

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH DRAMA

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to II B.A. English students

WHAT IS DRAMA?

- **Drama is a genre of literature represented by works intended for acting by actors on stage, radio, or television.**
- **Drama is a composition in prose or verse presenting in dialogue or pantomime, where a story involving conflict or contrast of characters, intended to be acted on the stage.**
- **Drama involves any situation or series of events having vivid, emotional, conflicting, tragic, turbulent or striking interest or results.**
- **Drama is a type of literature, telling a story, which is intended to be performed to an audience on the stage.**

DEFINITIONS

- Aristotle defines by relating drama to the mimetic impulse in human beings like children playing father and mother in a childhood play.
- This means that imitation is a component of life.
- Human beings have the desire to copy others, situations or events.
- But E.M. Forster insists that drama is not just an imitation of action, but a tool for the exposure of social conditions, not just an entertainment but an instrument of political and social change.
- Thus drama is a way of creating or recreating a situation, an expression of reality through impersonation or re-enactment.

ORIGIN OF DRAMA

- The origin of the drama is deep-rooted in the religious predispositions of mankind.
- The ancient Greek and Roman dramas were mostly concerned with religious ceremonials of people, which resulted in the development of drama.
- As the Bible was in Latin, common people could not understand its meanings.
- That's why the clergy tried to find out some new methods of teaching and expounding the teachings of Bible to the common people.
- For this purpose, they developed a new method, wherein the stories of the Gospel were explained through the living pictures.
- The performers acted out the story in a dumb show.

Second stage

- The actors spoke as well as acted their parts.
- Special plays were written by the clerics, at first in Latin and later in the vernacular French.
- These early plays were known as Mysteries or Miracles.
- The very word *Mystery* shows its ecclesiastical origin, since the word comes from the French *Mystere* because the clergy themselves took part in these plays.
- In England the term Miracle is used indiscriminately for any kind of religious play, but strictly speaking the term Mystery is applied to the stories taken from the Scriptures, while Miracles are the plays dealing with incidents in the lives of Saints and Martyrs.

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS ORIGIN

- The history of drama is deeply rooted in the religious annals of history.
- Thus the early plays that merged gradually into Elizabethan drama.
- The era of Elizabeth, drama is found with distinctive stages in twofold appeal.
 - i. The craving for amusement
 - ii. The desire for improvement
- This twofold appeal of the drama, enables us to differentiate the drama from the **sacred element**.

Church to the Marketplace

- **Drama is obviously inherent in the very ritual of the Church, was a factor in dramatic development.**
- **The season of the year suggested the subject matter of plays: Christmas, Easter, stories derived from the Bible, called Mysteries, stories from the lives of the Saints, scenes from the Life of Christ, which were known as Miracle Plays.**
- **The first positive stage in the development of the drama is marked by the performance of these stories in the Church.**
- **The next stage of the play emerged from the Church into the marketplace.**
- **This was effected when the common people were entrusted with the performances of the dramas in the fourteenth century.**

The Morality & Interlude Plays

- The Mystery and Miracle Play gave rise to the Morality and Interlude.
- In the Miracle and Mystery plays, serious and comic elements were interwoven.
- But the Morality plays present the serious and the Interlude the higher side of things.
- The Morality was frankly didactic. The characters typified certain qualities e.g., Sin, Grace, Repentance.
- The Interlude aimed merely at amusement.
- Moralities began to be acted in the reign of Henry VI and flourished until the beginning of Elizabeth's reign.
- The morality, as we have said, is a drama in which the characters are allegorical, symbolical, or abstract. Who are found in some of the earlier Miracle plays.

Emergence of Modern Drama

- The Morality plays with their allegorical characters led gradually to emerge into real people with individual idiosyncrasies.
- Comic scenes were introduced to relieve the seriousness of these medieval “problem” plays.
- An associate, a character peculiar to the Morality, was allowed to enter between the scenes and amuse the people with a character.
- According to Aristotle, there are mainly **Five elements** of drama: (1) Imitation (2) Plot (3) Action (4) Dialogue & (5) Character.

ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

- The English drama reached its height between 1590 and 1614 when Shakespeare was at the peak of his dramatic career.
- His predecessors -Marlowe, kyd, Greene and Lyly paved the way and Shakespeare marched on taking English drama to a level which could not be surpassed till today.
- The main features of the English drama of that time are - revenge themes, ghastly melodramatic scenes, inner conflict, hero-villain protagonists, tragic-comedy, presence of ghosts and use of blank verse.

SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

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WHAT IS COMEDY?

- Comedy is a literary genre and a type of dramatic work that is amusing and satirical in its tone, mostly having a cheerful ending.
- The motif of this dramatic work is triumph over unpleasant circumstance by creating comic effects, resulting in a happy or successful conclusion.
- It is any work that is intended to incite laughter and amusement, especially in a theatre, television, film, stand-up comedy or any other entertainment medium.
- In a comedy an amusing character triumphs over poor circumstances, creating comic effects. The tone here is light and satirical and the story always ends well.

COMIC PLAYS by SHAKESPEARE

- **All's Well That Ends Well**
- **As You Like It**
- **The Comedy of Errors**
- **Love's Labour's Lost**
- **Measure for Measure**
- **The Merchant of Venice**
- **The Merry Wives of Windsor**
- **A Midsummer Night's Dream**
- **Much Ado About Nothing**
- **The Taming of the Shrew**
- **The Tempest**
- **Twelfth Night**
- **The Two Gentlemen of Verona**
- **The Winter's Tale**

PLOT STRUCTURE IN SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDIES

- **1. Introduction of main character(s)**
2. Tragic Event
3. Journey (physical or self-discovery or both)
4. Reconciliation
5. Resolution
6. Happy Ending
- **The climax of the play most often occurs in the third act. The final scene has a celebratory feel with declarations of love.**

SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDIES

- The First Folio was published in 1623 with the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays.
- Its contents page was divided the plays into three categories: Comedies, Histories and Tragedies.
- Shakespeare comedies are generally identifiable as plays full of fun, irony and dazzling wordplay.
- They are also abound in disguises and mistaken identities, with very complicated plots that are difficult to follow with very contrived endings.
- Shakespeare's comedy plays have stood the test of time.
- The following are the typical shape of comedies.

MARRIAGE

- Comedies head towards marriage.
- Marriages conventionally represent the achievement of happiness and the promise of regeneration.
- Marriage is the symbolic power in Shakespeare's plays that some end in more than one marriage.
- Both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* end with three.
- In the final scene of *As You Like It*, Hymen, the god of marriage, takes the stage to preside over no fewer than four nuptial couplings and to celebrate 'High wedlock'.
- The couples of all comedies have achieved happiness through marriage.

Misconception

- Shakespearean comedies arise from the misconceptions of lovers.
- In *Much Ado about Nothing*, the friends of Benedick, who is mocking Beatrice and scorning love, arrange for him to overhear them talking about how desperately Beatrice in fact loves him.
- The trick is enjoyably justified when he next meets Beatrice and determinedly interprets her rudeness as concealed affection.
- Shakespeare's comedies rely on benign misunderstanding and deception.
- They therefore put a premium on dramatic irony, where the audience know better than the perplexed lovers.
- An outstanding example is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where we understand the magic of the love potion, mistakenly applied by Puck to Lysander's eyes, and can relish not only the love talk he spouts to Helena, but her bewilderment too.

