

Drama and play

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----- DRAMA Origin of Greek tragedy and comedy Drama, in the western world, begins with ancient Greece, where the two major forms of drama tragedy and comedy were an aspect of religious ritual. Greek tragedy is believed to have begun in the sixth century B. C. with Thespis who introduced the first actor on the stage. The first dramatic dialogue lies in the conversation of this actor with leader of the satiric chorus. The dramatic element was subsequently added by Aeschylus in the fifth century B. C. and later by Sophocles of the same period.

They added a second and third actor on the stage respectively. Euripides, a contemporary of Sophocles, used drama as a medium for dealing with the problems of human existence. As the Greek drama developed, the chorus was detached from the main action. Of these ancient Greek tragedies, thirty-two plays are now extant seven by Sophocles, and eighteen by Euripides. Greek comedy originated from the humorous side of the Dionysian rites. A actual feature was the singing procession, or comos. Their song along with a kind of mummary or play-acting developed into comedy. Greek comedy passed through three stages

Old Comedy, Middle Comedy, and New Comedy. The Old comedy was the comedy of political and personal satire. The satirical plays of Aristophanes were directed against Euripides. The Middle comedy was a transition from this to the comedy of social life and manners. The satire became impersonal. In the New Comedy, the love intrigue became the dominant theme. The best known writer of the New Comedy was Menander who died in the third century B. C. His plays are now extant in Latin translations by Plautus and

Terence. Drama and in Rome The Romans wrote comedies and tragedies in the manner laid down by the Greeks.

The characters were mostly stock figures like the comic slave, the braggart soldier, the proud cook, the young lover, the hunch-back, the cuckold and so on. The outstanding writers were Plautus (200 B. C.) and Terence (150 B. C.). Twenty plays of Plautus are now extant, including the “ Menaechmi”, from which Shakespeare took the plot for “ The Two Gentlemen of Verona”. Only six plays of Terence are extant. The most important writer of Roman tragedy was Seneca, who was a statesman and philosopher in the Stoic School. His ten plays are translated into English during the Elizabethan period. Drama in England

Like other countries, the drama in England had its origin in the services of the church. In the Middle Ages, the services of the church used to be in Latin, and the Bible was therefore, beyond the comprehension of the common people. The clergymen started illustrating Biblical stories by dump shows in order to bring the religious doctrines within the comprehension of the laymen. They were enacted within the church and the actors were all clergymen and monks. In due course, dialogue, first in Latin, then in the vernacular, was introduced and thus the ritualistic representations in the church developed into full-fledged drama.

Subsequently the place inside the church was found inadequate and so the representations were transferred to the churchyards. When this also proved insufficient, the drama passed from the church to the street, from the clergymen to the laymen. The mystery and miracle plays The Mystery and Miracle plays mark an advancement in the development of the medieval

religious drama. The Mysteries dealt with themes taken from the Bible, whereas Miracle plays dealt with the lives of saints. The institution of the festival of Corpus Christi by Pope Urban IV in 1264 gave an impetus to the growth of these plays.

Until the thirteenth century Miracle plays were annually performed at several important towns like Chester, York, Coventry, and Lancaster. Curiously enough, these religious plays combined serious theme with farce, buffoonery, and coarse humour. Devil and Vice were depicted in a funny manner. The Devil was represented as a hideous monster, hairy and shaggy with horns, hoofs and a tail. Vice appeared in a fantastic, variegated dress carrying a wooden dagger and indulging in mad tumultuous pranks and jokes. He continued to have a comic role in English drama for long.

This sort of medieval religious drama reached its highest point of development in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The “cycles” presenting a series of plays containing a story of the creation of the world were popular in England in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. Of these, four cycles Chester comprising twenty-five plays, York comprising forty-eight plays, Wakefield comprising thirty-five plays, and Coventry comprising forty-two have been preserved. Monks and scholars generally wrote the plays. Their settings were elaborate.

Heaven was presented in an awe-inspiring manner while Hell was presented as a dragon’s mouth. Theatrical effects were obtained by several devices as trap doors, pulleys, and the beating of drums. The aim of these was to instruct and entertain people. The Moralities and Interludes The end of the fifteenth century witnessed a parting between the serious and comic

elements in these plays. The serious part of the story was treated separately in plays called “ Morality Plays”. The comic or the lighter side was presented in “ Interludes”.

In the Morality Plays religious instruction was substituted by moral teaching and biblical figures were substituted by personified virtues and vices. Mostly the theme was the struggle for a man’s soul. The purpose of these plays was to inculcate virtue by showing the forces of Good and Evil in action. The characters were mostly personifications of abstract qualities like Sin and Repentance. The first known Moralities called “ Paternoster” plays were performed in the latter part of the fourteenth century. It dealt with the conflict between the Seven Moral Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins.

