**SHAKESPEARE-I**

**As You Like It**

**Act I**

Orlando, the youngest son of the recently-deceased Sir Roland de Boys, is treated harshly by his eldest brother, Oliver. Bitter and angry, Orlando challenges the court wrestler, Charles, to a fight. When Oliver learns of the fight, Oliver tells Charles to injure Orlando if possible.

Duke Frederick has recently deposed his brother, Duke Senior, as head of the court. But he allowed Senior's daughter, Rosalind, to remain, and she and Celia, the new Duke's daughter, watch the wrestling competition. During the match, Rosalind falls in love with Orlando, who beats Charles. Rosalind gives Orlando a chain to wear; in turn, he is overcome with love.

**Act II**

Shortly after, Orlando is warned of his brother's plot against him and seeks refuge in the Forest of Arden. At the same time, and seemingly without cause, Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind. She decides to seek shelter in the Forest of Arden with Celia. They both disguise themselves: Rosalind as the young man Ganymede and Celia as his shepherdess sister Aliena. Touchstone, the court fool, also goes with them.

**Act III**

In the Forest of Arden, the weary cousins happen upon Silvius, a lovesick shepherd. Silvius was in the act of declaring his feelings for Phoebe, a scornful shepherdess. Ganymede buys the lease to the property of an old shepherd who needs someone to manage his estate. Ganymede and Aliena set up home in the forest. Not far away, and unaware of the newcomers, Duke Senior is living a simple outdoor life with his fellow exiled courtiers and huntsmen. Their merriment is interrupted by the arrival of Orlando, who seeks nourishment for himself and his servant. The two men are welcomed by the outlaw courtiers.

Ganymede and Aliena find verses addressed to Rosalind hung on the forest branches by Orlando. Ganymede finds Orlando and proposes to cure Orlando of his love. To do this, Orlando will woo Ganymede as if he were Rosalind (even though "he" really is . . . Rosalind). Orlando consents and visits Ganymede/Rosalind every day for his lessons. In the meantime, the shepherdess Phoebe has fallen for Ganymede while the shepherd Silvius still pursues her. Furthermore, Touchstone, the court fool, has dazzled a country girl, Audrey, with his courtly manners. Audrey deserts her young suitor, William, for him.

**Act IV**

When Duke Frederick hears Orlando disappeared at the same time as Rosalind and Celia, he orders Oliver to the forest to seek his brother. In the forest, Orlando saves Oliver's life, injuring his arm in the process. Oliver runs into Ganymede and Aliena in the forest and relates this news. Rosalind (disguised as Ganymede) is overcome with her feelings for Orlando. Celia (disguised as Aliena) and Oliver quickly fall in love with one another. Rosalind decides that it is time to end her game with Orlando and devises a plan in which everyone will get married.

**Act V**

As Ganymede, Rosalind promises Phoebe that they will marry, Celia will marry Oliver, Touchstone will marry Audrey, and Orlando will marry Rosalind. She makes Phoebe promise that if they, for some reason, don't get married, Phoebe will marry Silvius instead.

On the day of the wedding, and with the help of the god Hymen, Rosalind reappears in her female clothes. Duke Senior gives her away to Orlando, while Phoebe accepts Silvius. Orlando's other older brother returns from college with the news that Celia's father, Duke Ferdinand, has left court to become a hermit. Thus, everyone is happy (except maybe Phoebe, who marries someone she doesn't love and Silvius, who marries someone who doesn't love him). The play ends with a joyful dance to celebrate the four marriages.

