a friend of Marlow's, is due to pay him a call that evening. Sir Charles Marlow, Hardcastle's acquaintance, has a son named Young Marlow. Kate is excited to meet the young man, while she is concerned about her father's depiction of him as bashful with young women.

Constance Neville eventually pays us a visit. Constance informs Kate about her own admirer, Mr. Hastings, a Marlow family member, when Kate tells her about young Mr. Marlow. Miss Neville appreciates Hastings' attention, but she resents Mrs. Hardcastle's attempts to pair her with her "beautiful monster," Tony, in order to keep Miss Neville's attention.

Meanwhile, Tony is having a great time singing and drinking in the alehouse when Hastings and young Marlow ask for directions to the Hardcastle home. They have lost their way after arriving in the area from London after a long journey

Because of Hardcastle's recent abuse of him, he sees an opportunity to avenge himself.

He informs Marlow and Hastings that his daughter is a "tall, trapesing, trolloping, chatty maypole," according to him. Hardcastle's son (meaning himself) is a "pretty, well-bred youth," he claims.

“Everyone admires.” Marlow claims to have been told otherwise, notably that the girl is "well-bred and well-mannered."

“The son, an ungainly booby, grew up and spoilt at his mother's apron-string,” she said.

Tony is caught off guard and can only hem and haw. He then informs them that the Hardcastle home is too far away to reach by dusk, but that there is a fine inn just up the road, as a prank. Of course, the "inn" is the Hardcastle residence. When Marlow and Hastings arrive, they notice that the inn is old, but in its own way admirable. According to Hastings,

Marlow has travelled far and stayed in a variety of inns, yet he is perplexed as to why such a worldly man is so reserved among young women. Marlow reminds him that he is only timid among cultured and well-behaved young ladies. He is a constant talker around lower-class women, a joker entirely at ease.

When Mr. Hardcastle enters, he greets them as the expected guests—friend Marlow's Hastings and the Marlow fellow who is to meet his daughter. The young guys, believing they are at Tony's inn,

believe Mr. Hardcastle is the innkeeper and treat him as such, giving him orders to make their supper and asking to view the lodgings. Hardcastle is irritated by

He thinks they're the rudest of tourists, despite the fact that he has no idea they're staying at an inn. He keeps his emotions hidden.

When Hardcastle takes Marlow upstairs to show him his room, Hastings runs into Constance Neville and understands he is at the Hardcastle house, not an inn, from their conversation. Hastings resolves to keep the facts hidden from Marlow because he is afraid that the mix-up would cause Marlow to flee. As a result, he convinces Marlow that Constance and Kate are also visitors at the "inn."

When Marlow eventually meets Kate, his timidity prevents him from speaking. Kate is forced to complete almost every statement John starts. She, on the other hand, complements him on being so perceptive as to bring up excellent conversation subjects. Throughout their conversation, Marlow lacks the guts to even look her in the eyes. He has no idea who she is or what she looks like.

Tony, who has returned from the pub, and Constance are insulting each other in another room, much to Mrs. Hardcastle's chagrin. After observing their spitfire back-and-forth, Hastings offers Tony the young lady in exchange for his assistance in winning her.

Hardcastle irritated

Meanwhile, Mr. Hardcastle is growing increasingly irritated with Marlow for treating him like a stooge. Hardcastle, alone on stage, laments, "He has already taken possession of the easy-chair by the fire-side." In the parlour, he removed his boots and asked me to take care of them. I'm curious as to how his debauchery impacts my daughter."

Kate has been upstairs putting on some more casual attire.

When she comes down to speak with her father, she bemoans Marlow's extreme shyness, while Hardcastle bemoans Marlow's rudeness. They're not sure if they're referring to the same person.

Tony, who knows where his mother stores everything, retrieves the casket of jewels Mrs. Hardcastle is keeping for Constance and offers it to Hastings as an amusement while they chat.

Hastings is enticed to flee with Constance. Mrs. Hardcastle later discovers it missing and suspects a robber is on the loose.

In the meantime, a maid informs Kate that Marlow thinks he's in an inn. Marlow mistook Kate for a barmaid after she changed into her casual dress, according to the maid. Kate chooses to keep up the act, altering her tone and behaviour in the company of Marlow.

He claims she is "vastly handsome" when he strikes up a discussion with her. "Suppose I should call for a taste of your nectar, simply as a trial," he says, growing bolder.

lips." (Audiences at the performance are well aware that Marlow is a different man in the presence of servant women, so his brazen behaviour is unsurprising.) When old Hardcastle watches Kate and Marlow interact, he notices Marlow grabbing Kate's hand and treating her like a milkmaid. He's considering evicting Marlow.

When he expresses his feelings to Kate, she requests an hour to persuade her father that Marlow is not as bold and disrespectful as he thinks. He accepts her suggestion.

The narrative intensifies at this moment, as another visitor, Marlow's father, Sir Charles Marlow, is about to arrive. Miss Neville apparently came across a letter from Sir Charles to old Hardcastle in which he stated that he would arrive at the Hardcastle home a few hours after his son arrived. When she informs George Hastings of Sir Charles' impending visit, George is concerned that Sir Charles, who is aware of George's feelings for Constance, would derail their plans to go away together. Constance inquires about the safety of the diamonds. George tells her that they are, as he has sent the gems to Marlow for safekeeping via a servant.

Unfortunately for Hastings, Marlow has instructed the servant to hand over the gem casket to the "landlady" for safekeeping. So the jewels have returned to their original location.

Originally, it was in the possession of Mrs. Hardcastle (as Miss Neville's guardian). Tony informs his mother that they were misplaced by a servant. She returns to her job, encouraging a romance between Tony and Constance, oblivious to the fact that Hastings and the young girl are scheming to flee.

Marlow has been enamoured with the barmaid and declares, "She's mine, she must be mine."

Meanwhile, elderly Hardcastle has had it with impolite Marlow and has ordered him to go. Marlow raises his voice in protest. Hardcastle rants and storms out. When Kate walks in, she sees Marlow has realised something unusual is going on, so she intervenes.

Hardcastle's house is revealed to be the inn. She does, however, refer to herself as a "related," a "poor relation" who helps out. As a result, she knows Marlow will continue to speak freely to her, as a "poor relation" has the same status as a barmaid. "To mistake this place of all others for an inn, and my father's old friend for an innkeeper!" Marlow exclaims, frightened and ashamed. What a swaggering puppy he must think I am! What a wacky puppy I've become!

In light of the circumstances, Marlow informs the "poor relation" that he would be departing but adds that she has been the one nice thing that has happened to him during the perplexing and uncomfortable ordeal. His statements assist in identifying the problem.

When they first met, she felt affection for him. Her plan of posing as a barmaid/poor relative to discover his true feelings—a plan she stooped to defeat—has proven wise.

Miss Neville's diamonds and Mr. Hastings' planned elopement with Constance become further entangled. Tony is blamed for starting the comedy of errors by lying to Marlow and Hastings about the Hardcastle house being an inn.

Sir Charles and old Hardcastle joke about the mix-ups when they arrive, but Hardcastle informs Kate that he is still not convinced that Marlow is anything other than unpleasant and insulting. Kate enacts one final scene as the poor relative while Marlow converses with her and Sir Charles and Hardcastle listen from behind a screen to prove that Marlow is a worthy man. Finally, Kate discloses her true identity to Marlow, and everyone accepts responsibility for the evening's errors.

Tony has been "of age" for three months, which means he has the right to make his own decisions regarding his future. Tony immediately goes against his mother's desires and refuses to marry Constance Neville, releasing her to marry Hastings and therefore qualifying her to get the jewels. The youthful loves, Kate and Marlow, Constance and Hastings, get betrothed in the end.

Climax

The climax arrives when Kate exposes her true identity to young Marlow behind a screen while Hardcastle and Sir Charles listen.

Structure and Design

Goldsmith's writing style is humorous, straightforward, and charming. From start to finish, the play is both entertaining and easy to follow, with few terms and idioms that modern audiences would be unfamiliar with. It's also well-crafted and fast-paced, with the first act's events—in particular, references to Tony Lumpkin's youthful proclivity for mischief and practical jokes—foreshadowing the events of the subsequent acts.

Scene changes are frequent, interrupted by the presence on stage of a character alone (solus in the stage directions) presenting a brief explanation of his sentiments. The drama is a page-turner for readers in current terms. Because the action of the play takes place in a single location (the English countryside) on a single day, Goldsmith observed the traditional unities of time and place.

11.4 Themes

Bias based on social class

Marlow responds to women entirely on the basis of their social class until Kate gives him a lesson. He looks down on lower-class women yet is completely at ease around them; he admires upper-class women but is terribly shy about them. He assumes that all women of a specific class think and act according to artificial and arbitrary standards expected of that class, much as he did in the London society in which he was raised. In the case of Mrs.

Hardcastle appears to judge a person based on the value of his or her belongings.

Love is unconcerned about social boundaries.

Marlow can't help but fall in love with a lowly "barmaid" despite the fact that prevailing attitudes among England's high classes frown on romance between one of their own and a person of humble descent (who is, of course, Kate in disguise).

Hope for Humanity's Flaws

Despite the fact that Marlow makes a fool of himself as a result of his upper-class prejudices, Kate has enough wisdom to see through the London hauteur that surrounds him and admire him for his true excellent qualities—which are numerous once he allows them to emerge. In addition, Mrs.

Despite her erroneous values, Hardcastle loves the love of her sensible, down-to-earth spouse. He, too, is willing to overlook her flaws in favour of her positive qualities.

Indolence is bred by money.

When Tony Lumpkin reaches the age of majority, he will be paid 1,500 pounds per year. As a result of his lack of financial concerns, he devotes himself to ale and a sedentary lifestyle.

The Very First Performance

In 1773, Goldsmith finished the piece. On March 15, that year, it was originally performed at London's Covent Garden Theatre. It went over quite well. It has become one of the most popular comedies in English literary history during the last two centuries. It is still widely performed in English-speaking countries today.

Summary and Analysis of She Stoops to Conquer

She Stoops to Conquer or The Mistakes of a Night was written by Irish novelist Oliver Goldsmith to reintroduce wit and humour to the romantic drama of nineteenth-century England.

The Preamble

"The Comic Muse, long ailing, is now a-dying!" says the prologue, voiced by Woodward (one of the leading actors of the day). Thus, an overdose of morality and sentiment, which were fashionable in sentimental comedies, was gradually eroding authentic humour. He claims that "a doctor" (Goldsmith) "has arrived this night" with his "five draughts," referring to the play's five acts, to make the audience laugh out loud.

This anti-sentimental comedy, which was first produced in London in, also satirises the pretentious class consciousness of the upper-class people of his day, using the style of a comedy of manners.

Historical Background

She Stoops to Conquer was a great hit, which was especially important to Goldsmith because his last piece, "The Good-Natured Man," had garnered mixed reviews. Interestingly, Goldsmith purposefully depicted the alehouse scene where drunkards insist that their way of life is not at all low, despite the fact that his earlier play had been criticised for featuring scenes of low behaviour. The play is often known as a Restoration Comedy because of its resemblance to the Restoration period's "laughing comedies."

Summary

Mr. and Mrs. Harcastle are a middle-aged couple who live in a "old fashioned" home that looks like an inn. Their daughter Kate, Mrs. Hardcastle's son Tony from a previous marriage, and their relative Constance Neville live with them. Kate is a dutiful daughter who dresses according to her father's desires in the morning and how she pleases in the evening. Tony, on the other hand, is a chronic alcoholic and adherent of the "low company" lifestyle. Mrs. Hardcastle is adamant about Tony and Neville getting married because the latter has a small wealth, but Tony and Neville loathe each other.


The first act introduces all of the characters and lays the groundwork for the issues to emerge. As a result, Mrs. Hardcastle's comparison of her home to an inn sets the stage for Marlow and Hastings' misunderstanding. Kate's odd dressing style also serves as a hint to the audience about the identity reversal strategy she'll use to reveal Marlow's actual character. As a result of the audience's knowledge of the characters' predicted antics, there are plenty of opportunities for laughter.

This act also emphasises one of Goldsmith's primary themes: the rejection of established ideas in favour of a vibrant life. A hero in a sentimental comedy is usually portrayed as a good person. Marlow is a complicated figure who acts modesty solely to serve his aims, and the audience learns

this in Act I. Only Kate looks to be admirable and logical. Tony is another character who subsequently appears to be the play's main spokesman, as evidenced by his alehouse song, which clearly contradicts traditional wisdom and promotes base life.

Marlow and Hastings become lost on their way to Mr. Hardcastle's house, and when they go seeking for lodging at the Three Pigeons, Tony purposefully leads them astray by recommending that they stay at the ancient inn down the road, which is, in fact, Mr. Hardcastle's house. As a result, both Marlow and Hastings treat Mr. Hardcastle brutally upon their arrival, mistaking him for the innkeeper. Mr. Hardcastle, for one, is taken aback by their intrusiveness.

Meanwhile, Constance, upon seeing Hastings, tries to clarify the situation by implying that the foolishness of mistaken identities is most likely a Tony ruse. To avoid upsetting Marlow, they finally decide not to tell him and elope together, taking the jewels with them. Tony, who volunteers to steal the diamonds merely to avoid marriage with Constance, enthusiastically endorses and supports this scheme.

Marlow meets the properly dressed Kate and, judging by her attire, engages in a very serious discourse that is completely boring and useless. Kate, on the other hand, is drawn to him and decides to learn more about him.

 All of the issues are revealed in Act 1, and the characters can be judged. As a result, the main character, Marlow, displays his actual personality via his folly. He acts harsh and disrespectful to Mr. Hardcastle, failing to recognise that he is actually his host, because he persists in his false belief that noble manners must be acquired. Constance, on the other hand, isn't quite as lively as Kate, but she appears to understand the value of money. She decides to elope with Hastings only after she has secured her jewels, which is a long cry from the romantic drama heroines. The chat between Marlow and Kate is clearly the most important sequence in the act. Marlow is engrossed in a lofty philosophical examination of love and life.