The best Morality play is, however, “ Everyman” published in the early sixteenth century. Humour was kept alive in the character of the Vice, who may be regarded as the forerunner of the Shakespearean clown. The term “ Interlude” is applied to a species of professional performance carried out on special occasions like banqueting. It was used to fill intervals. It marks a definite advance in the art of comedy and forms a bridge of sorts between the Moralities and the Elizabethan drama. The characters were living human beings, and the aim was to amuse and entertain the audience.

With the interlude, drama lost its didactic character and became a vehicle of secular entertainment. The most famous interlude is John Heywood’s “ The Four Ps” printed in 1569. The characters in are a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potheary and a Pedlar vying with another in telling the biggest lie. The verdict goes in favour of the palmer who stated that of the five hundred women he had known he had never seen one “ out of patience”. The five

divisions of the dramatic plot The basic of every dramatic story is conflict. It may take different shapes.

It may be between the hero, representing good, and the villain representing evil, it may be of the hero against fate or circumstances, or against social conventions and customs. It may also be an inward war as in the case of Macbeth. In any case, a kind of conflict is the central element of the dramatic story. The plot begins with the opening of this conflict and ends with its conclusion. If we sympathise with the struggler, the play is a tragedy, and if we laugh at him, it is a comedy. The theme of the play passes through five stages. They are exposition, complication, climax, denouement, and catastrophe.

This is called “ the dramatic line”. Perhaps this five-fold structure of dramatic story accounts for the common division of play into five acts. The Exposition introduces the circumstances or situation from which the initial incident is to begin. Its aim is to give all the information necessary for the audience to understand the play. This is not an easy part of the play and its management may be regarded as a real test of a dramatist’s skill. Mrs. Stowe admits in her book “ The Minister’s Wooing”, “ When one has a story to tell, one is always puzzled which end of it to begin with.

You have a whole corps of people to introduce what you know and your reader does not; and one thing so presupposes another that whichever way you turn your patchwork, the figures seem ill-arranged”. This is the experience of a novelist who can recourse to direct narrative and explanation. We can, then presume the difficulty of a dramatist who is denied such privileges. The least dramatic among the methods adopted by

the dramatists is that of speech given by one of the characters, or a prologue. An example is the dialogue in the Second Scene of Shakespeare's "The Tempest". A good exposition takes the form of a dialogue which is natural and appropriate. It is brief, clear and dramatic. The first portion of the play after the initial incident comprises the Complication or the Rising Action or the Growth of the conflict towards the crisis. It should be characterised by clearness and logical consistency. Every incident should appear natural, and nothing that is essential should be obscured by unimportant details. The proper relation between character and action should be maintained. Every scene should have its role in the development of the plot or add to our knowledge about the characters should be indicated.

If the conflict is between two persons, both the characters should be made familiar to the audience, and if it is within the mind of the hero, his qualities and conduct should be presented carefully. The foundation for the following action should be thus laid. In climax or Crisis, the story reaches a point at which the balance begins to lean decisively to one or the other side. This is therefore known as the turning point also. The treatment of the crisis may vary according to the circumstances. It may consist of a single incident or a group of incidents.

Generally the crisis is placed about the middle of the action, but in Shakespeare's plays, it is generally towards the close of the third act or the beginning of the fourth act. In "Macbeth", the Banquet scene, which comprises the crisis, occurs in Act III. After the appearance of Banquo's ghost and the escape of Fleance, Macbeth's fortunes are reversed. The dramatist should be careful that the event which determines the whole course of the

action to its catastrophe comes out of the action itself and is not superimposed from outside.

The crisis over, we enter upon the denouement which is the falling action. In comedy it implies the removal of the obstacles or the clearing away of the misunderstanding which has hitherto been hindering the good fortune of the hero and the heroine. In tragedy it lies in the removal of those resisting powers which have been holding the powers of evil in check. In any case, our uncertainty and suspense come to an end and we rejoice in the happiness of the hero and the heroine or sympathise with them. The denouement presents to the dramatist the difficulty of maintaining the interest of the audience after they are able to foresee the fortune of the characters. Small wonder Fielding hated “the man who invented fifth act”: Oddly enough, in Shakespeare tragedies, our interest continues even after the ending of the play can be clearly foreseen. Catastrophe is the final stage of the plot. The dramatic conflict comes to an end. The play to an end. The play usually ends with a sense of finality. But in modern plays and novels nothing is concluded and as Tennyson said, we seem to be poised on the crest of a wave which does not break.

This inconclusiveness is supported by those who favour realism, for, in life, they say, there is no such things as an “end” yet we must bear in mind that drama is a series of incidents selected for dramatic treatment. Audience demand a story in which no loose threads are left. The dramatist has to make the catastrophe the natural outcome of the forces which have been at work in the play. Aristotle recommended that the unraveling of the plot must

arise out of the plot itself, and must never be brought about by a *deus ex machina*.