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**KING LEAR**

**How do loyalty and disloyalty affect the fates of the major characters in King Lear?**

Loyalty is portrayed in such a way that family relationships and friendships either remain in place or split apart after Lear divides his kingdom. While Shakespeare shows loyalty to be a virtue, it does not guarantee success or even survival. However, the characters who are disloyal seal their own destruction. Cordelia, Kent, and the Fool remain loyal to the king; for Cordelia and the Fool, loyalty results in their tragic, senseless deaths. Only Kent, who disguises himself and risks death to stay near his king, survives, but he suggests he will soon follow the call of his master and die himself. Regan and Goneril's betrayal of their father results in war, violence, and multiple deaths. When they ultimately betray each other through jealousy, both characters die. Edmund's lack of loyalty to his brother and father results in his death during the trial by combat with his brother. Edgar, loyal to his father even when he is in disguise, survives and is offered the joint rule of the kingdom. Yet his last line, like Kent's, suggests that he too might not live long.

**How is the concept of monarchy explored in King Lear?**

Monarchy in King Lear is powerful but fragile. It takes only a few bad decisions on the part of the aging King Lear to throw all of Britain into disarray. His first error is to divide his kingdom; his next is to deny Cordelia her share because she responded to him honestly. His next mistake after that is to remain passive when "power to flattery bows." As Kent remarks, Lear allows Regan and Goneril to deceive him because he is blinded by their flattery. He also foolishly expects his daughters to continue to obey him because he is their father. As the play shows, foolishness undermines monarchy. Only a wise king can rule well.

**What made the issue of a divided kingdom timely when Shakespeare wrote King Lear?**

Shakespeare wrote for the company called the King's Men, which performed for James I. James was concerned about the rights of an absolute monarch and wrote theoretical works on the topic. In addition, he had been king of Scotland before assuming the crown of England, and he wanted to unite the two countries. Although the concept of union failed, Shakespeare clearly wanted to show his support for the king by portraying the division of a kingdom as dangerous. The division leads to anarchy and disorder in the play, creating gaps in the social order that allow the wicked to flourish. It also leads to invasion by a foreign power, France.

**How does King Lear explore the concept of love in relation to honesty?**

King Lear uses the actions of its main characters, particularly the king's three daughters and Kent, to show that love and honesty are entwined. In Act 1, Scene 1, when the three daughters are asked how much they love their father, Goneril and Regan respond with flattering and dishonest statements that please Lear's ego. By contrast, Cordelia speaks honestly, saying that she loves him only as much as she should (as a daughter loves a father). Though Lear strips Cordelia of her dowry and banishes her, she continues to love and honor him, while her sisters betray their father. Likewise, Kent can't or won't speak flattery to the king. Yet he is willing to risk banishment to tell Lear the truth and loves the king selflessly. In the last scene of the play, he suggests that his life is no longer worth living after his "master" dies.

**What is the attitude toward sex in King Lear?**

King Lear shows that sex is a fun but dangerous manifestation of passion. Sex as fun is discussed in the play's opening lines. When Kent and Gloucester talk in Act 1, Scene 1, Gloucester makes a point of saying how much he enjoyed fathering Edmund, declaring there was "good sport at his making." However, the dangers of sex are underscored throughout the play. Edmund's resentment at being a bastard fuels his betrayal of his brother and father. Edmund has affairs with both Regan and Goneril, which leads to jealousy and the deaths of both women—Regan's at her sister's hands and Goneril's by suicide.

**What is the significance of the conversation between Kent and Gloucester in Act 1, Scene 1 of King Lear?**

The conversation between Gloucester and Kent provides key information for the audience. Lear has been making changes in how his kingdom is structured and which noblemen he favors. The conversation between Kent and Gloucester shows the kingdom is already in a state of anxious upheaval even before Lear's big announcement. In addition, the casualness with which Gloucester treats his son Edmund's illegitimate status is telling. He's completely unprepared for Edmund's bitterness, and fundamentally doesn't understand his role in what will happen, much as Lear doesn't foresee how his daughters will react to his decision to split the kingdom among them.