Disguise and gender

- A comparable kind of dramatic irony is produced by Shakespeare's use of disguise in comedy – particularly the disguising of women as young men.
- In *As You Like It* there is a delicious comedy in Orlando's enacted wooing of Rosalind, who prompts him in the guise of a young man to whom he can speak without reticence.
- In *Twelfth Night*, Olivia who, mourning her brother's death, has sworn to be 'a cloistress' and keep herself a veiled recluse for seven years, finds herself smitten by Cesario, a young man sent with messages from Duke Orsino.
- As ever in Shakespeare's comedies, it takes mistakes to teach characters the truths of their own hearts.

SETTINGS

- The action of *Twelfth Night* takes place at some uncertain date in Illyria, an imagined place where the Italian-seeming court of Orsino is neighbour to the apparently English household of Olivia.
- Several of Shakespeare's comedies have such highly imaginary settings – the magical wood outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*.
- Only one, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is set in England, and this is an opportunistic piece, written to exploit the popularity of the character of Falstaff.
- Shakespeare was unusual in invariably finding foreign and timeless locations for his comedies.

BOUNDARIES OF COMEDY

- Comedy was traditionally a 'lower' genre than tragedy or history, and so these comedies by Shakespeare's contemporaries justified themselves by their satirical ambitions.
- Shakespeare was little interested in topical satire.
- Yet there is some evidence that the rules and conventions governing comedy were loose in Shakespeare's day.
- The title pages of the various quarto editions of Shakespeare's plays indicate that generic categories were not hard and fast.
- The quarto edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598) announces it as 'A Pleasant Conceited Comedy' and the quarto *Taming of the Shrew* declares it to be a 'wittie and pleasant comedie'.
- The title page of *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) calls it 'The most excellent Historie of the *Merchant of Venice*'.

HAPPY ENDINGS

- One of the most notable elements of Shakespearean comedy is a happy ending.
- Unlike tragedies, which always end with death, Shakespeare's comedies ended in a celebratory manner, often with love and marriage as the biggest focal points.
- To modern eyes, this may seem trivial, given how cynical modern readers can be about the pitfalls of holy matrimony.
- Supernatural happy endings in Shakespeare's plays can also happen as a result of *deus ex machina*, known as 'god in the machine,' as a literary device it refers to instances, which conclude a narrative thanks to a contrived but wholly unlikely occurrence, as if God has waved a magic wand to tie up loose ends.

SUMMING UP

- **Happy ending, usually involving marriages between the unmarried characters (sometimes deus ex machina)**
- **Light-hearted tone**
- **Separation and re-unification, eg. lovers who overcome obstacles and re-unite in harmony**
- **Mistaken identities and deception**
- **Disputes between characters**
- **Complex plot with several, intertwining plot-lines**
- **Heavy use of comic devices**
- **Comic language full of clever puns, metaphors and insults**
- **Country setting which is often idealized**
- **Main theme: love**
- **Gender mix-up and disguise (men dressing as women and vice versa)**
- **Frequent use of improbable, fantastic, or supernatural elements**
- **Comedies often contain a philosophical thematic undercurrent**

DRAMATIC IRONY

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What is Irony?

- Irony is a literary device in which contradictory statements or situations reveal a reality that is different from what appears to be true.
- There are many forms of irony featured in literature.
- The effectiveness of irony as a literary device depends on the reader's expectations and understanding of the disparity between what “should” happen and what “actually” happens in a literary work.
- This can be in the form of an unforeseen outcome of an event, a character's unanticipated behaviour, or something inappropriate that is said.

WHAT IS DRAMATIC IRONY?

- **Dramatic Irony that is inherent in speeches or a situation of a drama and is understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters in the play.**
- **It is an important stylistic device that is commonly found in plays, movies, theaters, and sometimes in poetry.**
- **Storytellers use this irony as a useful plot device for creating situations in which the audience knows more about the situations, the causes of conflicts, and their resolutions before the leading characters or actors.**
- **That is why readers observe that the speech of actors takes on unusual meanings.**

- For instance, the audience knows that a character is going to be murdered, or will make a decision to commit suicide; however, one particular character or others may not be aware of these facts.
- Hence, the words and actions of characters would suggest a different meaning to the audience from what they indicate to the characters and the story.
- Thus, it creates intense suspense and humor.
- This speech device also emphasizes, embellishes, and conveys emotions and moods more effectively.