Though modern dramatists do not resort to a “God out of the machine” they employ such means as the timely removal of the villain by an accident, or the turning up of a will, or the discovery of a birthmark or something that reveals the real identity of the hero, or the unexpected arrival of an uncle long reported to be dead and so on. More common is the sudden change of heart of one of the characters to make the story end happily. The dramatist who employs such contrivances in a comedy may not do so when writing a tragedy. The reason is not far to seek. In comedy life is treated in a light and superficial manner..

Criticism of life in the drama The drama is different from novel in being objective. The novel permits the writer to intrude often to express his interpretation of life. He can do it directly or indirectly while the dramatist is forced to confine himself to the indirect method alone. According to Henry James, an novel is a personal impression representation of life. It is not, therefore, easy to detect in a play, the writer's philosophy of life. The dramatist throws on our shoulders the entire responsibility of finding his meaning and even explaining what he has merely implied. But occasionally the dramatist escapes from the restraints imposed on him by making one of the characters in the play represent him. The Chorus of the Greek tragedies was thus a representative of the dramatist. He is often the mouthpiece of the dramatist's philosophy of life. The modern dramatist no longer makes use of such a device. The main function of the chorus was to report the events that took place off stage and to make some comments on the morality of the

actions presented on the stage. In modern plays, its place is often taken by one of the characters in the drama. Thus Enobarbus in Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" is a kind of chorus.

With his critical comments he serves to bring out the cause of Antony's degeneration under the spell of the "Serpent of old Nile". In modern problem plays, we often come across a character whose principal function in the play is merely to move through it as a philosopher spectator. He expounds moral problems on behalf of the writer. The French critics call him "raisonneur". But it is not always right to identify an out-spoken character with the dramatist. For instance some commentators have made the mistake of discovering in the melancholy Jacques in "As You Like It" the representative of Shakespeare.

But Shakespeare makes all the other characters in the play laugh at him which indicates that he does not express Shakespeare's views. The dramatist may very often find the Chorus-like character or the "raisonneur" inadequate to express his views on life. He often makes his view clear to the audience through the utterances of the various characters. Even while speaking in accordance with their personalities and situations, they may express the writer's ideas about many things. We can thus gain a clear idea of Shakespeare's ideas and judgements from the utterances of his characters.

The difficulty lies in discriminating the particular moments when they express the dramatist's views. Canon Beeching holds the opinion that the sentiments put into the mouth of these characters with whom we are expected to sympathise invariably express the writer's views. But we notice

that even the characters unable to arouse our sympathy may sometimes express moral truths, defined by them on earlier occasions. For instance, when Edgar says at the end of “ King Lear”, “ The Gods are just and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us”,

Edmund, the villain replies, “ Thou hast spoken right; ‘ tis true; the wheel has come full circle; I am here”. Shakespeare’s commentary upon the plot is provided more by Edmund than Edgar on this occasion. We should , therefore, be careful in examining the sentiments expressed by the various characters in a play. In conclusion, we can say without any shadow of doubt that dramatist’s criticism of life is embodied in the whole spirit of the play. The world that the dramatist creates, with all men and women, their actions, passions and motives, their struggles followed by success or failure, is a world for which the dramatist alone is responsible.

It goes without saying then that it is a projection of his own personality. The whole play, therefore, reveals the temper of his mind, the way in which he looks upon things, the line of his thoughts, his interests, and his attitude towards life. Characterisation in Drama One of the differences between drama and novel lies in the exposition of character. Usually it is thought that drama is concerned with action and, therefore, characterisation is a secondary matter in it. According to Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, “ The first demand of an average theatrical audience is always the same as the child’s Tell me a story”.

But story in a drama is childish and unintellectual unless it is related to character. If the story is nothing more than a succession of incidents, it is not much different from the adventures of a highway man. The story in a play

should display the various aspects of human nature. As Hudson says, “Characterisation is the rally fundamental and lasting element in the greatness of any dramatic work”. This is illustrated best by Shakespeare’s plays. Centuries have passed since Shakespeare wrote them, but we are still interested in them, and our interest is by no means less than that of the Elizabethan audience.

What keeps our interest alive are the men and women in them. The essential quality of “Macbeth” lies not in the murders Macbeth commits, but in the character of Macbeth. Even Iago, the villain, can hold us spellbound with his villainous schemes, originated in his brain. “Hamlet” is nothing more than a revenge play when we consider its plot, but none of these revenge plays that hooked the Elizabethan audience can appeal to us now as “Hamlet” does. Shakespeare has worked miracle out of that raw material by developing the psychological element in it, and that accounts for the immortal appeal of “Hamlet”.