It's impossible not to notice how it's a touching satire of emotive discourse.

Mr. Hardcastle and Kate both appear befuddled by their encounters with Marlow. Mr. Hardcastle calls him an impudent fellow, while Kate expresses her dissatisfaction with his lack of vibrancy. Kate eventually asks her father to allow her the chance to reveal Marlow's true character. As a result, when she shows up in a basic outfit and is mistaken for a barmaid by Marlow, the latter not only participates in a fun-filled repertoire with her, but also tries to embrace her. And after seeing all of this, Mr. Hardcastle agrees to give Kate the night to show how respectful and enjoyable he is.

Meanwhile, Constance is unaware of Tony's intention to take the diamonds, and she continues to beseech Mrs. Hardcastle for them. Mrs. Hardcastle agrees to pretend that the fortune has been taken in order to deter Constance, and Tony instructs his mother to do so until she realizes they are genuinely missing.

 In Act 2, the plot grows more intricate, and it is purely due to Goldsmith's deft craftsmanship and use of dramatic irony that the events, while baffling, appear natural and appropriate. As a result, the numerous occurrences — Tony taking the jewels and pressuring his mother to lie that they are lost, as well as Mrs. Hardcastle's humiliating revelation – all contribute to the play's amusement. Nonetheless, two essential topics are deftly explored: Mr. Hardcastle's and Kate's disquieting dilemmas over Marlow's murky character, and Kate's "stooping" to clear it.

Mr. Charles Marlow's impending arrival causes additional complications for Constance and Hastings, as their affair will be revealed along with the prediction of whether Marlow and Kate will marry. Now, Hastings' diamonds, which he sends to Marlow through a servant for protection, are entrusted to Mrs. Hardcastle by mistake, driving Hastings to arrange a hasty elopement with Constance. Mr. Hardcastle, on the other hand, is enraged by Marlow's rudeness and orders him to leave; an attitude that makes Marlow worry if something is wrong. Kate, who reappears as a barmaid and reminds him that it is Mr. Hardcastle's house and that she is a poor related, corrects his assumptions. Despite the fact that Marlow claims to have begun to care for her, she leaves because she does not want to become entangled in such a bad relationship.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Hardcastle intercepts a letter Hastings had written to Neville, instructing him to meet him in the garden. She intends to take Neville with her since she is enraged by this new, unexpected development. The act comes to a close with a furious exchange between Marlow, Hastings, and Tony, in which Tony offers to solve all of Hastings' issues.

Act 2 is full of surprises; Marlow remains uninterested in Kate, and Constance's elopement with Hastings is likewise uncertain. This act also exposes aristocratic hypocrisy by Marlow's refusal to accept Kate in her plain clothes, despite his unwavering declaration that he is willing to pay for her honour. Tony's kind nature is revealed when he offers to help Hastings recover the gems.

Following his arrival, Sir Charles Marlow had a hearty chuckle with Hastings about Marlow's befuddlement. Apart from apologizing, Marlow expresses his unwillingness to build any kind of relationship with Kate because there has been no meaningful communication. Mr. Hardcastle is taken aback by this, as he has been privy to Marlow's romantic advances toward his daughter. As Marlow walks away, Kate appears and promises them that the mystery will be solved soon. The two old guys, stationed behind the screen, watch Marlow's colorful character and get along to plan their wedding from an interview between Marlow and Kate.

The circumstances around Hastings and Constance are now developing in an equally fascinating manner. Tony tells Hastings, who is waiting for Constance in the garden, how he forced his mother and Constance drive around in circles to fool them into thinking they were far away. Mrs. Hardcastle's concern grows as she misidentifies her husband as a "highway man." Instead of eloping, Hastings and Constance decide to seek Mr. Hardcastle's permission to marry. All concerns are resolved in the end when Kate exposes her true identity to Marlow and Mr. Hardcastle confirms that Tony is "of age" — a benefit that allows him to easily reject Constance.

This act appears to follow the sentimental comedy tradition of reuniting all the estranged lovers and resolving the underlying issues. However, this is not the case. Because of Kate's calculated plan to expose Marlow's duplicity and Tony's outspoken refusal to marry Constance, Goldsmith's ideals of living life according to one's preferences rather than the way one observes are upheld, making the conclusion of this romantic comedy inherently lively and delightful.

The Epilogues

Kate states in the first epilogue that she has "stooped to conquer with success," referring to her winning Marlow's heart as well as the play's success. Tony states in the second epilogue that he will bring prosperity to the world by "taking his lively energy to London, where he will show the world what excellent taste is," reminding the audience that "good taste" is a product of liveliness rather than morality

Self Assessment

1. What is the term for a highly sexualized, womanizing male protagonist found in a Restoration comedy?

A. A knave

B. A gadabout

C. A rake

D. A silver fox

2. One of the most popular and vulgar examples of Restoration comedy is William Wycherley's...

A. Romeo & Juliet

B. The Rover

C. Paradise Lost

D. The Country Wife

3. What marked the beginning of the period of Restoration comedies in English theatrical history?

A. An increased interest in social critique.
B. Shakespeare writing parts for women.
C. Charles II retaking the throne of England
D. Women becoming professional playwrights for the first time.

4. Aphra Behn is noted as being...

A. The first professional black playwright.
B. The most risque of all Restoration authors.
C. The first professional female playwright.
D. A Puritan who hated the theater.

5. What is a major trait of Restoration comedy?

A. Plays were full of a variety of scene types.
B. Actors became truly famous for the first time.
C. Professional actresses take the stage for the first time.
D. All of the above

6. After 1660 the drama in England called:

A. The Puritan Drama
B. The Elizabethan Drama
C. The Restoration Drama
D. The Jacobean Drama

7. Restoration Drama was greatly affected by the spirit of the new age which was deficient in:

A. imagination and emotional approach to life
B. poetic feeling
C. both a and b
D. none of the above

8. During Restoration, the common people were still under the influence of which movement?

A. Realism
B. Puritanism
C. Humanism
D. All the above

9. The most popular form of drama during Restoration was:

A. Comedy of Manners
B. Satire
C. Tragedy
D. None of the above

10. Which portrayed the sophisticated life of the dominant class of society- its gaiety, foppery, insolence and intrigue during Restoration?

A. Tragedy
B. Comedy of Manners
C. Satire
D. None of the above

11. The general tone of Restoration's Comedy of Manners drama was most aptly described by:

A. Shakespeare
B. Ben Jonson
C. P.B Shelley
D. All the above

12. Which period was specialized in "Heroic Tragedy", ended happily and virtue was always rewarded?

A. Puritan Period
B. Restoration Period
C. Both a and b
D. None of the above

13. The most gifted among all the Restoration dramatists was:

A. William Shakespeare
B. William Congreve
C. Ben Jonson

D. None of the above

14. Who wrote all his best plays before he was thirty years of age?

A. William Congreve (1670-1720)

B. John Dryden (1631-1700)

C. Both a and b

D. None of the above

15. On account of the remarkable style, who is put at the head of the Restoration drama?

A. William Blake

B. William Shakespeare

C. William Congreve

D. None of the above

Answer for Self Assessment

1.	C	2.	D	3.	C	4.	C	5.	D
6.	B	7.	C	8.	B	9.	A	10.	B
11.	C	12.	B	13.	B	14.	A	15.	C

Review Questions

1. Do you think Tony Lumpkin is the hero in the play? Give reasons for your answer.
2. "*She Stoops to Conquer* has a serious vein of commentary of class." Explain.
3. How does the device of dramatic irony facilitate the play's major themes and comedy?
4. Do you think that the characters of the play are comic archetypes? How does Goldsmith deepen these stock characters?
5. Discuss the significance of the title *She Stoops to Conquer*.

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Unit 12: Oliver Goldsmith-She stoops to Conquer:

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand aristocratic comedy
- explore the elements of sentimental comedy
- analyze the significance of the title *She Stoops to Conquer*
- evaluate the subtitle of the play

Introduction

The Sentimental Comedy of the 18th century was, in fact, a response to the Comedy of Manners, which was popular during the Restoration Period.

The Comedy of Manners was known for its lighthearted humour, as well as its caustic and severe speech. The writers of Comedy of Manners intended to mock religious figures.

Middle-class morals was mocked, and the writers attempted to instil virtue by satirising virtuous characters. The era's Sentimental Comedy was a reaction to the Comedy of Manners.

Laughter and humour were completely absent from this comedy, and grief was inserted in their place. In comparison, The Sentimental Comedy lacks the actual essence of comedy.

Characteristics of Sentimental Comedy

• In pathetic situations, pathos and hilarious situations substituted humour.

• Characters from the middle class were introduced, all of whom were distinguished by virtue and lacked any vice.

• The writers of Sentimental Comedy were moralists who aspired to use their plays to teach morality.

• The Sentimental Comedies were truly moral comedies, with a strong sense of morality and virtue running throughout.

• The conversations were neither stern nor enthralling.

• It was a hit for nearly half a century.

• It suffocated true humour on the English stage.

• Instead of amusement, it offered moral teachings.

• Instead of laughter, it brought tears to my eyes.

- It lacked wit and humour and was characterised by feelings of pity and sympathy.
- It was solemn from beginning to end and completely divorced from life's reality.
- Its characters were not real men and women, but the creations of playwrights' imaginations.
- The sharp insights and realistic nuances that had always enlivened the previous comedy vanished entirely.

As a result, calling it a comedy is a misnomer. It's more of a discussion homily. Restoration Comedy or Comedy of Manners

A Comedy of Manners is a play that satirises society's etiquette. A manner is the way in which daily tasks are carried out, societal conditions, or a way of speaking. It denotes a courteous and well-bred demeanour.

Because the creation of the script requires sophisticated wit and talent, Comedy of Manners is referred to as high comedy. In this way, it's both intellectual and the polar opposite of slapstick, which relies heavily on physical comedy and requires minimal scripting expertise. However, there is often little physical action in a Comedy of Manners, and the play may rely heavily on conversation.

A Comedy of Manners usually combines satire and comedy in equal measure, resulting in a funny parody of a particular social group. The majority of plays in this genre were meticulously crafted to satirise the exact individuals who were viewing them. This was mainly reserved for the middle to upper strata of society, as they were the only ones rich enough to watch a comedy of manners in the first place. The playwrights were well aware of this and aimed to create characters who mocked the audience's daily habits. The comedy focused on their materialistic mentality, insatiable desire to gossip, and hypocritical lives.

The comedy of manners has spanned various epochs in theatre history. If the works of later playwrights effectively resuscitate it, a dramatic genre can begin in a specific era but transcend numerous periods. During the Restoration, the most valuable material of this genre was created. Between 1642 and 1660, when Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans ruled England and there was no aristocracy, English theatres were formally closed. When King Charles II reclaimed the English throne in 1660, one of his first acts was to grant several prominent theatrical figures licenses to write plays and resurrect the English theatre.

The Restoration period officially ended with Charles II's death in 1685, but theatrical historians usually extend it to around 1700. This revival was accompanied by a sort of performance called as Comedy of Manners. William Wycherley's play The Country Wife (1675) and William Congreve's play The Way of the World (1676) were major contributors to the genre in England at the time (1700). Moliere was also composing Comedy of Manners plays during this time in France. Moliere satirised features of 17th century French society in three of his most famous works: The School for Wives (1662), Tartuffe (1664), and The Misanthrope (1666).

The Comedy of Manners was resurrected a century later by Irish dramatist Richard Sheridan and Englishman Oliver Goldsmith. Sheridan's The School for Scandal (1777) and Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer are two of the best examples of their work (1773).

Again, a little over a century later, famed Irish playwright Oscar Wilde was perfecting Comedy of Manners plays in England, with wonderful masterpieces like Lady Windermere's Fan (1892) and The Importance of Being Earnest (1895). (1895).

It is vital to comprehend the concept of sentimental comedy before we can understand the qualities of anti-sentimental comedy. In general, the skill of a sentimental comedy is to approach overly melodramatic incidents in a way that arouses or provokes laughter and pleasure in the audience. Sometimes, in this type of drama, there is too much modesty mixed in with endless theatrical tears, resulting in a farce with no major ending. However, in contrast to all of these melodramatic components, there is a style of comedy that presents a very realistic image of everyday life and affairs with the addition of a fantastic comic sense and a galaxy of realistic people.

She Stoops To Conquer is widely regarded as a protest comedy, as it was written in response to the sentimental comedy that dominated the English stage at the time of Oliver Goldsmith. Goldsmith, like R.B. Sheridan, waged war on this unnecessary species of comedy, emotional comedy, and strove to resurrect comedy of manners and genuine comedy as practised by great comedians like William Congreve and George Farquhar, minus the obscenity and licentiousness.

A emotional comedy is neither a comedy nor a tragedy, but rather an artificial blend of the two. She Stoops to Conquer is an anti-sentimental comedy that is a reaction to current sentimentality and a representation of the "return to nature." The characters in Goldsmith's masterpiece are all true to life.

Tony, Marlow, Hastings, and the Hardcastle's are all true to nature, and they are men and women of genuine flesh and blood, not histrionic figures or personified abstractions.

The play is not one of those tear-jerking, sentimental comedies, but rather a brilliant, laugh-out-loud comedy. It is intended for entertainment purposes only, not for moral cleansing or education. The Rivals exhibit, like Sheridan's, is a series of hilarious incidents. There are also assaults against emotional comedy in the play itself, with the author mocking foolish moralising in a sentimental comedy's lack of authenticity and artificial nature in the prologue. Thus, Goldsmith has created a drama and anti-romantic comedy with the help of a fantastically funny plot, which deals with some charming incidents and includes real-life characters.

12.1 Oliver Goldsmith

One of the most popular 18th-century English writers, Oliver Goldsmith, led a fascinating life of paradoxes, balancing his undeniable brilliance with self-destructive inclinations.