FUNCTION OF DRAMATIC IRONY

- Many writers use dramatic irony as an effective tool to sustain and excite the readers' interest.
- Since this form of irony creates a contrast between situation of characters and the episodes that unfold, it generates curiosity.
- By allowing the audience to know important facts ahead of the leading characters, dramatic irony puts the audience and readers above the characters, and also encourages them to anticipate, hope, and fear the moment when a character would learn the truth behind events and situations of the story.

- More often, this irony occurs in tragedies, where readers are lead to sympathize with leading characters.
- Thus, this irony emphasizes the fatality of incomplete understanding on honest and innocent people, and demonstrates the painful consequences of misunderstandings.
- Dramatic irony is most often associated with the theatre, but examples of it can be found across the literary and performing arts.
- It's a way of building tension.
- When Viewers have information, the characters don't have. Viewers want to shout a warning through the screen. Audience members end up on the edge of their seats, anticipating that something terrible is going to happen that the characters can't see coming.

- Dramatic irony is frequently contrasted with verbal irony.
- The former is embedded in a work's structure, whereas the latter typically operates at the level of words and sentences that are understood by audiences or readers to carry meanings different from the words themselves when interpreted literally.
- Sarcasm can be considered a form of verbal irony.
- Dramatic irony is also sometimes equated with tragic irony, situational irony, or structural irony.

EXAMPLES

- Dramatic irony abounds in works of tragedy.
- In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the audience knows that Oedipus's acts are tragic mistakes long before he recognizes his own errors.
- Western writers whose works are traditionally cited for their adept use of dramatic irony include William Shakespeare (as in Othello's trust of the treacherous Iago in the play *Othello*), Voltaire, Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, and Henry James, among many others.
- Dramatic irony can also be found in such works as O. Henry's short story "The Gift of the Magi" and Anton Chekhov's story "Lady with the Dog."

Macbeth

(William Shakespeare)

- “There’s no art
To find the mind’s construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.”
- In this case, Duncan says that he trusts Macbeth, not knowing about the prophecy of witches that Macbeth is going to be the king, and that he would kill him.
- The audience, on the other hand, knows about the prophecy. This demonstrates dramatic irony.

- *Titanic*: At some point before the ship hits the fateful iceberg, a character in James Cameron's film remarks, "It's so beautiful, I could just die." This is dramatic irony because the audience goes into the movie knowing that the ship will ultimately sink.
- In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the audience knows Juliet is in a drugged sleep, so when Romeo thinks she is dead and kills himself (followed by Juliet doing the same) it increases the audience's shock.
- In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, the audience knows Nora borrowed money forging her father's signature and her husband is unaware. We also know Nora's husband thinks of her as a doll and Nora is unaware.

SOLILOQUY & ASIDE

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Definition of Soliloquy

- A soliloquy is a popular literary device often used in drama to reveal the innermost thoughts of a character.
- A soliloquy is also a kind of *monologue*, or an extended speech by one character.
- In a soliloquy, though, the speech is not given to another character, and there is no one around to hear it.
- Instead of another character, the soliloquy is delivered to a surrogate, to the audience, or to no one in particular.

- It is a great technique used to convey the progress of action of the play, by means of expressing a character's thoughts about a certain character or past, present, or upcoming event, while talking to himself without acknowledging the presence of any other person.
- A soliloquy allows the character to express his or her views without necessarily having anyone to talk to.
- The speaker may have to be more careful about what he or she says in the presence of other characters.
- But if the character is simply thinking out loud, talking to a surrogate, or addressing the audience, then this doesn't matter – he or she can just speak at length about the topic without worrying about anyone else's reaction or perceptions.