The first condition in characterization in a lay is brevity. The dramatist has to portray the motive and conduct of a person within a few scenes. Since characterization and action cannot be divorced in a play, and the progress of the story has to be kept up, the task of the dramatist is not easy. This can well be illustrated with Shakespeare’s delineation of Macbeth. In the first act, the dramatist gives us an account of Macbeth’s courage on the battlefield, the evil fermenting in him, the confidence that others, including King Duncan, had in him, and above all, his superstitious nature.

The essential qualities of Lady Macbeth are also portrayed with equal precision. Her moral courage, her singleness of purpose, her influence over

her husband's sensitive nature are all laid before us in the first act itself. Yet Shakespeare has allotted to Lady Macbeth less than sixty speeches in the whole play, and Macbeth speaks about 150 times, and none of the speeches is long. "Macbeth" thus illustrates Shakespeare's skill in characterization. Concentration is another necessary condition in characterization in plays. The main qualities of a character should be emphasized.

Every word of the dialogue may be used for this purpose, and supererogatory talk may be avoided. A dramatist sometimes commits the mistake of being absorbed in the development of the character to such an extent that those qualities which do not influence the action may also be mentioned. This is called over characterisation, characterisation in accused Shakespeare of this tendency.. Impersonality is another necessary condition in characterisation. Unlike the novelist, the dramatist has to spend apart from his characters.

He cannot take them to pieces and lay their soul bare before us or pass judgement upon them. The plot and the utterance of the characters are the only means by which the dramatist can reveal his men, and women, their thoughts, their motives and passions. The dramatist, therefore, makes use of movement of the story, then crises and situations in it to display the intellectual and moral qualities of his characters. In the words of Hudson, "We know them by what they do, as the tree is known by its fruit". In a good play, as in a good novel plot rests upon character.

A number of men and women of different dispositions, motivated by different passions are brought together and the clash of their interests constitutes the plot. The evolution of the story then reveals their

dispositions, their motives and passions. Dialogue plays an important role in characterization. The characters exhibit their passion and motives, feelings and conflicts in their utterances. When the interest of the drama is psychological, the plot concerns itself rather with the play of the forces behind action, and then dialogue becomes an adjunct to action or an integral part of it.

Dramatic dialogue as a means of characterization can be classified under two heads. They are utterances of a given person and the remarks made about him by the other characters in the play. In the words of modern psychological playwrights like Ibsen, the utterances of the given person serves the purpose. Shakespeare generally reveals the fundamental qualities of his characters as soon and as clearly as possible. Though self-portrayal is the principal means of characterization by dialogue, the comments made by others about a person may be add to it. It is not correct to take every word uttered by a character as an indication of his nature.

His situation, his sympathy, antipathy and similar aspects should be taken into consideration. Occasional phrases uttered by a man can never be a reliable guidance to his character unless they are reinforced by various other utterances scattered through the play. Shakespeare uses this method in his “The Merchant of Venice”. Antonio is praised lavishly by all the other characters in the play. Salanio speaks of him as “the good Antonio”, Lorenzo refers to him as a “true gentlemen”, Gratiano loves him abundantly, and the gaoler grants him special privileges.

The same method is employed in revealing the character of Brutus in “Julius Caesar” too. Soliloquy, which is a minor subdivision of “aside” is

another means employed by the dramatists to take his audience down into the hidden recesses of a person's nature. Certain aspects of a man's character cannot be revealed in his action or his own word. Neither can the dramatist dissect his men and women as the novelist does. He, therefore, makes the characters themselves do the work of dissection, for we cannot understand them well unless we know the workings of their mind.

They think aloud, and we overhear what they say. A man, especially a villain, cannot disclose his design to a confidant, and in such a case, he is allowed to reason then imagine, not that the man is talking to himself or to us, but only thinking, and that we are concealed spectators of his thoughts. Modern critics however, condemn the use of Soliloquy, especially in realistic plays,. It is now regarded not only as clumsy, but also as non-dramatic, and the play that contains it is stigmatized as " old-fashioned".

Modern critics accept the confidant, but also on condition that he has an essential part in the action. The different types of drama Drama has been divided broadly into two categories Tragedy and Comedy, the former dealing with adversity and unhappiness, and the latter dealing with joy and mirth. Aristotle in his " poetics" defined tragedy as " artistic imitation of an action that is serious, complete in itself, and of adequate magnitude". He gave importance to suffering or rather, " an incident of a destructive or painful sort, such as violent death or physical agony".

In order to evoke pity, he recommended a hero neither too good nor wholly vicious, but " brought low through some error of judgement or shortcoming" known as " hamartia" or tragic flaw. It existed within the character of the hero, but in modern plays, the tragic law exists in the milieu more than in

the hero who merely becomes a victim of external circumstances. The effect of tragedy, according to Aristotle, is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear in such a way as to effect that special purging and relief known as “catharsis”. It can be brought about by proper constructions of the plot, which must have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Pity and fear are aroused not merely by the complete action but by salient incidents in the plot. Tragedy can be divided in the basis of form and content. From the point of view of form or structure, it is divided into the classical and the romantic tragedy. The former is based on Greek conventions, and the latter follows its own rules. One of the main features of the classical tragedy is the Chorus. It is consisted of a band of singers and dancers. In Greek tragedy the men and the women forming the Chorus belonged to a lower social rank than the chief characters.