Many aspects regarding Goldsmith's biography are unknown, partly because he appears to have frequently misled to his official biographer about minor details like his birth year and major details like his pedigree. Despite this, this fact reveals as much about Goldsmith's life and character as any other.

Goldsmith was born into an impoverished Irish household somewhere between 1728 and 1731. His father was a county vicar, and he was one of seven children. When Goldsmith's father died when he was still a child, he was forced to rely on a wealthy uncle for assistance. He was constantly bullied as a child due to facial deformity caused by smallpox. Goldsmith never tried to hide his Irish heritage, even keeping his brogue despite the fact that it would have been deemed low-class once he moved to London and was surrounded by more respectable society. His connection with his mother was always tumultuous, and he eventually drifted apart from her.

He was known for his brilliance and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1750. He was publicly chastised for his role in a student riot while he was there. Goldsmith was unable to stay on a vocation for a long time, flitting between the church, law, and education, despite a significant aptitude for literary work. He began studying medicine in Edinburgh in 1752. Despite the fact that there is no proof that he ever finished his studies, he later went on to practise medicine and identified to himself as Dr. Goldsmith throughout his career.

Goldsmith spent many years travelling before settling in London in 1756. It was at this point that he decided to pursue a career in literature, and his career took off. Goldsmith made a good livelihood authoring history books and literary journals, but he also led a wild life of gambling and extravagant spending that put him in debt. Contributions to Tobias Smollett's Critical Review and An Inquiry to the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe are among his literary works from this time period (1759). The Busy Body, The British Magazine, and The Lady's Magazine have all published his work. His "Chinese letters," which were fabricated letters in the style of Voltaire and assumed to be written by a Chinese mandarin visiting England, were published in the Public Ledger a year later.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, one of England's most prominent men of letters, became a huge fan of Goldsmith's work during this time period. He encouraged Goldsmith to join his private Turk's Head Club, and with Johnson's help, Goldsmith began to publish his first masterworks, including The Vicar of Wakefield, a novel. This novel, as well as his superb comedy drama She Stoops to Conquer, was a huge success and is still one of his most well-known works. Vicar was especially valuable because his advance payments kept him out of debtor's prison. Goldsmith also published his letters and The Life of Richard Nash at this time.

Throughout the 1760s, he continued to write, overseeing multiple versions of The Vicar of Wakefield. Goldsmith died abruptly on April 4, 1774, after refusing to receive medical treatment for a kidney condition. It was an early death, but given his lifestyle, it was unsurprising. In 1776, his work The Haunch of Venison was published after his death.

Goldsmith was noted for both his genius and his insecurities throughout his life. He could come across as exceedingly kind and sociable, or as pompous and pretentious, because he is always eager to act foolishly. Some biographers detect a persistent contradiction in him between the high-class position he attained via brilliance and the low-class background he struggled to completely abandon. In short, Oliver Goldsmith is one of the most contradictory of his era's classic writers, which greatly aids comprehension of the complexities inherent in his writing.

12.2 Significance of the Title and Subtitle

The Mistake of the Night was the original title for She Stoops to Conquer. She Stoops to Conquer, in my opinion, is a significantly better title because it is more catchy and reflects the play's subject and concept more effectively.

"She stoops to conquer" is a line from a Dryden poem. We're intrigued by the combination of two words with opposing connotations, "stoop" and "conquer." In order to "conquer" or "win," people normally do not "stoop," which is a symbol of abjection and surrender. We're immediately perplexed as to what's going on.

In a way that the original title does not, the title accurately reflects the substance of the major plot: Marlow, Kate Hardcastle's love interest, is terrified of ladies from his own social level, but brave and flirtatious with lower-class women. In order to "win" Marlow's heart, Kate resolves to "stoop," or appear to be a lower-class maid. This ruse is successful.

The seeming oxymoron in the phrase "she stoops to conquer" also depicts the play's crazy, madcap, upside-down universe, in which Marlow and his friend George Hastings believe the Hardcastle estate is an inn, Kate, a woman, takes control of the wooing, and nothing is as it seems.

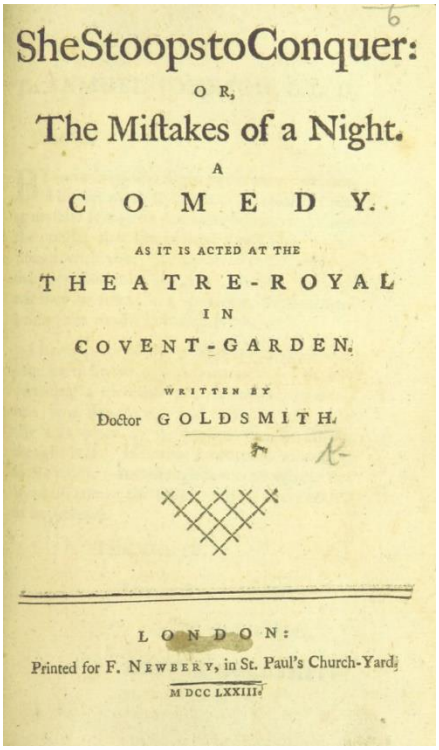
She Stoops to Conquer, in my opinion, is a much more artistic and brilliant title for this drama. The Mistake of the Night is a good film, but which one is it? Constance is a barmaid, according to Marlow? Mrs. Hardcastle's deception regarding the jewels that went missing? The reality that they've gone missing for real?

Stoops is a beautiful word that implies to lower something or someone. To test Marlow's love for her, Kate assumes the role of a working-class woman. Marlow is tense among upper-class women, and he isn't himself. Working women, on the other hand, were more likely to be exposed to men's sexual solicitations and to recognise their actual character. Kate goes to great lengths to track down the real Marlow.

Kate succumbs to deception as well. She decides to play a role in order to gain insight into Marlow's true personality. It's a risky decision, because even if the relationship works out, she'll have begun it with a lie. It may have also backfired on her. Marlowe may have been enraged that she had pulled a fast one on him and never spoken to her again.

But, in the end, *She Stoops to Conquer* is the correct title, because Kate discovers that the real Marlow is someone she can love by lowering her rank.

Summary


SheStoopstoConquer:
OR,
The Miſtakes of a Night.
A
COMEDY.
AS IT IS ACTED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL
IN
COVENT-GARDEN.
WRITTEN BY
Doctor GOLDSMITH.
LONDON:
Printed for F. NEWBERY, in St. Paul's Church-Yard;
MDCC LXXIII.

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* is a five-act comic drama featuring a prologue and an epilogue that premiered in London in 1773. Mr. Woodward, a comic performer known to Goldsmith's contemporaries, begins the prologue by crying because humour is purportedly extinct. He believes that Goldsmith's play will make him laugh, rekindling his interest in comic books. It's worth noting that this prologue was written in the 1770s by David Garrick, an actor and producer.

Mr. Hardcastle is the protagonist of Act One. He has chosen a husband for his daughter, Kate, whom he has never met. Mr. Hardcastle's old friend Sir Charles Marlow is the son of Kate's future husband, a reserved guy with good looks. Tony Lumpkin, Hardcastle's stepson, is relaxing at the Three Pigeons Tavern in the second scene. Marlow and Hastings, two gentlemen, arrive and report that they are lost. They're on the lookout for Hardcastle's home. Tony decides to pull a practical joke on them and offers them directions to his stepfather's residence, which he refers to as an inn. He claims it's run by a strange individual who considers himself a gentleman.

In Act Two, Hardcastle collects his farmhand servants and informs them that their future son-in-law, Marlow, will be paying them a visit. He instructs the servants that they must act like gentleman's servants, which perplexes them. Meanwhile, Marlow confesses to Hastings that proper females make him feel shy on the way to Hardcastle's house, which he believes is an inn. Marlow and Hastings are disrespectful to Hardcastle when they arrive at his home, supposing him to be the innkeeper. Mrs. Hardcastle's niece, Miss Constance Neville, is introduced to Hastings. She informs him that they are not staying at an inn, but at Hardcastle's home. He responds by attempting to get her to elope with him. She does not, however, want to give up her inheritance. They concoct a strategy to obtain her diamonds in order to elope. Hastings decides not to inform Marlow that he is not staying at an inn because this would embarrass Marlow and jeopardise Hastings and Constance's plans.

Hastings introduces Marlow to Constance and Kate Hardcastle, both of whom he is extremely shy about. Despite his attractive features, Kate finds his reserved demeanour off-putting, and she worries if she can be happy as his wife. When Mrs. Hardcastle arrives, Hastings teases her about her lack of ties to London and its fashionable society. Hastings then discovers, while speaking with Tony, that Tony's mother is pressuring him to marry Constance in order to retain Constance's wealth in the family. Tony despises the concept, so he agrees to assist Hastings in not just recovering Constance's money but also in eloping with her.

Act Three begins with Hardcastle, who is perplexed as to why his friend, Sir Marlow, would advocate his son for Kate, given his dislike for young Marlow. Marlow treats Hardcastle cruelly, as an innkeeper would, and is timid and shy near Kate because he knows she is a lady, thus Kate and her father discuss him as if he is two individuals. Tony, on the other hand, sends Constance's jewellery to Hastings. Constance asks Mrs. Hardcastle if she can wear her jewels, unaware of their plan, and intends to take them with her when she elopes. Tony instructs his mother to inform Constance about the missing gems, which she does.

By telling Marlow and Hastings that the house is an inn, Kate learns of Tony's joke on them. She refuses to admit to the deception and instead insists on continuing it. Kate is mistaken for a barmaid, and Marlow flirts with her. When Hardcastle notices them flirting, Marlow flees, but Kate, who has grown to admire him, is confident that she can show his respectability.

In Act Four, Constance informs Hastings that Sir Marlow will be visiting. Meanwhile, Hastings has entrusted Constance's diamonds to Marlow for safekeeping, but with no instructions, so Marlow hands them off to one of the maids, mistaking her for the inn's landlady. Mrs. Hardcastle receives the jewellery from the servant. When Hastings inquires about the jewels, Marlow is in the middle of

telling him about the barmaid he likes—who is actually Kate. Marlow responds that he gave them back to the landlady. Hastings thinks that without the jewels, he and Constance will have to elope.

After Hardcastle becomes enraged that Marlow has pushed the servants to become drunk, Marlow understands the house is not an inn. Kate admits this, but still pretending to be a barmaid. Marlow informs her that if society and his father would allow it, he would marry her, but that this is improbable. Meanwhile, Mrs. Hardcastle, who has reclaimed Constance's diamonds, is pressuring Tony to marry her. Tony, on the other hand, has already prepared the horses for Constance's elopement with Hastings. When Mrs. Hardcastle learns of the elopement, she takes Constance to her Aunt Pedigree's house. Hastings enrages Marlow for not informing him that the house was not an inn. Hastings is furious at Marlow for returning Mrs. Hardcastle's diamonds. With Constance gone, there appears to be little chance, but Tony devises a new strategy.

Sir Marlow and Hardcastle discuss Marlow and Kate's marriage in Act Five. Meanwhile, Tony fails to transport Mrs. Hardcastle and Constance to Aunt Pedigree's as required. Instead, he returns them to their original location. Constance chooses against eloping and instead hopes that the Hardcastles will grant her permission and her inheritance so that she can marry Hastings honourably. Kate's true identity is revealed to Marlow. Both couples married at the end of the play.

In the epilogue, Goldsmith recaps the play and how Kate descended in her status to overcome the obstacles imposed by society on the characters.

Keywords

Veracity: Truth

Pshaw (shaw): Expression of contempt or irritation.

Genteel: Well bred.

Piety: The state of being pious.

Foppery: The behavior or dress of a male who is excessively concerned with appearance (fop).

Unaccountable: Inexplicable.

Slough (slew): Moist area

Trumpery: Junk, useless articles

Impudent: Lacking modesty, not showing due respect

Stoop to conquer: to adopt a role, position, attitude, behavior, undertaking, etc., that is seen as being beneath one's abilities or social position in order to achieve one's end.

Self Assessment

1. Who recites the play's prologue in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Tony lumpkin
B. Mr. Woodward
C. Marlow
D. Kate hardcastle

2. What does Mr. Hardcastle disdain most of all in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Country manners
B. Arranged marriages
C. Money
D. Town manners

3. Why does Mrs. Hardcastle defend Tony in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. She's his mother
B. She does not defend him
C. He blackmails her
D. She hates hardcastle

4. Why does Mr. Hardcastle worry about Kate in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. He worries she is sick.
B. He worries the town manners have infected her
C. He worries she will marry poorly.
D. He worries she dresses immodestly.

5. How does Kate dress in the morning in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Plainly
B. In gowns
C. In rags
D. Fashionably

6. How does Kate dress in the evenings in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. In rags
B. In gowns
C. Plainly
D. Fashionably

7. Who does Hardcastle hope Kate will marry at the beginning of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Tony lumpkin
B. Hastings
C. Sir charles
D. Marlow

8. Who does Mrs. Hardcastle hope Tony will marry in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Kate hardcastle
B. The landlady at the inn
C. She does not want him married
D. Constance neville

9. Which character is the best example of moderation in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Tony lumpkin
B. Kate
C. Mrs. Hardcastle
D. Mr. Hardcastle

10. What is Mrs. Hardcastle's great vice in *She Stoops to Conquer*?
A. Vanity
B. Thievery
C. Lust
D. Depression

11. Why is Constance excited to hear Marlow is visiting?
A. He brings her her fortune
B. She is not excited
C. She loves Marlow
D. Hastings is with him

12. What is Constance's inheritance?
A. A dowry
B. She is destitute

C. A set of gowns
D. Jewels

13. Where does Tony drink with friends?
A. In his bedroom
B. The marked laugh
C. The three pigeons
D. In the garden

14. Who does Tony not attack in his pub song?
A. Clergy
B. Teachers
C. Sanctimonious people
D. Drunkards

15. Who is Tony's ally in fooling Marlow and Hastings?
A. Hardcastle
B. Diggory
C. Kate
D. The landlord

Answer for Self Assessment

1.	B	2.	D	3.	A	4.	B	5.	D
6.	C	7.	D	8..	D	9.	B	10.	A
11.	D	12.	D	13.	C	14.	D	15.	D

Review Questions

1. Critically justify the title She Stoops to Conquer.
2. Can "She Stoops to Conquer" by regarded as a comedy of manners?
3. How will you justify the title "She Stoops to Conquer" and its sub title "The Mistakes of a Night"?
4. Why is Tony Lumpkin an important character in She Stoops to Conquer?
5. What is the moral lesson of *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith?
6. Analyze the theme of reality vs appearance in She Stoops to Conquer.
7. What is the most suitable title: "She Stoops to Conquer" or "The Mistake of the Night"?
8. Who stoops to conquer, and what is conquered?
9. Who is the central character of "She Stoops to Conquer" and why?
10. Why was the play She Stoops to Conquer initially called Mistakes of a Night?
11. In the play She Stoops to Conquer how does Kate manage stooping to conquer Marlowe?
12. In She Stoops to Conquer, what is the main conflict and the climax?