**What purpose does the character Curan serve in King Lear?**

Curan, a servant of Gloucester, appears in only one scene of King Lear: Act 2, Scene 1. In the scene, he does just one thing: he shares news and gossip with Edmund. Using a new character to share the gossip about tension between Albany and Cornwall is another way to show how agitated the kingdom is becoming; even characters outside the immediate royal/noble families are noticing the tension among the nobility. By having Curan appear only once , Shakespeare underscores the upheaval by suggesting that people are disappearing or fleeing the court. There's a restlessness in Britain that speaks of social disorder.

**How can the world of King Lear be seen as pagan, rather than Christian?**

A number of characters throughout the play, including Kent, Edmund, Gloucester, and the king of France, refer to "the gods" rather than to the Christian God. For example, in Act 1, Scene 1, Kent says to Cordelia, "The gods to their dear shelter take thee." Edmund refers to signs in the heavens and to how the people explain their characters in terms of astrological influences (Act 1, Scene 2). Furthermore, when Lear finds Kent in the stocks in Act 2, Scene 4, he swears by Jupiter, a Roman god, and Kent answers by swearing by Juno, a Roman goddess. The existence of capricious gods who do not provide justice to the good and loyal characters suits the play's theme of the tragic, often violent consequences of disrupting order. Gloucester captures this idea in Act 4, Scene 1, when he cries, "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; / They kill us for their sport.

**How does Gloucester help lay the ground for his son Edmund's betrayal in King Lear?**

The Earl of Gloucester helps set in motion his son Edmund's betrayal by fathering him out of wedlock. In Act 1, Scene 1, Gloucester says Edgar is not just legal, he's also older, which means Gloucester was probably cheating on his wife when he fathered Edmund. Gloucester displays a casual attitude toward Edmund's illegitimacy, mocking Edmund in Act 1, Scene 1, for his illegitimate status. In addition, Gloucester contributes to Edmund's betrayal of him by immediately believing the purported letter from Edgar that Edmund "finds" in Act 1, Scene 2. The letter suggests that Edgar is plotting the death of their father, even though Edgar has always been loyal to Gloucester.

**Do the knights in King Lear do anything to merit Goneril and Regan's complaints about them?**

The audience doesn't ever really know if the knights do anything wrong, as Shakespeare never shows the knights onstage as a body. Therefore, the audience must reach its own conclusions. Shakespeare does show individual knights or gentlemen in Lear's service. There is very little drama to them; they serve Lear loyally and simply. All reports of the knights' bad or "riotous" actions come through several unreliable witnesses, most often Oswald, Regan, or Goneril. Because these characters have been shown to lie for their own purposes, especially Regan and Goneril, it seems likely that while the knights might have offended these women, the offense did not necessarily involve inappropriate behavior.

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**TWELFTH NIGHT**

Duke Orsino of Illyria is in love with Olivia, but his advances are rejected. A shipwrecked Viola arrives on his shores, and with the help of a Captain, disguises herself as a boy, calling herself Cesario, and enters Orsino’s service. Orsino takes to Cesario, and sends ‘him’ to woo Olivia for him. Viola, however, is already falling in love with Orsino.

Cesario arrives to woo Olivia, and Olivia falls in love with ‘him’. She rejects Orsino’s approach, but asks Cesario to return. Orsino discusses the nature of love with Cesario, and sends ‘him’ again to Olivia, who confesses her love for Cesario, much to ‘his’ dismay. Meanwhile, Viola’s twin brother Sebastian, also a casualty of the shipwreck, arrives in Illyria with the help of Antonio, a sea-captain and former enemy of Orsino. Sebastian looks around the town, and Antonio gives him his purse to use, deciding to stay at the inn for safety.

Staying with Olivia is her uncle Sir Toby, who is encouraging Sir Andrew, his drinking-companion and source of funds, to woo Olivia. While carousing with Olivia’s fool Feste late one night, they quarrel with Malvolio, and with the help of Olivia’s maid Maria, they decide to trick him. Maria writes a letter to Malvolio, forging Olivia’s handwriting, to make Malvolio think Olivia loves him. The letter asks Malvolio to dress and behave in eccentric ways.