Its main function was to report the events that occurred off stage and to make some comments from time to time. In the preface to “Merope”, Matthew Arnold explains the function of the chorus as to collect and weigh the impression which the action would at each stage make on a pious, thoughtful mind. It deepened the feeling aroused in the spectator by reminding him of the past, and by indicating what was to come. To combine, to harmonize and to deepen the feelings excited in the audience by sight of the play was the function of the chorus.

Its importance dwindled as Greek drama developed. In Aeschylus, it takes part in the action, but in Sophocles, it becomes a mere commentator, and in Euripides, it is a lyric element. The Elizabethan dramatists in England reduced it to a single speaker, unrelated rest of the characters, who spoke

the prologue or occasional interpretations of the plot. In modern plays it is rarely used as in Eliot's " Murder in the Cathedral". The Three Unities is another feature of the classical tragedy. The theory of unities was first propounded by Aristotle a Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.

C. They are of time, action, and place. Actually Aristotle mentioned only two Unity of time and unity of action. The unity of place was implied in the first, by the unity of action he meant that the story should be the imitation of one action, and of the whole of this , and that the parts should be so arranged that if any of them is transposed or taken away the whole would become different and change. By the unity of time, mentioned in " Poetics 5 " he meant that tragedy should confine itself to ne revolution of the sun, or slightly exceed the limit.

His statement (" Poetics 17") that, as contrasted with epic, tragic episodes are short and (" Poetics 26") confined in less extended limits crowded into a narrow compass, is the nearest he comes to any utterance regarding Unity of place. In short, Aristotle's requirements were interpreted to mean that the action of the play should be a unified whole, the time should be limited to twenty-four hours, and the scene should be unchanged, or it should at least remain within the limits of a single city.

According to some, Aristotle, insisted on the unity of action only, and the other two unities were added by critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They argued that verisimilitude an illusion of reality could be achieved only by the observance of the three unities. In England romantic tendencies were stronger thanacademicprecepts and therefore, the playwrights violated the theory of the unities came from Dr. Johnson who

defended the romantic playwrights for following laws of nature rather than those of art imposed by the critics.

It is universally admitted that more than Sophocles and Aeschylus, Seneca, the Roman dramatist, influenced the tragic writers of the renaissance in England. It happened so on account of the melodramatic elements in his plays and because he wrote in Latin which was treasured more than Greek then. His understanding of the working of human emotions commended itself to the Elizabethan playwrights in England. Moreover, Seneca showed in his plays a moral tone and system of philosophy popular in England. The moral purpose and the rhetorical methods of Senecan play appealed to them.

While Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristotle believed that man had some chance for happiness, Seneca showed that man was sure to be beaten. But he introduced a stoical remedy that appealed to the Elizabethan dramatists. Senecan plays were immersed in honours, epigrammatical moralizing and stichomythia or line repartee. The Senecan tradition also associated with supernatural agents like ghosts. Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy", and Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" show Senecan influence. The Neo-classical tragedy departed from the Senecan model in two points. They were the introduction of romantic love and the dropping out of chorus.

The ancient playwrights held the opinion that the introduction of romantic love would mar the dignity of the hero and the high seriousness of the narrative. The Neo-classicists, however, trudged in the footsteps of the classicist in observing the Three Unities rigorously, and in making the drama basically narrative. Nearly everything, especially of a violent character, happens, in a neo-classical theory, off the stage and is narrated to the

audience. The neo-classicists as well as the romantic dramatists dealt with great legends of the past and were in this respect not different from classicist.

The chief characters were all majesty, far above the ordinary human beings. The dialogues were stately, devoid of homely phrases, and mostly poetic. No attempt was made by the neo-classicists to mirror ordinary life. The romantic plays, though dealing with aristocratic character, were different in the method of treatment. The tragic hero is placed in a common world, among ordinary people. The dialogue had many touches of familiarity and even colloquialism. Realistic details like King Lear's famous, "Pray you, undo this button" abound. Thus the romantic tragedy was a combination of the idealistic and realistic elements.

To the romantic dramatists, unity of action meant not a single action, but organic connection among the various action presented in the play. Subplots, like the comic plot in Shakespeare's "The Tempest" were introduced, provided the two plots were independent. Moreover, the romantic drama is, unlike the neo-classical plays, a drama of action. Nearly, everything happens in the stage. Duels are fought, murders and suicides committed, and battles waged in full view of the spectators. The play of Shakespeare and his contemporaries thus satisfied the appetite of the Elizabethan audience for the action.