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Unit 13: Oscar Wilde- The Importance of Being Earnest

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand nineteenth century drama
- explore the elements of Covent garden theatre
- evaluate the characteristics of Drury lane theatre
- analyze the play *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Introduction

Gilbert's Engaged was a major influence on The Importance of Being Earnest (pr. 1877). Gilbert flipped the melodrama norms inside out and upside down in this play. His goal was to reveal the mercantile morality that underpinned so much Victorian sentimentality. Gilbert would utilise this strategy in the Savoy operas as well. Gilbert, for example, utilises a chorus of orphans—pirates—whose monarch is forced to do much "dirty work" in the name of business in The Pirates of Penzance: Or, The Slave of Duty (pr. 1879). The notion of caste is flipped on its head in H.M.S. Pinafore, when seaman Ralph Rackstraw trades positions with Captain Corcoran, while Sir Joseph Porter, who is engaged to the captain's daughter Josephine, resigns her hand, commenting that love does indeed level ranks, but not to that extent. Almost all levels are levelled in The Mikado: Or, The Town of Titipu (pr. 1885) in the form of the aristocratic, bureaucratic Pooh-Bah, who is Chancellor of the Exchequer, Archbishop of Titipu, and Lord-High-Everything-Else, among other things.

Savoy operas were one of the most popular forms of entertainment at the time. The burletta was a hit as well. It, too, was a type of comedic opera, but it consisted of a three-act drama with at least five songs inserted between the conversation. This format was especially well-suited to the needs of smaller theatres, as it allowed them to adapt existing plays to meet the Licensing Act's standards. The burlesque, on the other hand, was a comedy that dealt with a serious issue in a lighthearted manner. (It did not include strippers or vulgar comedy, as the names' subsequent usage, notably in the United States, implied.) The spectacle focused on dazzle and whimsy to tell a story—often a fairy tale adaption. Planché penned a number of these tales, many of which were borrowed from French folklore. Horses were utilised in the hippodrama, either onstage or in a special ring built in front of the theatre on the pit floor. Pantomimes, particularly those for Christmas, were very popular. Finally, vaudeville and music halls combined singing, dancing, dramatic sketches, acrobatic stunts, and other

forms of entertainment. Theatrical diversions abound in the nineteenth century, and spectators had enough to choose from.

The audiences of the nineteenth century were not dissimilar to those of their predecessors or successors. They went to the theatre to get away from their daily life while also getting a kick out of seeing themselves portrayed onstage. Despite the growing trend toward realism, these audiences were acutely aware of theatrical artifice—so much so that playwrights who prioritised the text of their plays over their staging struggled to find success in the theatre. Despite the fact that these audiences were frequently sentimental and sententious, they were remarkably open to innovation, even if it meant offending their sensibilities.

Looking at nineteenth-century theatre solely as a transition between two other centuries is a far too narrow perspective. Transitional theatres can be found in theatres of all eras. The nineteenth-century theatre was exactly that: nineteenth-century theatre, a product as well as a reflection of its time—an era of both artificiality and realism, whose creative tensions generated some bad theatre but far better.

The theatres were reopened shortly after King Charles II was restored to the British throne in 1660, after they had been closed since the commencement of the English Civil War in 1642. Two of Charles II's courtiers, Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant, were granted patents (licenses that could be sold or passed down to heirs like other types of property). Their theatres, as well as those of their predecessors, had a virtual monopoly that lasted until 1843, when the Theatre Regulation Act was passed.

13.1 Drury Lane and Covent Garden

This monopoly was enhanced in the eighteenth century by the Licensing Act of 1737, which was enacted to control unauthorised playhouses erected during a period when the government's enforcement of theatrical patents was inadequate. The Licensing Act also mandated that all dramatic texts be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for censorship, because these illegal playhouses had also been hotbeds of antigovernment satire. As a result of this legislation, there were two types of theatres by the beginning of the nineteenth century: the two patent houses, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and the more numerous lesser (nonpatent) theatres, such as the Olympic and the Adelphi. The patent houses were the only ones allowed to perform "legitimate" theatre (five-act tragedies and comedies), while "illegitimate" drama (melodramas, extravaganzas, burlettas, hippodramas, pantomimes, and spectacles) was reserved for the "minors." This division of theatrical labour lasted until the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843, when it was repealed. The Lord Chamberlain's censorship powers, on the other hand, were retained until 1968.

The pit, box, and gallery had been created in the somewhat small eighteenth-century theatre auditorium. The pit, which was located at ground level, comprised of rows of backless benches where the rowdier members of the crowd congregated. The boxes were located one level up, around the edges of the theatre, and were chosen by the fashionable. One or more galleries were located on the upper level: the first gallery drew middle-class patrons, while the second was frequented by servants and apprentices.

The population of London had risen significantly by the beginning of the nineteenth century, increasing the number of potential theatregoers, particularly among the lower classes. Covent Garden's seating capacity was expanded to three thousand in 1792 and 1793, while Drury Lane's was increased to thirty-six hundred in 1794. The King's Theatre modified several pit benches into backless seats in 1828. In 1843, the Haymarket followed suit, and in 1863, these rudimentary "stalls" were replaced with upholstered seats. Only a few rows of pit seats were removed at initially, but by the 1880s, the pit had completely disappeared in favour of the stalls. With the addition of the stalls came the practice of reserving seats.

The boxes were kept except for those at the pit level, which were removed to allow the pit and then the stalls to expand. A total of four or five galleries were added, up from one or two previously. The pillars dividing various sections of the galleries were subsequently eliminated, and the galleries were transformed into modern balconies, thanks to new ways of theatrical architecture.

After 1860, there was a trend toward smaller theatres. The Criterion Theatre, for example, which opened in 1874, had a seating capacity of 660 people, and only a few theatres with a seating capacity of more than 1500 people survived. Because fewer galleries, or balconies, were available in smaller theatres, the boxes were transformed to balconies and nicknamed the Dress Circle. The Upper Circle became the name of the first gallery, while the Gallery became the name of the second. The traditional horseshoe-shaped auditorium was progressively replaced by a fan-shaped one, which provided better sightlines for the newly developed stage techniques.

The nineteenth-century theatre had inherited a shallow stage framed by a huge proscenium arch from its predecessor in the eighteenth century. A huge apron protruded from this arch, on which the most of the acting took place, with the shallow backstage allocated for scenery, which was altered by pushing and dragging painted flats and wings along wooden grooves. The proscenium doors, which were used for entries and exits on either side of the proscenium arch, were located on either side of the proscenium arch. (Normally, performers did not access or exit the stage through the wings or any other section of the scenery.

Throughout most of the eighteenth century, scenery was mostly utilised to suggest a general atmosphere, though it might be stunning at times. The Romantics influenced nineteenth-century drama, which began to use scenery to suggest specific locations—often in minute detail—under the influence of the Romantics. When Drury Lane was expanded in 1794, for example, the stage's dimensions were eighty-five feet wide by ninety-two feet deep, allowing for the employment of a very elaborate Gothic-cathedral set. Sir Henry Irving employed an archaeologist, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, to design scenery for his productions of William Shakespeare's Cymbeline (pr. c. 1609-1610) in 1896 and Coriolanus (pr. c. 1607-1608) in 1901, demonstrating the theater's concern for architectural correctness.

The larger auditoriums and stages also permitted theatre management to meet an increasing desire for spectacle from the audience. Large auditoriums, in fact, promoted this taste by making nuanced, personal events and movements difficult to see and hear. For example, Sadler's Wells Theatre had a water tank that allowed them to recreate sea fights. In front of the stage at Astley's Amphitheatre, there was a circus ring where equestrian dramas were performed.

The dazzling effects were further aided by a variety of staging gadgets. The "vampire trap," which allowed an actor to appear to walk through a wall, and the more sophisticated "ghost glide," which allowed an actor to appear to rise magically from the soil, were two of the most well-known.

There were smaller-scale dramas of everyday life alongside the grand-scale Romantic dramas with their frequently stunning sets. Madame Vestries popularised the box set during her tenure as manager of the Olympic Theatre, and it was first used there in 1832. This set entirely encloses the acting area, giving the impression that the action is taking place inside one or more rooms that have had their fourth walls removed. As a result, all of the acting took place behind the proscenium arch rather than on the stage apron. Indeed, as players began to walk among the scenery rather than just using it as a backdrop while declaiming their lines from the apron, the apron shrank significantly during the nineteenth century.

Managers began to prioritise productions that blended acting, staging, and costuming as the illusion of reality became more important. James Robinson Planché convinced Charles Kemble, manager of Covent Garden, to produce Shakespeare's King John (pr. c. 1596-1597) with historically correct costuming in 1823, launching a theatrical antiquarianism craze. Planché himself did a lot of research into ancient attire styles. His History of British Costume, published in 1834, was the canonical text on theatrical costuming for the majority of the nineteenth century. Madame Vestris was likewise pushed by Planché to pay similar attention to the costuming of the "small" drama. As a result, the exaggerated clothing that had defined comedy and burlesque at the Olympic Theatre gave way to outfits more akin to those worn in ordinary life.

The introduction of new stage-lighting techniques strengthened the appearance of reality even more. Candles and oil lights were employed in the theatres of the eighteenth century. It was practically impossible to change the lighting levels onstage or in the auditorium. Thomas Drummond invented Limelight in 1816, which employed a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen to heat a column of lime until it shone. This light, which was covered with a lens, operated as a spotlight and was also employed for special effects. In the 1840s, gaslights became popular, allowing for greater control of illumination

intensity than ever before. The Savoy Theatre was the first in London to be completely illuminated by a new power source, electricity, in 1881, and by 1900, practically all of the city's theatres had followed suit. The lighting levels in the auditorium could be regulated using both gas and electricity, allowing the lights to be muted during performances if the manager chose.

During the nineteenth century, the curtain's function altered as well. The curtain was traditionally raised at the start of a play and not down until the finish. Scene changes were carried out in front of the audience. As a result, the curtain was rarely employed to conceal scene changes or signal the conclusion of an act. As the need for the illusion of realism grew stronger, theatre management began to assume that such scene changes detracted from the desired impact, so they began to utilise the curtain to conceal the process and maintain the illusion.

The utilisation of three-dimensional scenery rather than two-dimensional scenery added to the illusion. As improved techniques of setting up and removing scenery were developed, the old grooves finally vanished. As a result, actors could make the most seamless use of scenery imaginable.

Although actors in the nineteenth century used a wide range of techniques, three distinct styles may be identified. The traditional style, promoted by John Philip Kemble and Sarah Kemble Siddons, is the first. This acting technique required an actor to capture a character's essence and portray it with grandeur, grace, declamation, and majestic stances. The catching of this essence, rather than the expression of it, was where naturalness lived. The actor's art was not to be kept hidden, but rather to be displayed and enjoyed.

The Romantic style, on the other hand, sought naturalness by accentuating a character's feelings, in stark contrast to the classic style's reasonable interpretation. Actors produced their effects mostly by exaggerating, and in some cases, rapidly changing, the many emotions they wanted to depict. Edmund Kean contributed to the development of this style, despite the fact that his detractors thought his acting and attitude were unpredictable.

Charles Fechter advocated the realistic aesthetic. Fechter, an actor, was the manager of the Princess's Theatre and the Lyceum Theatre in London, respectively. Because of his focus on the box set and his desire to create the illusion of reality, he demanded that his performers move and speak more naturally. Fechter's love for this technique did not stop with modern play; it also included classics.

Actor-managers like Fechter were commonplace. For example, Kemble took over as manager of Drury Lane from Richard Brinsley Sheridan in 1788 before relocating to Covent Garden in 1803. William Charles Macready was one of the most well-known managers. Macready was dissatisfied with current theatrical practises and saw managing as a way to effect reforms. An actor who combined the best of the classic and Romantic styles (with a touch of realism thrown in), Macready was dissatisfied with current theatrical practises and saw managing as a way to effect reforms. From 1837 to 1839, he was the manager of Covent Garden, and from 1841 to 1843, he was the manager of Drury Lane. Macready highlighted the importance of rehearsals, which had traditionally been treated as an afterthought, with the star often skipping them to save energy for the big performance. Furthermore, he insisted on telling his actors where they should stand rather than letting them to choose the positions that were most beneficial to them personally. Overall, Macready aimed for a consistent look, which extended to his sets and costumes, which were meticulously constructed to be historically accurate.

Samuel Phelps was a member of Macready's acting company, and as the ultimate manager of the run-down Sadler's Wells Theatre, he attracted big audiences by programming almost entirely poetic theatre. Phelps, like Macready, acted in his own shows and took considerable measures to ensure historical accuracy. He left Sadler's Wells to tour in 1862, but his productions of Shakespeare's plays resurrected Drury Lane's sinking fortunes later that decade.