Toby, Andrew, and Fabian observe Malvolio opening the letter and absorbing its contents. He approaches Olivia according to the letter’s instructions, and she thinks him mad. Toby arranges for him to be confined in a dark room. Later, he gets Feste to disguise himself as a priest, Sir Topas, to taunt Malvolio. Malvolio writes a letter of complaint to Olivia.

Meanwhile, Andrew prepares to leave the house, having seen Cesario apparently being more successful with Olivia, but Toby persuades him to stay, and to challenge Cesario to a duel. Sir Toby separately informs Andrew and Cesario that the other is a ferocious fighter, and they approach each other with trepidation. They are about to fight when Antonio arrives, intending to defend Cesario, whom he has mistaken for Sebastian. Antonio is arrested by officers who recognize him as Orsino’s enemy. He asks for his purse from Cesario, who of course professes no knowledge of it.

Feste is sent to bring Cesario to Olivia, but encounters Sebastian instead. They meet Andrew, who strikes Sebastian, thinking him to be Cesario, and Andrew is beaten for his pains. Olivia arrives to stop a fight between Sebastian and Toby. Sebastian is immediately taken with her. Thinking him to be Cesario, she is delighted that he has finally responded to her advances, and they go off to be married.

Orsino is told by Cesario of Antonio’s arrival, but when Antonio is brought before him and asserts that he has been with Cesario for some time, Orsino thinks him mad. Olivia arrives, and again rejects Orsino’s advances. As he and Cesario prepare to leave, Olivia insists on Cesario staying, and calls him her husband. When Cesario denies it, she presents the priest as confirmation. Orsino is enraged, thinking Cesario has betrayed him. Toby and Andrew pass by, having just been severely beaten by Sebastian. Sebastian then arrives, and the twins delightedly recognize each other. Everyone is amazed, Viola’s true identity is revealed, and she and Orsino decide to be married.

Feste delivers Malvolio’s letter to Olivia, and he is brought from his cell. Fabian reveals the nature of the trick played upon him, and Malvolio leaves vowing revenge on them all. They all prepare for celebration, leaving Feste to bid the audience farewell.

**TWELFTH NIGHT SUMMARY**

Twelfth Night Summary provides a quick review of the play's plot including every important action in the play. Twelfth Night Summary is divided by the five acts of the play and is an ideal introduction before reading the original text.

**Act I.**

Orsino, The Duke of Illyria reveals his great love for the rich Countess Olivia who we learn has decided to veil herself for seven years to honor her recently deceased brother's memory. Profoundly impressed by this, the Duke continues his pursuit of Olivia undeterred...Viola is introduced to us as a survivor of a shipwreck. Her brother was lost at sea but may not be dead. Viola learns from the Sea Captain of their doomed ship that they are now in Illyria, which is ruled by Orsino. The Sea Captain explains to Viola that The Duke of Illyria is pursuing the fair Olivia, a woman who like Viola has lost a brother.Identifying with Olivia's grief, Viola wishes to serve Olivia but when she learns this will be impossible, Viola instead has the Sea Captain disguise her as a boy so she can serve Orsino, The Duke of Illyria.Sir Toby, Olivia's cousin is introduced. We quickly discover that he drinks a great deal, keeps late hours and is generally rowdy by nature. Maria, Lady Olivia's maid makes this clear to us in her unsuccessful attempts to quieten Sir Toby down. Maria also reveals Olivia's annoyance that Sir Toby has encouraged Sir Andrew Aguecheek to court her.Sir Andrew Aguecheek is now introduced, quickly revealing himself to be rich but rather dim (unintelligent). Sir Toby has manipulated Sir Andrew into pursuing Olivia so Sir Toby can continue benefiting from Sir Andrew's great wealth.Realizing Olivia will not be courted by him, Sir Andrew makes preparations to leave but Sir Toby convinces Sir Andrew to stay a month longer, no doubt so Sir Toby can use Sir Andrew and his great wealth further...Viola has successfully disguised herself as a man named Cesario. Her success with Orsino has been so great that she is now a favorite with Orsino who believes Viola to be the man named Cesario. As such, Orsino entrusts Cesario (Viola) to express his love for Olivia. Cesario, (Viola) deeply divided by her own love for Orsino, nonetheless dutifully represents Orsino.Olivia's maid is angry with Feste, Olivia's Clown. Feste redeems himself with Lady Olivia by telling her she should not mourn her brother since he is in a better place, namely heaven. Olivia is pleased, but Olivia's uptight steward, Malvolio is not, regarding Feste as old and lacking in wit.Olivia gives us an insight into Malvolio's character by saying that he suffers from self-love or is arrogant and vain.Cesario (Viola) petitions Lady Olivia, eventually gaining her audience. Olivia is quite taken by Cesario but tells him, she cannot return Orsino's affections for her.Olivia would however like to see Cesario (Viola) again, asking him to come back to report to her how Orsino took the news.Intrigued by Cesario, Olivia sends Malvolio after him to give back a ring Cesario left behind as an excuse to express her affection for him...