The romantic dramatists differed from the neo-classicists in their attitude towards the theory of unities too. They ignored the unity of time and place. Even Shakespeare moved his scenes from town to town, and from country to country, and described the events of many years. Tragic comedy is a new form of play. The classical dramatists never allowed any comic element to

enter their tragedies though they allowed serious element in their comedies. But the romantic playwrights disregarded this line of demarcation between tragedies and comedies. They freely mingled tragic and comic scenes in their plays.

Addison calls it “ One of the monstrous inventions that ever entered into a poet’s thought”. Dyrden agreed with him by commenting, “ There is no theatre in the world which has nothing so absurd as English tragic-comedy”. Though considered a non-Aristotlean form, the trig-comedy was successful. Shakespeare’s “ The Merchant of Venice” is an example for it. The important characters in tragi-comedies were drawn from both the high class and the low class. A serious action is introduced as threatening the protagonist who, by a sudden change of fortune, escapes and the play ends happily.

The term “ tragic-comedy” is sometimes applied to play with double plots, one serious and the other comic. On the basis of content, tragedy may be divided into various types. One of them is the horror tragedy, developed in England in the early part of seventeenth century by Ford and Wesbter. The appeal to the audience is made in these plays, not by characters, but by incidents. The aim of the writers who wrote horror tragedies was stage sensationalism. The inner struggle in these tragedies depends upon external events. Horror from situation dominates these plays. An example is “ The Duchess of Malfi”.

The Heroic tragedy was cultivated during the Restoration Period by a number of dramatists, the prominent among whom are Dryden and Otway. The subjects of these plays were love and valour and the themes were developed to epic magnitude. An air of exaggeration prevailed in them. Dryden himself

said, “ Heroic play is the representation of nature wrought up to a high pitch”. The scenes in them were laid in distant countries like Peru, India and Mexico. The characters were men of superhuman power and women of immortal beauty and unattainable virtue. The speeches were magnificent, marked by a declamatory style.

The heroic meter, instead of blank verse, was employed in them. Its Artistic beauty and effect were marred by its artificiality and exaggeration. Domestic tragedy was a type of play written in the eighteenth century. The term is also applied to some of Ibsen’s plays and some Elizabethan tragedies like “ A Woman Killed with Kindness”. It is a serious play, realistic in style with its hero drawn from the low or middle class and its action concerned with personal or domestic matters. The domestic tragedies were written mostly in prose. They were devoid of emotional force and was based on pity and sympathy.

An example is Lillo’s “ The London Merchant”. Comedy, according to Aristotle, deals with “ some defect or ugliness that is painful or destructive”. The characters, mostly from low classes were drawn from observation and experience. The writers were often satirical and the characters became caricatures of actual human beings. The plots were less complicated than those of tragedy. Misunderstandings and mistaken identities played a prominent role in them. Yet a good comedy can penetrate deeply into the roots of the human nature, and make the audience aware of man’s limitations.

Aristotle believed that the play is rendered comic by making the characters in it worse than they are, thereby making them objects of merriments. Ben

Johnson also believed that whatever is awry in men provokes laughter. A number of critics from Kaunt to Hazlitt have found that the source of laughter is incongruity. In Sidney's opinion also, "Laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature". Allardyce Nicoll traces the source of laughter to a desire for liberation from the restraints of society.

It goes contrary to Bergson's view that the source is automatism which implies that the conditions of comedy are unsociability on the part of the object of laughter. The first regular drama in English in the form of a comedy was "Ralph Roister Doister" written by Nicholas Udall in 1550 or so. The writer seems to have been influenced much by Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence. The second English comedy was "Grammer Gurton's Needle" of doubtful authorship performed at Christ's college in Cambridge in 1552. Both these comedies had the classical division into five acts, and the action was limited to a single day and a single locality.

On the basis of form, the comedy may be divided into classical and romantic comedies, which differ from each other in the same manner the two types of tragedies do. On the basis of content, comedy may be divided into various types. The comedy of Humours was written chiefly by Ben Johnson who used the term "humours" in the medieval sense in which it referred to the four fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile in the human body. According to the theories of humours, a person's physical, mental and moral conditions are determined by the state of his humours.

An imbalance in their proportion affected the behaviour of the person, and a perfect balance created an ideal man. The dramatists who adopted this

theory designed “humourous” characters, whose behavior was determined by a single humour. Ben Johnson’s “Every Man in His Humour” is the earliest play written in this way in 1598. Shakespeare has introduced “humourous” characters like the melancholy Jacques in “As You like it”. Johnson drew comedy down to real life, using it to present the follies of contemporary London. The comedy of humours disregarded humour as the term is used now.

It depended on wit and satire. The comedy of Manners developed in the Restoration period. The writer were influenced by the French dramatist Moliere and the Spanish dramatist Claderson. It is realistic in nature, and concentrated on the activities, intrigues and amorous achievements of gay, frivolous men and women who used to meet in cafes, chocolate houses, clubs and gambling centres in London. Reputations were murdered and clandestine love affairs were carried out by them. A lot of senseless prattle went on with scandal mongering in the air.