The work of Madame Vestris at the Olympic Games has already been discussed, particularly her use of the box set and insistence on more realistic costume for the "small" drama. She was well-known for her roles in light comedies. Charles Mathews, her second husband, was also noted for playing similar parts. (Armand Vestris, her first husband, was a dancer.) From 1839 to 1842, Vestris and Mathews united their managerial skills at Covent Garden, and subsequently at the Lyceum, from 1847 until 1856.

Charles Kean, the son of the more famous Edmund Kean, was one of the most important actor-managers. Charles, never the actor his father was, gave up playing in 1850 to become the manager of the Princess's Theatre. Ellen Tree, his wife and leading lady, aided him. He also served as Master of the Revels, a position bestowed upon him by Queen Victoria. By selecting his curtain time and arranging his theatrical bill to appeal to upper-class tastes, Kean was able to attract a fashionable audience. He primarily performed Shakespeare and melodramas, relying on long runs to defray the rising costs of his productions in response to Kean's demands for historical accuracy.

From 1853 through 1876, John Baldwin Buck stone was a comedian who later became the Haymarket's manager. He also wrote several plays, notably the well-received melodrama Luke the Labourer; Or, The Lost Son (pr. 1826). Mr. Buckstone's Ascent of Mount Parnassus (pr. 1853) and Mr. Buckstone's Voyage Round the Globe in Leicester Square were two works by Planché that satirised Buck stone and his entertainments (pr. 1854). Buckstone's melodramas, on the other hand, found a home at the Adelphi, where they were directed by Benjamin Webster, a former member of Madame Vestris' company. He also served as Buckstone's predecessor at the Haymarket Theatre, which he ran from 1837 to 1853, when Buck stone took over.

In 1865, Marie Wilton Bancroft, a "minor" theatre actress, and her husband, Squire Bancroft, a provincial actor, bought a run-down theatre and reopened it as the Prince of Wales's Theatre. The Bancrofts were particularly adept at producing Thomas William Robertson's current dramas, which necessitated realistic surroundings but not necessarily completely realistic acting. Their reduction of the theatre bill to a single play, their adoption of regular matinee performances, their refinement of the box set, and their extension of the proscenium arch across the stage's floor, which confined all acting behind the imaginary "fourth wall," enhancing the pictorial effect, were among the Bancrofts' most important contributions to the theatre.

Sir Henry Irving rose to prominence as a melodramatic actor. Ellen Terry, another well-known actress who excelled in Shakespearean parts, was his leading woman. From 1878 to 1898, Irving was the manager of the Lyceum Theatre. He advocated for graphic realism. Irving was the one who, in 1881, removed the grooves that had been used to change scenery, allowing for more three-dimensional sets to be employed. He also expanded historical clothing authenticity to include minor characters, who had traditionally been overlooked in favour of the main characters. Irving experimented with colour as well as lighting intensity when it came to the stage lighting. Irving, on the other hand, was knighted in 1895 for his acting. He was the first English actor to receive such a distinction. Squire Bancroft followed in his footsteps two years later.

From 1887 to 1897, Herbert Beerbohm Tree ran the Haymarket Theatre before constructing Her Majesty's Theatre. Despite the fact that he frequently appeared in his own performances, he is most known for founding an annual Shakespeare festival and an acting school, which later became the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Another notable manager was non-actor Richard D'Oyly Carte, who teamed up with playwright W. S. Gilbert and musician Sir Arthur Sullivan. The Savoy Theatre was built in 1881 by D'Oyly Carte specifically for the presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan's comedic operas. Because the turbulent alliance between Gilbert and Sullivan frequently jeopardised the viability of his venture, his administrative talents were needed not just to get the operas staged, but also to get them written. Sullivan sulked and grumbled that his music had been reduced to a simple accompaniment for Gilbert's lyrics, while Gilbert insisted on monitoring every detail of rehearsals. There would be considerably fewer Savoy operas to enchant today's audiences if it weren't for D'Oyly Carte's diplomatic persuasion.

Some of the greatest actors of the nineteenth century were prima donnas, much as Gilbert and Sullivan were. The star system originated in nineteenth-century theatre. Actors were employed by a manager for a complete season in the eighteenth century, and they were hired for a specific "line of business," which signified a specific type of part, such as tragic hero, romantic hero, or low comedian. Playwrights used to tailor their works to the talents of a certain company that produced plays on a short-term, repertory basis. Due to the high costs of mounting new productions (due to more elaborate sets and costumes) and the huge popularity of leading actors and actresses (which could be used to fill large theatres and help managers recoup their production costs), leading actors and

actresses were hired only for the run of a specific play, not for the entire season, in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, in favour of the extended run, the repertory system was largely abandoned. Furthermore, ensemble acting was often subordinated to the star's showcase, with the rest of the cast serving as nothing more than feeding lines or adding atmosphere. Stars also commanded exorbitant salaries, which drove some theatre owners to bankruptcy. Because of the emphasis on the hero in Romantic theatre, the star system flourished. Robertson's more realistic drama supported a return to ensemble playing, though not necessarily to the repertory system itself.

Because it relied on attracting the same individuals over and over again, the repertory system allowed the eighteenth-century theatre to survive with fewer audience members. As London's population rose, so did the prospective audience, allowing a theatre to survive for several years by attracting new people each night. As the aristocratic influence of the eighteenth century began to fade, the impact of the nineteenth century working classes began to express itself, both in the pit, where rowdyism was common, and on the stage, where escapism through spectacle and familiarity through realism were both indulged. The melodrama, with its straightforward, clear-cut morals, emotional appeal, and capacity to deliver both escapism and realism, depending on whether it was a gothic thriller or a domestic drama, was the staple of this type of audience and the salvation of theatre management. However, the rowdy behaviour of the working-class audiences kept a sizable portion of the sober middle classes away from the theatre. The Princess's Theatre's reforms by Charles Kean helped to break this tendency. He was able to entice Queen Victoria herself to his theatre by scheduling his curtain to coincide with more fashionable dining habits and expelling some of the more disagreeable supplementary entertainments to the music halls. Her patronage and presence began to elevate the status of theatregoers. The stalls replaced the pit, which helped to shift the audience's demographics to a more middle- and upper-class mix. Works like Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy operas were created specifically to appeal to and not offend this more desirable type of theatregoer.

The playwrights of the nineteenth century faced significant hurdles while writing for the stage. They had to capture the attention of crowds who were sometimes more interested in being seen than in watching the show: Theatergoers socialised, arranged an assignment or two, reacted on the performance, typically with hisses and catcalls, and bought refreshments from vendors while the plays were being played. There were riots every now and again. Furthermore, the managerial practice of allowing individuals to enter the theatre for half price after the performance had ended caused additional disruptions. The progressive removal of the pit and the influx of a better-educated, more restrained crowd resulted in a group of theatregoers who, by the turn of the century, were watching the stage activity behind the fourth wall in relative silence.

Playwrights did not make a lot of money from their works in the early years of the century. They could gain from the performances on the third, sixth, and ninth nights. They might also be able to sell their copyright for a few hundred pounds. They didn't get anything after that, no matter how popular their plays were. A good example is Planché's popular historical play Charles XII: Or, The Siege of Stralsund (pr. 1828). Planché sought legal redress after an unauthorised performance of this work in 1828 resulted in him receiving nothing. Planché's friend Edward Bulwer-Lytton was essential in obtaining Parliament to establish the Dramatic Authors Act in 1833, which gave the author copyright for his lifetime plus twenty-five years and imposed sanctions for unlicensed performances.

Dion Boucicault, a talented playwright, effectively utilised the royalty system to make more than sixty-five hundred pounds from his play The Colleen Bawn shortly after the turn of the century (pr. 1860). Prior to the Dramatic Authors Act, the identical play would have only brought in approximately a tenth of that sum. A similar reform, instigated once again by Planché, resulted in royalties being paid to operetta lyrics writers. They had previously only received a minimal amount, with royalties earmarked for the music's composers. Overall, the more profitable royalty system drew more great playwrights to the theatre, so that by the turn of the century, high-caliber plays were more than a rare occurrence.

Foreign plays did not receive copyright protection until 1852, when it was granted for a period of five years. Because this copyright only extended to translations, not adaptations, executives looking to avoid paying for international dramas made modest changes to the foreign works before producing them. They preferred French plays, and playwrights such as Planché and Boucicault provided numerous adaptations for the theatres. These plays matched the preferences of working-

class audiences. Planché, however, recommended the development of an English art theatre, in which commercialism would be subordinated to aesthetic considerations, shortly before his death.

Planché was hardly the only well-known writer who discussed the state of English play, typically with a deep interest in its history. In his essay "On the Characteristics of Shakespeare's Plays" (1836), Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued that Shakespeare's judgement was equal to his creativity. In his essay "On Wit and Humour" (1819), William Hazlitt expanded on the eighteenth-century debate on the subject. In "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century" (1822), Charles Lamb attempted to examine Restoration comedy using grounds other than moral ones. In "Comic Dramatists of the Restoration" (1841), Thomas Babington Macaulay argued that Restoration comedy does establish a moral standard—a very bad one. In An Essay on Comedy (1877, 1897), George Meredith claimed that comedy required a cultured society since its goal is both intellectual and emotional. Finally, Oscar Wilde emphasised the drama's artifices (its lies) in "The Decay of Lying" (1889), claiming that life copies art more often than art copies life.

Theaters throughout the first half of the nineteenth century put on a variety of shows that lasted five or six hours and included two full-length plays and a variety of additional entertainments. These performances began between six and six thirty in the evening and ended between one and two a.m. The Olympic Theatre's Madame Vestris decreased the quantity of pieces on offer so that her theatre closed at eleven o'clock. Only a short curtain raiser and main play were delivered by Charles Kean. By the turn of the century, most directors had dropped the curtain raiser and merely presented the main act.

The types of plays in the nineteenth century were certainly diverse. The Romantic verse drama, melodrama, comedy of manners, problem play, comic opera, and a variety of farces, burlettas, and extravaganzas were all popular. Shakespeare revivals were popular, particularly if they starred Edmund Kean and had historically realistic sets and costumes. Furthermore, adaptations of French plays could always be counted on to round out a theatrical schedule. Many plays, particularly those by Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, were adapted from novels. Frankenstein (1818) by Mary Shelley was also a successful novel.

Romantic playwrights emphasised the importance of passion over logic. Joanna Baillie, for example, was known for penning plays that focused on a particular passion. Between 1798 and 1812, she released three volumes of her Passion Plays. In the preface to The Cenci (pb. 1819), Percy Bysshe Shelley even claimed that "the highest moral objective... of the drama is the instruction of the human heart." Shelley's play, on the other hand, was a little too passionate. Count Cenci's unwavering commitment to evil and his incest with his daughter Beatrice kept the drama off the stage until the Shelley Society staged it in 1886.

Romantic writers were enthralled by both heroes and villains. Count Cenci in Shelley's novel chases his own desires at any costs, including his own life. He repels and intrigues the audience, who is repulsed by his depravity but envious of his freedom and power. His villainy is right out of a Jacobean drama, yet his liberty, however twisted, distinguishes him as a creature of the nineteenth century, which adored rebels of all stripes. The hero of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts (pb. 1820), Prometheus, is a rebel with a good cause. He reaps immense benefits for humanity and great anguish for himself by stealing fire from the gods. The Romantic heroes and villains finally made their way into melodrama, albeit with greatly lessened grandeur.

The Romantic dramatists were likewise fascinated by horror and the supernatural, and their gothic tragedies evoked fear by picturing wicked, supernatural powers at work in an ominous environment, such as a ruined church or a mediaeval castle. By the end of the eighteenth century, this genre had established itself, as typified by Matthew Gregory ("Monk") Lewis's The Castle Spectre (pr. 1797). Bertram: Or, The Castle of St. Aldobrand, by Charles Robert Maturin, is perhaps the most famous example of gothic play from the nineteenth century (pr. 1816). Its locations include a castle and a monastery; its special effects include fierce storms and midnight processions; and its villain exhibits a passion bordering on mania, a character tailor-made for Edmund Kean, the play's producer and actor. This category also includes Coleridge's Remorse (pr. 1813).

Shakespeare's history plays were revered by Romantic dramatists, who tried to emulate their forefather in plays with passionate monologues from heroes and villains, frequently concerning

liberty and oppression. This sort of play was introduced by James Sheridan Knowles' Virginius: Or, The Liberation of Rome (pr. 1820), but it was epitomised by Bulwer-Richelieu: Lytton's Or, The Conspiracy (pr. 1839). Bulwer-Lytton fudged historical facts in order to create a majestic, but miserable, Richelieu who is ennobled by a great love of France. In imitation of Shakespeare, Robert Browning's Strafford (pr. 1837) and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Queen Mary (pr. 1876) and Becket (pr. 1893) were written.

Such noble themes, on the other hand, coexisted with the less lofty ones of domestic drama, which typically revolved around social caste strife and romantic love that transcended status; claims of filial duty often added to the mix. The Lady of Lyons: Or, Love and Pride (pr. 1838) by Bulwer-Lytton and John Westland Marston's The Patrician's Daughter (pr. 1842) by John Westland Marston, to which Browning's A Blot in the 'Scutcheon' can be added (pr. 1843).

Some of the most well-known Romantic writers, like as William Wordsworth and John Keats, struggled to write stage-worthy works. Their failure stemmed in part from their overemphasis on text at the expense of staging, as well as their scepticism, if not outright scorn, for the theater's mass audiences' ability to appreciate the polished poetry of their plays. Their response was to write "closet drama," or dramatic poems that weren't meant to be performed. Prometheus Unbound by Shelley, Pippa Passes by Browning (pb. 1841), and Atalanta in Calydon by Algernon Charles Swinburne (pb. 1865) could all be classified as "closet dramas" because they were written to be read but not performed. Only Byron succeeded in writing for the theatre, creating the "Byronic hero"—a hybrid of hero and villain, frequently a rebel, driven by intense feelings and prone to reflection. Byron's time on the Drury Lane governing committee provided him with practical theatrical experience that his Romantic contemporaries lacked. Although only Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice (pr. 1821) was played during Byron's lifetime, the majority of his surviving plays, including Manfred, published in 1817 and finally staged at Covent Garden in 1834, were eventually performed.