**Act II.**

Sebastian, the twin brother Viola feared had died at sea, has also survived the shipwreck. Like Viola he mourns the loss of his sibling, believing his sister Viola to be dead.Antonio, the man who saved Sebastian's life is touched by Sebastian's loss and decides to follow Sebastian to the Duke of Orsino's court even though he has many enemies there. Sebastian nobly tries to talk Antonio out of this, but Antonio is eventually accepted by Sebastian to travel with him to the Duke's court.Malvolio catches up with Cesario (Viola), rudely returning Cesario's ring to him. Cesario is confused, he left no such ring at Lady Olivia's house. Malvolio also conveys Olivia's desire that Cesario return to confirm that Orsino has accepted the fact that she does not love him.Cesario now realizes that the ring is a ploy by Olivia to express her affections for him. Realizing she has charmed Olivia, Cesario remarks that Olivia would do better chasing a dream than a man who really is a woman (Viola) in disguise. Cesario is distressed by this mess and hopes time will undo this tangled web.Late at night, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and later Feste the Clown are enjoying some late night drinking and singing. This gets Maria's attention who warns all three men to quieten down lest Malvolio notices.The three men ignore Maria. Malvolio arrives, warning the men that he will speak to Olivia about this noise. The three men ignore him as they did Maria and now Malvolio threatens to make Maria look disrespectful in Olivia's eyes if she does not quieten these three men down.Maria, resenting Malvolio's heavy-handed arrogance hatches a plan to write a letter, which will convince Malvolio that Olivia loves him. This news quietens down all three men, who each dislikes Malvolio but now are all enthusiastic accomplices in his downfall. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste will hide near where Malvolio will discover the letter so they can all enjoy what in their eyes is Malvolio's rightly deserved humiliation...Orsino notices that Cesario (Viola) is in love. Cesario describes this person in terms that precisely describe Orsino but Orsino does not realize this. Cesario warns the Duke that Lady Olivia may not love him but Orsino refuses to even accept such a possibility.Cesario (Viola) remarks on the unreliability of men in relationships. Cesario starts to reveal "his" own past but quickly becomes vague when Orsino becomes too curious.Orsino sends Cesario once more to Lady Olivia with a large jewel as a token of his love for her... Maria tells Fabian, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, all of whom hate Malvolio, that she has penned the letter that will convince Malvolio that Lady Olivia loves him.Malvolio, meanwhile having not yet found the letter, starts entertaining the idea that Olivia could love him and that he could marry her.Malvolio picks up Maria's counterfeit letter with its instructions that Malvolio be rude to kinsman like Sir Toby. It also suggests that he wear yellow stockings and be cross-gartered to win Olivia's love.Maria explains to Sir Toby and company, that Lady Olivia hates yellow stockings and cross-gartered fashion and so Malvolio will be humiliated before Lady Olivia.