This degraded life of the aristocratic classes of the day is presented in these comedies. Satire was an integral part of these comedies. It was the satire at the follies of those who strive to enter the elegant circle by plotting against their rivals and competitions in love. Besides satire, it made use of wit which is seen in the repartees that abound in these plays. It has been criticised for its obscenity and immorality. The Genteel Comedy was developed by Colley Cibber in the middle of the eighteenth century. His “The Careless Husband” is regarded as the first genteel comedy in English.

The term was first used by Addison for the type of comedy that portrays more artificial life than the comedy of manners. Affectations ruled the life of

the upper class society then, and these affectations are presented in humorous manner in these comedies. Laughter arises not out of the playful fancies of intellectual men, but out of the affectations of the high class society. The Comedy of Intrigue came into inception in the days of Fletcher and continued to be popular till the end of the eighteenth century. In this type of comedy laughter arises out of the disguises and the intrigues and complications of the plot.

An important writer of this type of comedy is Fletcher. The play captures our attention with a series of situations leading to innumerable mistakes and amusing denouements. There is little wit, no humour, no satire, but there are several comic situations. Its laughter depends on external sources, and it provides little intellectual mirth. The Sentimental Comedy of the eighteenth century was a reaction against the comedy of manners of the Restoration period. The sentimental comedy was opposed to the light-hearted fun in the comedy of manners.

In fact, it is opposed to the spirit of comedy itself. Humour is driven out of it, and as Allardyce Nicoll says, it presented tears in place of laughter. The place of humour was taken by pathos. Wit or brilliance had no place in this type of comedy. The writer aimed at moral edification, for they felt that the taste of the readers had been degraded by obscenity and vulgarity depicted in the comedy of manners. Distressed middle class characters were presented in these comedies to evoke sympathy. The principal writers of this type of comedy were Richard Steele, Hume Kelly and Cumberland.

It developed not only on account of the theatrical and social changes of the time, but also because the rising middle class demanded a different type of

comedy. The sentimental comedies provided moral lectures and lacked emotional appeal. Hazlitt aptly says, “ It is almost a misnomer to call them comedies; they are rather homilies in dialogue”. The One Act Play The origin of the one-act play can be traced back to the short farces that flourished in Italy from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries and the miracle and mystery plays of became a curtain-raiser. In 1903 when W. W.

Jacob’s play “ The Monkey’s Paw” was acted as a curtain-raiser, it appealed to the audience so much that most of the people left the theatre when the curtain descended upon this play became a series rival to the long play. The one-act play may be tragic as in Synge’s “ Riders to the Sea”, it can be didactic as Willis Hall’s “ The Day’s beginning”, it can be comic and satirical Houghton’s “ The Dear Departed”, or oit can be a fantasy like Lord Dunsany’s ‘ The Golden Doom”. It can be farcial too Arnold Bennet’s “ The Stepmother”, or melodramatic like ‘ The Monkey’s Paw”. It can be written in verse like Christopher Fry’s “ A Phoenix too Frequent”.

The outstanding characteristic of the one-act play is that it turns upon a single idea or situation, presenting a single mood or single aspect of character, though it presents a conflict like long plays. A few characters are introduced and the interest is concentrated on a single dominant character in whom a single trait is revealed in a flash. Dialogues are short, and the dramatist cannot unities of action, time and place are observed. It has an immense future because modern people have less time and inclination for long plays, it is cheaper to produce, and can be performed by amateurs.

Above all, the growth of radio and television has made it popular. The importance of the opening scene of the play The Exposition as given in the

essay on drama. Soliloquy and the Aside The aside like the soliloquy indicates that dialogue is not the only substitute for the dramatist for direct analysis and commentary of the novelist. Soliloquy is a convention by which a character, alone on the stage, utters his thoughts aloud. The audience is thus provided with the information necessary to understand the character's motives and the state of mind.

Aside is another similar stage device in which a character, not necessarily alone on the stage, expresses his thoughts in a short speech which is supposed to be inaudible to the other characters on the stage. Both these conventions, prevalent in the Elizabethan and later drama, were adopted by the dramatist to take the audience down into hidden recesses of a person's nature. The dramatist, being denied the privilege of dissecting his characters as the novelist does, has to resort to such means to enable the audience and readers to understand his characters well.

In soliloquy and aside the characters are not supposed to be speaking to us or to themselves, but they are merely thinking aloud. The conventions, however, fell into disuse in the nineteenth century when realism was insisted upon. Melodrama "Melos" is a Greek term meaning "song", and the term melodrama was, therefore, applied to musical accompaniment was a characteristic of most of the plays, because "legitimate" plays were permitted only in the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres while musical entertainment had no such restrictions at all. In melodrama the hero and heroine were embodiments of virtue, and the villain was a monster of evil.