13.2 Melodrama

Many features of the melodrama were shared with the Romantic verse play, most notably its emphasis on emotion, archvillains, heroes, and sensationalism. In France, the melodrama was born. Originally, the phrase simply referred to a three-act drama with music. Such a set-up was ideal for the theatrical conditions of nineteenth-century Britain. The melodramatic form was appropriate because tiny theatres were not allowed to produce five-act plays and their productions had to have a certain number of songs. In reality, popular five-act plays were frequently rewritten with the necessary music. Even Othello was subjected to such abuse. However, as the century went, the amount of music decreased to the point where it was sometimes as little as the occasional striking of a chord in compliance with the letter, if not the spirit, of the law.

Like the mediaeval morality play, the melodrama presented the fight between virtue and vice, with virtue almost always triumphing after the villain's defeat or conversion. The most common victim of the moral tug-of-war is an innocent heroine (often an orphan), but she is finally rescued from calamity, either by the hero or by an unexpected turn of events. A melodrama's setting can be gothic, domestic, or more specialized—nautical, for example: Douglas William Jerrold's Black-eyed Susan (pr. 1829) is peppered heavily with sea terminology. Stock characters from the nautical melodrama, such as the "jolly jack tar" and the chorus of sailors, finally made a comeback in Gilbert and Sullivan's nautical operetta H.M.S. Pinafore: Or, The Lass That Loved a Sailor (pr. 1878).

Even though Thomas Holcroft's A Tale of Mystery (pr. 1802) was only an adaptation of Guilbert de Pixérécourt's Clina: Ou, L'Enfant du mystère, it is often regarded as the first British melodrama (pr. 1800; The Tale of Mystery, 1802). The use of music to enhance mood is evident in Holcroft's stage directions. They also show his use of highly stylized acting, particularly stunning gestures and emotions.

Luke the Labourer was a domestic melodrama by Buck stone, famous for its use of two heroes and two villains, as well as its social protest against debtors' jails. The Rent Day (pr. 1832) by Jerrold was a protest against the damaging system of agricultural rentals that had to be paid regardless of how devastating the payment was to the farmer. After Dark: A Tale of London Life (pr. 1868) by Boucicault

was set in the London underworld and featured a spectacular rescue in the depths of London's underground subway system. East Lynne (pr. 1874), adapted by T. A. Palmer from Mrs. Henry Wood's 1861 novel of the same name, was more emotional. Her hardships end only after a sorrowful deathbed scene in which the heroine abandons her husband and children to live with her evil seducer. The Bells (pr. 1871) by Leopold David Lewis was one of the most popular melodramas of the time. Sir Henry Irving's favourite section was that of Matthias, a killer who has kept his crime hidden for years. Henry Arthur Jones' The Silver King is a less showy production, yet it is widely regarded as the best of the melodramas (pr. 1882). Its protagonist believes he has accidentally killed a guy and runs to the West, where he makes a fortune in silver mining. He returns barely in time to save his impoverished wife and ailing child from being evicted. The hero, in detective-like fashion, eventually clears his name and brings the genuine culprit to justice.

13.3 Problem Plays

The social problem play arose from the refinement of the melodrama. A societal problem was presented, as the name implies, with varied degrees of realism. The playwright may offer a solution or leave the question unanswered. Thomas William Robertson authored a series of similar plays, each with a one-word title and dealing with a specific social issue, which were staged by the Bancrofts: Society (pr. 1865), Play (pr. 1868), Home (pr. 1869), School (pr. 1869), War (pr. 1871), and Caste (pr. 1871). (pr. 1867). The latter is likely his most well-known work, and it explores the complexities of marrying above or below one's rank. Limited movement between classes is finally tolerated, while class distinctions are maintained. George D'Alroy, a member of the aristocracy, marries Esther Eccles, a former dancer with a theatrical company. The entire Eccles family is shown with compassionate good humour, including the inebriated father. The play's detailed stage directions, which required genuine chairs, tables, teacups and saucers, as well as bread and butter, gave origin to the term "cup-and-saucer theatre." The phrases and movements would not make sense if Robertson had not carefully prepared his dialogue for ensemble performance. The play's sentimentalism, Mr. Eccles' attempted villainy, and the usage of tableaux are the most prominent melodramatic features (picturesque poses struck and maintained by the cast).

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The eighteenth-century comedy of manners survived into the nineteenth century, elevating the genre's moral tone by removing much of the clever sexual innuendo that had previously distinguished it. The scene is usually a drawing room, where the social games that are being performed are shown for the audience's enjoyment as well as admiration, with the latter reserved for individuals who are the greatest at playing the game. The kind is depicted in Boucicault's London Assurance (pr. 1841). Sir Harcourt Courtly is the witty, sprightly young lady whom Charles concocts to win; his son Charles is the rakish but reformable man-about-town; and Grace Harkaway is the witty, sprightly young woman whom Charles concocts to win. The drawing room of Squire Harkaway's house provides plenty of area for plots and counterplots, with the greatest players

eventually coming out on top. Lady Gay Spanker, who spends most of her life riding to hounds and dominating her husband Adolphus, is the play's most memorable character (Dolly). She, too, participates in the romantic games and nearly loses her husband, whom she realises she actually loves in the process. Witwouds, witlings, and true wits can all be found, yet even the latter appear to be at the mercy of fortune's whims in a world they don't fully comprehend. Only barefaced "London assurance" carries them through.

Bulwer-comedy Lytton's Money had featured a different form of game playing a year before. Sir John Vesey, a wealthy man, claims to have lost all of his money in order to learn how his friends and relatives genuinely feel about him. Sir John obtains the information he desires, rejects all sycophants, and marries Clara, who has faithfully loved him despite his lack of riches.

Oscar Wilde's plays continued the comedy-of-manners tradition toward the end of the century. The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People is more than Lady Windermere's Fan, A Woman of No Importance, or An Ideal Husband. Subordinating considerations of theme and character to those of style, he pushed the form to its limits. Algernon, Jack, Gwendolyn, and Cecily play social games in the play's many drawing rooms in order to be appropriately partnered before the final curtain. Wilde employed mistaken identities, absurd settings, clever remarks, and the Ernest/earnest pun to produce his results. Wilde's humorous epigrams and artifices, on the other hand, appear to hint to a reality not adequately addressed by the more serious melodrama, whose conventions this play burlesques.

Summary

The play's protagonist, Jack Worthing, is a pillar of the community in Hertfordshire, where he is the guardian of Cecily Cardew, the lovely eighteen-year-old granddaughter of Thomas Cardew, who found and adopted Jack as a baby. Jack has obligations in Hertfordshire: he is a significant landowner and justice of the peace, and he is responsible for tenants, farmers, and a lot of servants and other employees. For years, he's also assumed to have an irresponsible black-sheep brother named Ernest, who lives a scandalous life in search of pleasure and is constantly getting himself into trouble, requiring Jack to rush grudgingly to his aid. Ernest is, in truth, Jack's alibi, a phantom who allows him to vanish for days at a time and do anything he wants. No one save Jack is aware that he is Ernest. In London, Jack goes by the name Ernest, which is where he truly goes on these occasions — probably to engage in the same kind of activity that he professes to disapprove of in his imagined brother.

Jack is head over heels in love with Gwendolen Fairfax, Algernon Moncrieff's cousin. When the play begins, Algernon, who knows Jack as Ernest, has begun to suspect something after discovering an inscription written to "Uncle Jack" inside Jack's cigarette case from someone who calls herself "little Cecily." Algernon suspects Jack of living a double life, which he appears to accept as normal and necessary in modern society. A person who lives a double life is referred to as a "Bunburyist," after a nonexistent friend he pretends to have, a chronic invalid named Bunbury, to whose deathbed he is constantly summoned whenever he wishes to avoid some tedious social engagement.

At the start of Act I, Jack abruptly interrupts Algernon and reveals his intention to propose to Gwendolen. Algernon confronts him with the cigarette case and forces him to reveal who "Jack" and "Cecily" are, demanding to know who they are. Jack admits that his real name is Ernest, and that Cecily is his ward, a responsibility he was forced to take on by his adoptive father's will. In addition, Jack informs Algernon about his fictitious sibling. Jack claims he's considered assassinating this false sibling because Cecily has taken a keen interest in him. Without intending to, Jack uses words to describe Cecily that draw Algernon's notice and pique his interest in her even further.

The arrival of Gwendolen and her mother, Lady Bracknell, allows Jack to propose to Gwendolen. Jack is ecstatic to learn that Gwendolen reciprocates his feelings, but he is disturbed to learn that Gwendolen is obsessed with the name Ernest, which she claims, "inspires absolute confidence." Gwendolen makes it clear that she will not marry a man whose name is not Ernest.

Lady Bracknell conducts an interview with Jack to determine his suitability as a potential son-in-law, during which she inquiries about his family background. Lady Bracknell is shocked when Jack explains that he has no idea who his parents were and that he was discovered in a handbag in the cloakroom at Victoria Station by the man who adopted him. She forbids Jack and Gwendolen from marrying and sweeps out of the house.

In Act II, Algernon disguises himself as Jack's brother Ernest and visits Jack's country estate. Meanwhile, Jack returns home in deep mourning, full of a storey about Ernest dying suddenly in Paris, having decided that Ernest has outlived his usefulness. He is furious to find Algernon there, posing as Ernest, but he has no choice but to go along with the ruse. If he doesn't, his own deceptions and lies will be exposed.

Algernon, who has fallen hopelessly in love with Cecily, asks her to marry him while Jack changes out of his mourning clothes. He is startled to learn that Cecily believes they are engaged, and he is charmed when she admits that her love with "Uncle Jack's brother" prompted her to create an elaborate romance between herself and him a few months ago. Algernon is less enchanted when he learns that part of Cecily's interest in him stems from the name Ernest, which she thinks "inspires perfect confidence," unintentionally mimicking Gwendolen.

Algernon seeks out Dr. Chasuble, the local rector, in order to have himself christened Ernest. Meanwhile, Gwendolen shows up, having decided to surprise Jack with a visit. Cecily orders tea and tries to act hostess while Gwendolen is shown into the garden. Cecily has no idea who Gwendolen is or how she fits into Jack's life, and Gwendolen has no idea who Cecily is. Cecily is initially mistaking for a visitor to the Manor House, and Gwendolen is disturbed to hear that she is "Mr. Worthing's ward." She observes that Ernest has never acknowledged having a ward, to which Cecily responds that her guardian is his brother Jack, and that she is engaged to Ernest Worthing. This, Gwendolen reminds out, is impossible because she is engaged to Ernest Worthing. The tea gathering devolves into a battle of etiquette.

Each of Jack and Algernon has made separate arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened Ernest later that day as they approach the culmination of this conflict. Cecily tells Gwendolen that her fiancé's real name is Jack, while Gwendolen tells Cecily that hers is Algernon. Because each of them is engaged to be married to Jack's brother Ernest, the two women demand to know where he is. Jack is compelled to admit that he does not have a brother and that Ernest is a fictitious character. Both women are astonished and enraged, and they go back to the house together.

Act III is set in the Manor House drawing room, where Cecily and Gwendolen have retreated. The two women confront Jack and Algernon as they emerge from the garden. Algernon explains why he pretended to be her guardian's brother to Cecily. Algernon explains that he did it to meet her. Gwendolen inquires if Jack faked to have a brother in order to gain entry.

London to visit her as frequently as possible, and she takes his evasive response as a yes. The women are relieved but remain concerned about the issue of the name. All is forgiven and the two lovers embrace as Jack and Algernon inform Gwendolen and Cecily that they have each made preparations to be christened Ernest that afternoon. Lady Bracknell's arrival is announced at this time.

Gwendolen has been followed from London by Lady Bracknell, who bribed Gwendolen's maid to betray her destination. She is inquisitive and wants to know what is going on. Gwendolen reminds Lady Bracknell of her engagement to Jack once more, and Lady Bracknell reiterates that they will not marry. When Algernon informs Lady Bracknell of his engagement to Cecily, she inspects her and inquiries about her social connections in a regular and patronising manner, which irritates Jack. He responds to all of Cecily's questions with a mix of kindness and sarcasm, suppressing the knowledge that Cecily is truly worth a lot of money and will inherit even more when she reaches adulthood until the last possible time. Lady Bracknell becomes actually interested at this point.

As Cecily's legal guardian, Jack notifies Lady Bracknell that he will not consent to her marriage to Algernon. Lady Bracknell proposes that the two young people simply wait until Cecily is of legal age, but Jack points out that Cecily is not officially of legal age until she is thirty-five, as stipulated in her grandfather's will. Lady Bracknell encourages Jack to rethink, and he reminds her that she has complete control over the situation. Cecily can obtain his consent to marry Algernon as soon as she agrees to his marriage to Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell, on the other hand, is adamantly opposed to the idea. When Dr. Chasuble arrives and mentions Cecily's governess, Miss Prism, she and

Gwendolen are about to leave. Lady Bracknell enters at this point and requests that Miss Prism be dispatched.

When the governess arrives and sees Lady Bracknell, she becomes suspicious and evasive. Lady Bracknell accuses her of leaving her sister's house with a baby twenty-eight years ago and never returning. She is inquisitive about the baby's whereabouts. Miss Prism admits she has no idea, stating that she misplaced the baby in a handbag in which she had intended to place the manuscript for a novel she had written. Miss Prism says she left the luggage at the cloakroom of a railway station when Jack inquiries about it. Jack urges her for further information and dashes offstage, reappearing moments later with a huge purse. When Miss Prism confirms that the bag belongs to her, Jack leaps on her and screams, "Mother!" It takes a time for the problem to be resolved, but we soon learn that Jack is not Miss Prism's illegitimate kid, but rather the lawful child of Lady Bracknell's sister and hence Algernon's older brother. Furthermore, Jack was given the name "Ernest John" at birth. Jack has been unwittingly telling the truth all these years: his name is Ernest, as is Jack's, and he does have an unprincipled younger brother named Algernon. Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble join the couples in their embrace, and Jack admits that he now understands "the vital Importance of Being Earnest."