- The word *soliloquy* is derived from the Latin word *solo*, which means “to himself,” and *loquor*, which means “I speak,” respectively.
- A soliloquy is often used as a means of character revelation or character manifestation to the reader or the audience of the play.
- Due to a lack of time and space, it was sometimes considered essential to present information about the plot, and to expose the feelings and intentions of the characters.
- Historically, dramatists made extensive use of soliloquies in their plays, but it has become outdated, though some playwrights still use it in their plays.

SOLILOQUY, MONOLOGUE AND ASIDE

- Soliloquy is wrongly mixed up with monologue and aside.
- These two techniques are distinctly different from a soliloquy.
- Although, like soliloquy, a monologue is a speech, the purpose and presentation of both is different.
- In a monologue, a character usually makes a speech in the presence of other characters, while in a soliloquy, the character or speaker speaks to himself.
- By doing so, the character keeps these thoughts secret from the other characters of the play.
- An aside on the other hand, is a short comment by a character towards the audience, often for another character, but usually without his knowledge.

FUNCTION OF SOLILOQUY

- **A soliloquy in a play is a great dramatic technique or tool that intends to reveal the inner workings of the character.**
- **No other technique can perform the function of supplying essential progress of the action of the story better than a soliloquy.**
- **It is used, not only to convey the development of the play to the audience, but also to provide an opportunity to see inside the mind of a certain character.**

Examples

- “To be, or not to be? That is the question—
Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune...”
- Hamlet is in a state of mind that only Shakespeare can describe through his magnificent pen. Uncertain, reluctant Prince Hamlet was literally unable to do anything but merely wait to “catch the conscience of the king” to complete his supposed plan.
- “Fair Nature’s eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!”
- These lines are from Dr. Faustus’ last soliloquy, where Faustus makes an appeal in the last hour’s anguish to stop whatever was done.

- **“O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.”**
- **Juliet was thinking aloud about the traditional enmity between Romeo’s clan and her family, expressing her hopelessness about the success of their love.**

ASIDE

- Most of the time, characters are separated from the audience by “the fourth wall.”
- But sometimes, a character will break the fourth wall and speak directly to the audience.
- This is called an *aside*.
- In general, an aside is a brief interruption, just a sentence or two, or even something as subtle as a wink. But when the aside is extended into a long monologue, it becomes a *soliloquy*.

- **Both a soliloquy and an aside are used to reveal a character's secret thoughts and motives.**
- **However, an aside is shorter than a soliloquy—typically only one or two sentences—and is directed at the audience.**
- **Other characters are often present when an aside is delivered, but they do not hear the aside.**
- **In plays and movies, the character making the aside will often turn away from the other characters and face the audience or camera while speaking.**

TRAGIC HERO

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Who is a tragic hero?

- An ideal tragic hero should be a man of eminence. The actions of an eminent man would be 'serious, complete and of a certain magnitude and goodness, though not absolutely virtuous.
- The sufferings, fall and death of an absolutely virtuous man would generate feelings of disgust rather than those of 'terror and compassion' which a tragic play must produce.
- The hero should neither be a villain nor a wicked person for his fall, otherwise his death would please and satisfy our moral sense without generation the feelings of pity, compassion and fear.

- Therefore, the ideal tragic hero should be basically a good man with a minor flaw or tragic trait in his character.
- The entire tragedy should issue from this minor flaw or error of judgment.
- The fall and sufferings and death of such a hero would certainly generate feelings of pity and fear.
- The idea of the tragic hero was first defined by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle based on his study of Greek drama.
- Despite the term "tragic hero," it's sometimes the case that tragic heroes are not really heroes at all in the typical sense—and in a few cases, antagonists may even be described as tragic heroes.