The plot was centered round intrigues and violent effect and emotional excitement. Now the term "melodrama" is applied to any work that contains

improbable events and sensational actions. Tragic Flaw / Hamartia In Aristotle's view, tragedy should evoke pity. To do so he recommended a hero neither superlatively good and just or wholly vicious and depraved. He brought to misery through some mistaken act caused by an error in his judgement or some shortcoming in his nature. This error of judgement is called "hamartia" or "tragic flaw". It exists within the character and causes the tragedy.

In Greek tragedies a common form of hamartia was pride which tempts a man to disregard divine power. It moves us to pity because the hero is not an essentially evil man, and his misfortune is far more than what he deserves. In modern social drama the tragic flaw often exists in the milieu, and the hero becomes a victim of external circumstances. Catharsis "Catharsis" in Greek signifies "purgation" or "purification". The effect of tragedy, according to Aristotle, is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear in such a way as to effect purging and relief, and this is known as "catharsis" in tragedy.

Recently, Aristotle's "Catharsis" has been interpreted as applying not to the effect on the audience, but to an element within the play itself. It then signifies the purgation of the guilt attached to the hero's tragic act by demonstrating in the course of the drama that the hero performed this act without knowledge of its nature. Aristotle distinguishes the tragic from comic and other forms by this effect. In any case, he accounts for the extraordinary fact that many tragic representations of suffering, defeat and death leave on the audience a feeling, not of depression, but of relief and exaltation. Comic Relief

Comic relief is the relief provided by a spell of fun between two serious scenes or just before a serious incident in a play. It is achieved by the use of a humorous characters and their speeches. This was common in Elizabethan tragedy. They are necessary to provide a sort of relaxation to the audience after witnessing a grave scene or to prepare themselves for a grave incident. Sometimes the comic relief is provided by an intrusive episode or dialogue. It not only alleviates the tension, but also adds variety to the play . in some plays they become an integral part of the play and serve to intensify the tragic note.

An example is the “ Porter Scene” in Shakespeare’s “ Macbeth”. Dramatic Irony Dramatic Irony s an utterance by a character in a play when he is ignorant of the real significance of his words. It is a situation in which the audience shares with the author knowledge of something which the speaker in the play is ignorant of. The character acts in a way inappropriate to the circumstances or says something which turns out to be true later though he did not expect such a turn of events. Writers of Greek tragedy, who generally borrowed their plots of this device.

For instance, in Sophocles’s “ Oedipus”, the king (Oedipus) hunts for the evil-doer who has brought plague upon Thebes without being aware that the culprit is himself. The English Chronicle plays Chronicle plays are plays for which the source is the Chronicle, or rather, record of events in the chronological order preserved in a king’s court. These historical materials are dramatized into chronicle plays. In England, Marlow’s “ Edward II”, and are taken from Holinshed’s “ Chronicles”. They were popular in the Elizabethan

period when patriotic fervor rising out of the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 reigned supreme in English society.

The early chronicle plays merely presented a series of events during the reign of an English King. The plays were effective on the account of the battles presented on the stage and the pageants and spectacles that accompanied the victory in battle. Marlowe, for the first time selected and rearranged materials from Holinshed Chronicles for his “Edward II”. The Elizabethan chronicle plays are often called history plays. Parallelism in drama Parallelism and contrast are two elements in the composition of the plot of a play.

The central idea of one part of the action reappears in another part of it, and each serves to illustrate and reinforce the other. Shakespeare seems to have been very fond of this stage device, for he often uses it to add to the dramatic interest of the story. However, the best example of parallelism in Shakespearean play is found in “King Lear”, the two plots of which correspond in every detail. Shakespeare has here worked upon two narratives from two sources. In one story we come across a father deceived in the character of his daughters, ultimately getting real love from the one he had spurned.

In the other story, we have a father deceived in the character of his sons, finding love in the one he has tried to kill. The Shakespeare, each supplementing the other in tragical emotions. A sort of burlesque parallelism is found in the comic scenes in Marlowe’s “Doctor Faustus”. The tragic hero Aristotle recommended for the tragedy a hero who is neither too good nor too evil. This is best seen in Shakespeare’s tragedies. His heroes are all men

of high rank and great eminence, but they are brought low by some weakness in their nature.

In Macbeth, it was indomitable ambition, in Othello it was an over-credulous nature, and in Hamlet, it was a wavering spirit. Tragedy proceeds from the character or the actions of the hero. But Fate or circumstances also plays a dominant role in bringing about the tragedy. The suffering and calamity that fall to the lot of the hero are not of the ordinary type. They are exceptional. Macbeth is pricked by a guilty conscience to such an extent that he feels “life is a meaningless tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”.