Self Assessment

1. On account of the remarkable style, who is put at the head of the Restoration drama?
A. William Blake
B. William Shakespeare
C. William Congreve
D. None of the above

2. The chief protagonist and writer of heroic tragedy was:
A. Dryden
B. Ben Jonson
C. Thomas Norton
D. Wordsworth

3. Under which leadership, the heroic tragedy dominated the stage from 1660 to 1678?
A. John Bunyan
B. John Dryden
C. John Tillotson
D. None of the above

4. Dryden heroic tragedy play was/were:
A. Tyrannic Love
B. The Conquest of Granada
C. Both a and b
D. None of the above

5. The play "All for Love" (1678), was written by:
A. Congreve
B. Milton
C. Dryden
D. Gay

6. How Dryden turns himself away from the conventions of the heroic tragedy?
A. He does not give a happy ending to this play
B. Ended happily
C. He used iambic pentameter
D. None

7. The comedies, Wild Gallant, Etheredge's The Comical Revenge or Love in a Tub, Wycherley's The Country Wife and The Plain Dealer were written by:
A. Viscount Halifax
B. Thomas Sprat
C. John Dryden
D. None of the above

8. The Theatre Royal is commonly known as:
A. West End
B. East End
C. Drury Lane
D. None of the above

9. English monarchy was restored to the throne with the return of:
A. Charles II in 1660
B. Charles I in 1560
C. Charles III in 1760
D. None of the above

10. Just two venues in London were allowed to perform spoken drama in 1700. They were known as:
A. 'Patent' theatres
B. King's theatres
C. Queen's theaters
D. Royal theater

11. Drury Lane Theatre was built by the theatre manager Thomas Killigrew in:
A. 1650
B. 1663
C. 1680
D. 1670

12. The Importance of Being Earnest is:
A. A Comedy of Manners
B. A Tragedy
C. A Roman Play
D. A History Play

13. The Beggar's Opera is written by:
A. John Gay
B. Christopher Marlowe
C. Shakespeare
D. John Dryden

14. The Importance of Being Earnest was published in:
A. 1899
B. 1880

C. 1869
D. 1860

15. The alternative title of The Importance of Being Earnest is:
A. The Importance of Being Earnest: A Romantic Comedy
B. The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy
C. The Importance of Being Earnest: An Interlude
D. The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

Answer for Self Assessment

1.	C	2.	A	3.	B	4.	C	5.	C
6.	B	7.	C	8.	C	9.	A	10.	A
11.	B	12.	A	13.	A	14.	A	15.	D

Review Questions

1. Do you think that by the end of the play Jack learned the importance of being earnest? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Discuss in detail the four main characters' relationships to reality in your own words.
3. Discuss the significance of names in the play 'The Importance of Being Earnest'.
4. In what ways are the gender roles in Earnest reversed?
5. How does Oscar Wilde show that Jack and Cecily have the same kinds of values?
6. What is Wilde's opinion of the aristocracy in the play 'The Importance of Being Earnest'.m

Further Readings

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Unit 14: Oscar Wilde- The Importance of Being Earnest

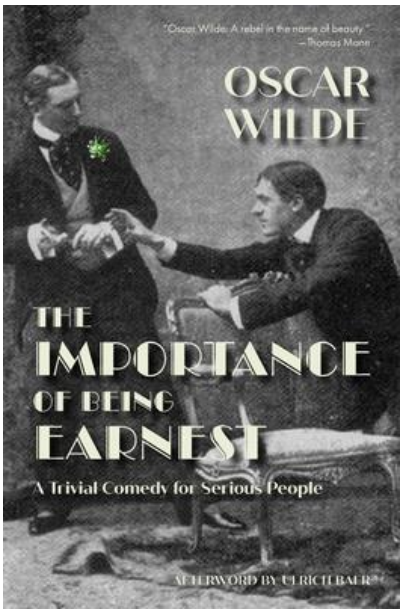
CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand double entendre
- explore the elements of Victorian prudery
- analyze the significance of the title *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- evaluate the themes of the play

Introduction



Wilde mocked the Victorian era in his play *The Importance of Being Earnest.* Wilde cast a scathing focus on the Victorian era as a whole by poking fun of Victorian ideals. The Victorians were completely enamoured with the concept of sincerity. The Victorian society's highest aspirations were living a life of seriousness. In Victorian society, sincerity was seen as the supreme virtue.

The phoney ideals of seriousness were so important to society that it was willing to pay any price for them. Individuals were forced to live a double life as a result of this frenetic and feverish pursuit of ideals. In an attempt to live life seriously, people became double traders. In their trendy and faddish attempt to attain the ideals of sincerity, the British people of the late nineteenth century eventually become hypocritical. People were willing to compromise on anything in order to live a more serious existence. Selfishness, superfluous pride, a false sense of self-worth, and dangerous haughtiness emerged as ills that tarnished people's natural beauty and charm. The Victorian era was known for its floral appearance. It was hollow and unnatural on the inside.

Wilde criticises the upper middle class's snobbish and arrogant demeanour. Lady Bracknell dismisses Jack's proposal to Gwendolen with arrogance. Her snooty demeanour is on display as she interrogates Jack about whether he is truly qualified to be her son-in-law. She had retained all the bio-data and testimonies of individuals who dared to propose to Gwendolen but turned out to be

unqualified suitors for her daughter, much to the readers' chagrin. Lady Bracknell's total control over her daughter's right to choose a decent life companion is truly unseemly. In this play, Wilde sharply exposes the snobbish trend prevalent among the upper middle class.

Two characters in the drama are seen elevating the virtue of sincerity. Characters like Jack Worthing and Algernon are preoccupied with the word sincerity. Jack lives in a farmhouse in the country. He is well aware that a modern Victorian lady in metropolitan society falls head over heels in love with Earnest. He did, however, have a country name, Jack. So, in order to thwart the love of a city lady, Jack assumed the false name Earnest and travelled to London. Jack's double life is exemplified by his hypocritical lifestyle. Why did Jack choose Earnest as his name? The explanation is that an urban lady prefers men with the name Earnest. Jack picked the name because Victorian society allowed teenagers to live multiple lives. In Victorian culture, the faddish religion of leading an earnest life was on the increase. As a result, Jack joined the Bunburying cult. Earnest Jack, as he was known, went to town to meet his friend Algernon. Gwendolen was the first person he met. Earnest was Earnest's name, Gwendolen knew. She instantly fell in love with him. Readers learn how ludicrous Victorian society had become from Gwendole's actions. What could be more ridiculous than Gwendolen's declaration, "I love you because your name is Ernest?" What kind of love is it if the base isn't commitment on the side of the lower, but rather the name's verbal charm? What does society gain from people who fall in love just because of the mystical, name-only charm? Jack and Gwendolen are not solely responsible for the society's shallowness and artificiality. It was Victorian civilization that allowed youths to pursue a shallow and meaningless existence. Gwendolen's love was void of substance because to her insatiable desire for love based on the attractive word serious. Jack was a double trader because of his hypocritical way of life in town under the bogus name sincere. In the course of leading a sincere life, Jack became a liar. He informed Cecily, his ward, that his brother Earnest lived in town and was sick, therefore he had to go see him.

In a same vein, Algernon assumed a fictitious name and travelled to the village in order to win Cecily's heart. Cecily has a crush on Jack's imaginary brother Earnest, which Algernon is well aware of. As a result, Algernon went to meet her, thinking he was Jack's brother.

Both the man and the woman fell prey to hypocrisy and the vice of double dealing. In Victorian society, these sins remained. The upper middle classes, in particular, were burdened by the folly of chasing after hollow ideals of sincerity. Both Jack and Algernon are upper-middle-class men. Their lives were rife with vices and blunders.

Oscar Wilde chastised the Victorian era for its devotion to a loveless existence. Victorian society's definition of love was bereft of affection. Wilde depicts Jack and Algernon as being in loveless love with Gwendolen and Cecily, respectively, in the play. Even Gwendolen and Cecily adore their respective lovers solely because of their aristocratic names Ernest. We're embarrassed to hear such an expression of love. Love for the beloved's name rather than for him or her has become the guiding concept of youth. In the play, Wilde satirizes this love that is devoid of emotional depth.

Gwendolen is seen in the play obeying the dictates of fashion. She lost any remaining bravery to exert her will in this path of obeying the sovereign tyranny of fashion. Gwendolen's absurd condition may be seen in her slavish replies to her mother's every remark.

In a humorous fashion, Wilde makes a passing reference to Victorian morals. Dr. Chasuble's loose obsession with moral consciousness is revealed by his nonchalant attention on Sermon. The religious dedication of Dr. Chasuble reveals a little about the Victorian people's moral consciousness. Chasuble is the type of priest that preaches constantly in order to appease the congregation's feelings. Dr. Chasuble's moral consciousness is shaky as a result of his surrender to Mrs. Prism's love. Readers can see the dramatist's sarcastic viewpoint on the Victorian society's waning moral beliefs through Chasuble's moral predicament. The pace of life in Victorian society was frenetic. People were tense. People were limited in their own privacy since there was a lot more business. Victorians become drowsy as a result of their deep-seated fear. Miss Prism is afflicted by Victorian inattention.

14.1 Characters in the Play

J.P. John (Jack/Ernest) Worthing

The protagonist of the play. Jack Worthing appears to be a decent and respectable young man, but he has a secret. Jack is known as Jack in Hertfordshire, where he owns a country estate. Ernest is his name in London. Jack was discovered in a handbag in the cloakroom of Victoria Station as a baby by an elderly gentleman who adopted him and made him guardian of his granddaughter, Cecily

Cardew. Gwendolen Fairfax, Algernon's cousin, is Jack's love interest. He is a Justice of the Peace, as indicated by the initials after his name.

Algernon Moncrieff (French: Algernon Moncrieff)

The play's secondary protagonist. Algernon is a charming, indolent, and ornamental bachelor who is the nephew of Lady Bracknell, cousin of Gwendolen Fairfax, and best friend of Jack Worthing, whom he has known as Ernest for years. Algernon is bright, witty, greedy, amoral, and fond of making entertaining paradoxical and epigrammatic declarations. Algernon has created an imaginary acquaintance named "Bunbury," an invalid whose periodic abrupt relapses allow him to avoid unpleasant or boring social commitments.

Fairfax, Gwendolen

Lady Bracknell's daughter and Algernon's cousin. Gwendolen is head over heels in love with Jack, whom she refers to as Ernest. Gwendolen, a model and arbiter of high fashion and society, has undisputed authority on matters of taste and morals. She is smart, intelligent, cosmopolitan, and obnoxious. Gwendolen is obsessed with the name Ernest and has stated that she will not marry a man without it.

Cardew, Cecily

Jack's ward, the granddaughter of the elderly gentleman who discovered and adopted Jack as a newborn. Cecily is undoubtedly the play's most realistically depicted character. She, like Gwendolen, is enthralled by the name Ernest, but she is even more so by the concept of wickedness. In her imagination, rather than the virtuous-sounding name, this concept has caused her to fall in love with Jack's brother Ernest and to create a complicated relationship and courting between them.

Lady Bracknell

Gwendolen's mother and Algernon's snooty, mercenary, and overbearing aunt. Lady Bracknell married well, and her life's ambition is to have her daughter marry well as well. She has a list of "eligible young men" on which she bases her decision, as well as a scripted interview that she conducts with possible suitors. Lady Bracknell, like her nephew, is prone to making amusing remarks, but unlike Algernon, the humour in Lady Bracknell's speeches is unintended. Wilde attempts to mock the British aristocracy's hypocrisy and idiocy through the character of Lady Bracknell. Lady Bracknell considers ignorance to be "a delicate exotic fruit." She prefers her spouse to eat downstairs with the staff when she hosts a dinner party. She is devious, narrow-minded, authoritarian, and the play's most quotable character.

Prism, Miss

Cecily's governess is a woman who works in Cecily's household. Miss Prism is a never-ending supply of pompous platitudes and cliches. She admires Jack's ostensible respectability and angrily condemns his "unlucky" brother. Miss Prism's stern declarations, Puritan though she is, have a habit of going so far over the top that they make you giggle. Miss Prism appears to have a softer side, despite her stiffness. She mentions having authored a novel whose manuscript had been "lost" or "abandoned." She has love feelings for Dr. Chasuble as well.

D.D. Rev. Canon Chasuble

On Jack's estate, there is a rector. Dr. Chasuble is approached by both Jack and Algernon, who desire that they be christened “Ernest.” Miss Prism is the object of Dr. Chasuble's covert amorous feelings. "Doctor of Divinity" is the meaning of the initials after his name.

Lane

The manservant of Algernon. Lane is the only one who knows about Algernon's "Bunburying" practise when the play begins. Lane only appears in Act I.

Merriman

The butler of Jack's country house, the Manor House. Merriman only appears in Acts 2 and 3.

Summary

The play *The Importance of Being Ernest* is on the importance of being Ernest. Oscar Wilde makes fun of Victorian institutions and traditions, especially marriage and the quest of love.

During the Victorian era, sincerity was seen as one of the highest goals for rehabilitating the lower classes. It eventually spread to the upper class. The play's subtitle, "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People," hints at the premise.

Throughout the play, we see numerous examples of Victorian people's views. For example, Algernon says in the first act, "Divorces are formed in heaven." This statement elucidates the issues that plague many married couples. Other statements that are similar to it include:

"Old-fashioned regard for the young is rapidly dwindling." (Act One)

'Three is company in married life, and two is none.' (Act One)

Again, Victorians are described as having a double standard. For example, Jack has created a complicated parallel identity for himself in the country, where he has a house, ward, and obligations.