- Aristotle categorized the characteristics of classic tragic hero in Greek drama as, in general, a male character of noble birth who experiences a reversal of fortune due to a tragic flaw.
- In addition, the realization of this flaw evokes sympathy from an audience.
- For example, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is a tragic hero.
- His reckless passion in love, which makes him a compelling character, also leads directly to the tragedy of his death.
- As a result, the audience is left to sympathize with his tragic fate.

SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGIC HERO

- William Shakespeare made great use of tragic hero as a literary device in his Shakespearean tragedies.
- Shakespeare's tragic heroes demonstrate the presence of fatal flaws within the powerful.
- Yet, the protagonists in his tragedies often experience moments of realization or redemption that result in compassion from the audience.
- Here are some classic examples of Shakespearean tragic heroes:

Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Romeo Montague, Othello, Henry V, Richard III, Cleopatra, Brutus, Troilus

TRAGIC HERO AND ANTI-HERO

- It can be difficult to distinguish between tragic hero and anti-hero in literary works.
- Essentially, for a character to be a tragic hero, they must have some initial virtue that makes them powerful, charismatic, or heroic in the minds of the audience.
- In addition, tragic heroes must possess some sort of tragic flaw as part of their internal make-up or nature that makes them at least partially responsible for their own destruction.
- Finally, a tragic hero should suffer a reversal of fortune from good to bad, often leading to death or punishment that appears to be greater than deserved.
- As a result, these elements work together to generate a sympathetic response from the audience for tragic heroes.

- **An anti-hero is also a protagonist in fiction.**
- **However, unlike a tragic hero, an anti-hero is lacking in virtues associated with heroism.**
- **The anti-hero may be deficient in characteristics such as courage or integrity. However, as a character, the anti-hero still has an audience's sympathy.**
- **Though anti-heroes may do good things for wrong reasons, they are fundamentally flawed and their actions serve only themselves.**
- **Therefore, their downfall is deserved and due entirely to their choices and devices.**

PROTAGONIST OF A TRAGEDY

- The tragic hero functions as the main character or protagonist of a tragedy.
- The characteristics of the tragic hero have evolved since Aristotle's time in the sense that they are not limited to nobility or the male gender.
- In addition, a modern tragic hero may not necessarily possess typical or conventional heroic qualities.
- They may even be somewhat villainous in nature.
- However, all tragic heroes must have sympathy from the audience for their circumstances.
- Additionally, all tragic heroes must experience a downfall leading to some form of ruin as a result of a tragic flaw in their character.

STRATEGIES TO INCLUDE TRAGIC HERO

- **HAMARTIA**, sometimes known as tragic flaw, is a fault of a character that leads to the downfall. For example, hubris is a common tragic flaw in that its nature is excessive pride and even defiance of the gods in Greek tragedy. Overall, a tragic hero must possess hamartia.
- **PERIPETEIA** refers to a sudden turning point, as in a reversal of fortune or negative change of circumstances. Therefore, a tragic hero must experience peripeteia for their downfall.
- **CATHARSIS** is the necessary pity and fear that the audience feels for tragic heroes and their inescapable fate. As a result, this sympathetic feeling indicates a purge of pent-up emotions in the audience, released through the journey of tragic heroes.

OTHELLO

- “Othello” is a classic example of one of Shakespeare’s most tragic heroes. At the beginning of the play, Othello’s circumstances are very fortunate.
- He is newly married to a wife who loves him. He has wealth and power, and his military leadership has earned him the highest ranks and honors.
- Overall, though Othello is subject to racial slurs, he is respected and embraced as a true hero by many.
- It is Othello’s inner flaws that make him a tragic hero.

- He succumbs to jealousy and invests his trust in those characters that do not deserve it.
- In turn, he reviles those who are loyal and loving towards him.
- As a result, he destroys the very people he loves and falls to ruin himself.
- Othello's moment of realization that his tragic flaw has led to his downfall and reversal of fortune.
- His own “hand” has thrown his “pearl” away.
- This remorse inspires compassion and sympathy in the audience, making Othello a tragic hero.