And in the city, he impersonates Ernest in order to gain Gwendolen's love, as she expresses in Act 1: "my idea has always been to love someone with the name of Ernest...

I knew I was meant to adore you the instant Algernon revealed that he has a friend named Ernest."

Similarly, Algernon appears sincere and travels to the village in search of Cecily, whom he loves. He was well aware that Cecily adores Jack's fictitious brother Earnest. As a result, he goes to meet her as Jack's brother.

'It had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was serious,' Cecily says, echoing Gwendolen. As a result, both Gwendolen and Cecily learn that they are engaged to "Ernest," a well-known and recognised name at the time.

Religious institutions are also mocked by Wilde. The chasuble is a priest who gives sermons just to appease the audience's moods. Similarly, Gwendolen's mother's attraction to Cecily after learning of her status and riches, as well as her hatred for Jack because he is not of a high social class, shows Victorian society's false ego.

As a result, Victorian society was so engrossed in the phoney notions of sincerity that it was willing to go to any length to attain this. People were forced to live a life of double standards as a result of the pseudo-earnestness mania.

In attempt to achieve the ideals of sincerity, they eventually became hypocritical. Greed, selfishness, and haughtiness arose among the populace, destroying their innocence and values. As a result, Victorian society was fashionable on the exterior but hollow on the inside.

Themes

Responsibility and Decency

The Victorian aristocracy placed a premium on duty and decorum above all else. The code of conduct prioritised sincerity, or a deliberate and earnest desire to do the right thing. It was all about appearances, and style was far more essential than content. As a result, while a person could have a secret life, have extramarital affairs, or have children out of wedlock, society would look the other way as long as the image of propriety was maintained. As a result, Wilde wonders if the more pressing or serious issues of the day are being disregarded in favour of superficial worries about beauty. Gwendolen exemplifies this quality. Her marriage proposal has to be done perfectly, and her brother has even practised it. "In issues of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the crucial thing," Gwendolen's aristocratic attitude says. The insignificant is significant, while the serious is neglected.

Act II's tea ceremony is a humorous example of Wilde's assertion that appearance and manners are everything. The basis for war is the garb of correctness. While the staff discreetly observe, both women, believing they are betrothed to the same person, wage a polite "war" over the tea service. Cecily puts four lumps to her cup while Gwendolen requests no sugar. Gwendolen is served a huge slice of cake despite her request for bread and butter. "Detestable girl!" she exclaims in an aside that Cecily is ostensibly unable to hear. Gwendolen is shocked to learn that Cecily is staying in Jack's country house and asks about a chaperone. Wilde repeatedly demonstrates the aristocrat's concern

for propriety, ensuring that everything is done correctly, regardless of what those fine manners may conceal.

Compassion Isn't There

Illness and death were two situations where Victorians showed little sympathy or compassion. When Lady Bracknell learns that Bunbury died after his physicians told him he couldn't live any longer, she believes he acted right in dying because he received the proper medical advice. "Illness, in any form, is not something that should be fostered in others. The basic responsibility of life is to maintain one's health." Lady Bracknell, like most aristocracy, is too preoccupied with her own life, the benefits of her daughter's marriage, and her nephew's mistakes in judgement to care about others. Gwendolen, like her mother, is completely self-absorbed and adamant about her desires. Cecily, she informs her, "My diary is always with me when I travel. In the train, one should have something exciting to read." Wilde appears to be criticising a socioeconomic elite that is mainly concerned with itself, with little compassion or understanding for those who are less fortunate.

Religion

Religion, which is a serious subject, is also satirised. While questions about the afterlife would seem to be an appropriate issue for individuals in this world, it appears to have been pushed aside throughout the Victorian era. The icon of religious thought, the Canon Chasuble, is used by Wilde to demonstrate how little the Victorians cared about religious attitudes. With replaceable lectures full of worthless platitudes, Chasuble can rechristen, marry, bury, and encourage at any time. Even Lady Bracknell acknowledges that christenings are a waste of time and money. "If I were lucky enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips," Chasuble says, his religious façade betraying a racing pulse for Miss Prism. Quickly realising his error, the pastor uses metaphor to mask his less-than-holy impulses. Wilde's satire is sweet and amusing, chastising a society for its arrogance.

Culture in the Public Eye

Wilde's wit also pokes fun at common sentiments about the French at the time, as well as literary criticism and books. Wilde wittily claims that Victorians feel that France produces nothing excellent, with the exception of the rare homosexual maid (in Wilde's opinion). Otherwise, France is a fantastic site to assassinate Ernest and have him buried. "I worry that scarcely points to any very serious state of mind at the end," the good reverend continues. The purpose of literary criticism is to "Those who have never attended a university. In the daily papers, they do it so brilliantly." Modern novels are full with facts that are never simple or pure, and controversial texts should only be read in secret. Again, Wilde attacks the Victorians for emphasising the importance of appearance over reality. He takes use of the chance to introduce several examples of common opinion, exposing bias, social discrimination, thoughtlessness, and erroneous beliefs.

Lives of the Unknown

Due to the oppressive and claustrophobic nature of Victorian standards, Wilde develops situations in which his characters live secret lives or create false impressions in order to express who they truly are. Both Jack and Algernon develop personas in order to be free. These alternate lives allow people to either ignore their responsibilities — as in Algernon's case — or to abandon their responsibilities and pursue pleasure — as in Jack's case. Wilde establishes these secret lives early in Act I, and they continue until the final act. "You won't be able to run out to the country quite as often as you used to, darling Algy," and "You won't be able to flee to London nearly as regularly as your wicked custom was," they both concede genuinely when they realise their weddings will halt their quest of pleasure. Marriage ushers in the end of freedom, pleasure, and immorality, and ushers in the beginning of responsibility and doing what is required. Of course, after marrying Gwendolen and Cecily, Jack and Algernon can keep their masks on, but they'll have to be cautious and make sure society is looking the other way.

Morality and Passion

Cecily's girlish ideas underscore Wilde's claim that there is a vast world outside of Victorian manners and looks. She is desperate to see Jack's "wicked" brother Ernest when she hears he is in the area. "I hope you haven't been living a double life, appearing to be wicked while being actually decent all the time," she says to Algernon. To naive Cecily, the prospect of meeting someone who lives outside the confines of propriety and regulations is enticing. Even his choice of the name Ernest for his hidden

existence is ironic, because Algernon is not being obedient – earnest — in keeping his secret life a secret.

Passion, sensuality, and moral looseness are all mentioned by various characters in the play. Miss Prism's three-volume novel, Chasuble and Prism's flirting and coded sexual conversations, Algernon stuffing his face to satisfy his hungers, the diaries (which are acceptable venues for passion), and Miss Prism's three-volume novel are all examples of an inner life hidden behind suffocating rules. Even Algernon's aesthetic life, which included posturing as a dandy, dressing with studied care, ignoring his bills, being unemployed, and prioritising pleasure above duty, is an example of Victorians valuing trivialities. Algernon will have to keep up with oppressive standards and appearances once he marries. Wilde's characters allude to a life beyond the Victorian veneer of propriety. Much of the comedy in this play straddles the border between the public life of appearances and the inner life of revolt against the societal code that dictates that life must be lived earnestly.

Marriage and Courtship

These Victorian principles, according to Oscar Wilde, were perpetuated through romance and marriage, which both had their own set of norms and rituals. Marriage was a carefully considered decision. "I suppose some prior enquiry on my side would not be out of place," Lady Bracknell concludes when Algernon confesses that he wishes to marry Jack's ward, Cecily. When Lady Bracknell grills Jack about his parents, politics, riches, addresses, expectations, family solicitors, and legal encumbrances, his responses must be suitable and adequate in order for the two families' legal union to be authorised. The importance of fortune is extremely crucial, and when both Jack and Cecily's fortunes are appropriate, the following issue is family history. Because Jack has no idea who his parents are, Lady Bracknell advises him to find a parent as soon as possible - any with the correct lineage will suffice. Once again, appearance is everything. The importance of duty (rather than joy, love, or passion) supports Algy's claim that marriage is a loveless obligation: "A man who marries without understanding Bunbury [an excuse for pleasure] has a very tiresome time of it." Marriage is portrayed as a legal contract between consenting families of similar riches, with little regard for background, love, or happiness.

Keeping the Upper Class Alive

The rigorous Victorian class system reinforces the divide between the elite, middle, and lower classes by allowing members of the same class to marry each other. Snobbish, aristocratic attitudes widen the gap between these groups even more. Lady Bracknell is informed that Jack is uninterested in politics. He believes himself to be a member of the Liberal Unionist Party. Lady Bracknell is satisfied with his response because it indicates that he is a Tory, or conservative. "That might easily be adjusted," says Jack, whose London property is on the "unfashionable side" of Belgrave Square. "Both, if necessary," Lady Bracknell clarifies when Jack asks if she meant the "unfashionable" or the side of the road. The French Revolution is used as an example of what happens when lower-class people are trained to question their superiors. Education isn't about learning to think; it's about blindly following the rules. Lady Bracknell is a firm believer in ignorance. She continues, "In reality, "The entire premise of modern education is fundamentally flawed. Fortunately, education has no influence in England at all. If this happens, it will pose a severe threat to the upper classes, and will very certainly result in acts of violence in Grosvenor Square." Thinking leads to dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction leads to social change. That will not suffice.

Class Rivalry

One would assume that aristocracy would recognise the mistake of their ways and strive to be more morally good. They, on the other hand, consider their attitudes as the moral high ground, and believe that other classes should adopt aristocratic attitudes and recognise their own errors. Miss Prism seemed to be chastising the lower classes for creating so many children for Chasuble to christen as a matter of thrift. "On the subject of christenings, I've given several talks to the poorer classes. But they don't seem to understand what it means to be frugal." The aristocracy's predilection for dabbling in good causes that do not disrupt their own lifestyles is delightfully described by Chasuble. He talks about a sermon he delivered for the Society for the Prevention of Discontent Among the Upper Orders. Reform, to the Victorians, meant maintaining the existing social and economic structure by promoting upper-class values and economy.

Every page, line of conversation, character, symbol, and stage direction in The Importance of Being Earnest is dedicated to proving Wilde's claim that social change occurs as a result of contemplation. Such contemplation can be induced by art. Human sympathy and compassion are harmed when

quirky or unconventional conduct and thought are substituted. When moral values are so rigid that they leave no space for doubt, a community loses a lot of its humanity.

Self Assessment

1. Why does Lane think it is not polite to listen to Algernon's piano-playing?

A. Because Lane is only a servant
B. Because Algernon plays so badly
C. Because Lane is tone deaf
D. Because he knows Algernon is shy about his playing

2. What does Algernon reveal to Jack about the person he has always suspected him to be?

A. A Communist
B. A Liberal Unionist
C. A Bunburyist
D. A Tory

3. What makes Algernon believe Jack is living two lives?

A. A letter
B. A diary
C. An inscription
D. A handkerchief embroidered with strawberries

4. Isn't it true that reading is a highly ungentlemanly thing to do, as Jack claims?

A. Gwendolen's diary
B. French drama
C. More than half of modern literature
D. A private cigarette case

5. Initially, Jack informs Algernon that Cecily is his:

A. Sister
B. Aunt
C. Hair colorist
D. Former governess

6. When Algernon claims Lady Bracknell rings the doorbell in a "Wagnerian way," what exactly does he mean?

A. That she is humming "The Ride of the Valkyrie"
B. That she is dressed up like one of the Valkyrie
C. That she rings insistently, leaving her finger on the bell for a long time
D. That she has a tendency to burst into song

7. What kind of house does Gwendolen claim they have?

A. A pigsty
B. An age of ideals
C. A house in Shropshire
D. An age of surfaces

8. When Jack tells Lady Bracknell that he smokes, how does she react?

A. Shock
B. Disgust
C. Approval
D. A coughing fit

9. How did Mr. Thomas Cardew come across Jack as a baby?

A. In a cloakroom at a railway station
B. Shropshire
C. A foundling hospital
D. The British Museum

10. What is Lady Bracknell's stance on Jack as a potential Gwendolen suitor?

A. His smoking
B. His lack of an occupation
C. His origins
D. His politics

11. At the conclusion of Jack's chat with Lady Bracknell, what does Algernon start playing offstage?

A. A funeral march
B. "The Wedding March"
C. "We Are the Champions"
D. "The Ride of the Valkyrie"

12. What is Gwendolen's reaction to Jack's origin story?

A. She is shocked

B. She is disgusted
C. She thinks it's romantic
D. She thinks it's a hoot

13. Who, according to Algernon, should be a role model for the upper crust?

A. The prime minister
B. The lower classes
C. The queen
D. The clergy

14. Behind Lady Bracknell's back, what does Jack call her?

A. A Gorgon
B. An organ
C. A Liberal Unionist
D. A Bunburyist

15. Why hasn't Jack informed Gwendolen that he has a particularly attractive young ward?

A. Because Gwendolen might be jealous
B. Because Gwendolen might want to borrow some of her clothes
C. Because Gwendolen's brother Gerald might want to meet her
D. Because Gwendolen herself is extremely unattractive

16. What is Algernon's imagined friend's name?

A. Harbury
B. Bunbury
C. Markby
D. Bunberry

Answer for Self Assessment

1.	B	2.	C	3.	C	4.	D	5.	B
6.	C	7.	B	8.	C	9.	A	10.	C
11.	B	12.	C	13.	B	14.	A	15.	A
16.	B								

Review Questions

1. What does Earnest's aristocracy value? How does Wilde demonstrate that Jack and Cecily share similar values?
2. How do the aristocrats' values clash with a more traditional definition of respectability?
3. What characteristics do city dwellers typically possess? What about the people from the countryside? Do preconceptions hold true in Earnest?
4. Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble, in what ways are they products of society? What does this say about Victorian educational attitudes?
5. Why doesn't Cecily seem to mind that Algernon's name isn't Ernest?

Further Readings

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