**Act III.**

Cesario has another private meeting with Lady Olivia on Duke Orsino's behalf.Sir Toby and Sir Andrew meet Cesario (Viola) and Sir Toby learns from Cesario that he will soon speak with Lady Olivia. In private, Lady Olivia admits to Cesario that she used the ring she sent after him to lure him back to her.Cesario (Viola) tries to put Olivia off him but she is smitten, ignoring all Cesario's attempts to diminish her enthusiasm for "him"...Knowing Lady Olivia will never love him, Sir Andrew prepares to head for home. The sight of Olivia showing more affection to a youth (Cesario) than him was the last straw.

Fabian and Sir Toby don't deny the affectionate display but argue Olivia did it to spur Sir Andrew to woo her and regain her respect. Sir Toby and Fabian manipulate Sir Andrew into writing a challenge to the youth (Cesario) even though they know a fight between two cowards (Cesario and Sir Andrew) is unlikely.Maria enters, telling Sir Toby and Fabian to watch the spectacle that is Malvolio wearing yellow stockings and being cross-gartered.Sebastian has now reluctantly accepted Antonio as his companion in the streets of Illyria.Antonio explains that his offence in Illyria, which was theft, was one the rest of his city have repaid but he has not and so he is still wanted in Illyria. Sebastian decides to look around, but Antonio fearful of his enemies, decides to head for lodging at a place called "the Elephant." Antonio gives Sebastian his purse (wallet) and directions to this lodging and the two part their separate ways...Olivia makes plans to once more woo Cesario (Viola). Olivia sees Malvolio with yellow stockings and cross-gartered and considers him mad since he continues to smile no matter what the situation and makes crude, lustful interpretations of Olivia's words.Malvolio makes his famous "'Some are born great,'-" speech.

Learning that Cesario has returned, Lady Olivia has Malvolio put into the care of her servants since in her eyes, Malvolio's behavior is some "midsummer madness."Sir Toby, Maria and Fabian plot to have Malvolio placed in a "dark room," so they can have some fun with him. Sir Andrew arrives with his completed letter challenging Cesario. Sir Toby decides to verbally scare Cesario and Sir Andrew about their opponents instead of sending the letter.

Alone with Cesario once more, Lady Olivia makes no progress with Cesario who will not requit (return) her love. Olivia is undaunted by this. Sir Toby scares both Sir Andrew and Cesario into drawing their weapons on each other.Antonio arrives, pledging to fight Sir Andrew on Cesario's (Viola's) behalf who he thinks is Sebastian since Viola disguised as a man now looks like her twin brother Sebastian.The fight is stopped but Officers recognizing Antonio, capture him. Antonio asks Cesario (Viola) for his purse back but Cesario not recognizing him does not oblige.Antonio thinks Sebastian has betrayed him, not realizing he has asked Cesario (Viola) for his purse, not Sebastian.

**Act IV.**

Confusion reigns as Sebastian is now mistaken for Cesario when Feste insists Sebastian sent for him and Sebastian is certain he did not (Cesario obviously did).Sir Andrew finds Sebastian and thinking it is Cesario from the earlier "fight" that did not happen, hits Sebastian. Sebastian unlike Cesario is not afraid to return the favor and a fight is only stopped by Sir Toby's intervention. Sir Andrew decides to have Sebastian punished by the law of Illyria despite the fact that he started the fight.Sir Toby and Sebastian are just about to fight when Olivia screams for her uncle, Sir Toby to stop. Olivia now scolds Sir Toby, hoping Sebastian, whom she thinks is Cesario (Viola), will forgive her uncle and not be displeased with her.Sebastian, amazed that this beautiful woman he does not know, loves him, replies to Olivia that he will be ruled by her and the two set off to marry immediately...In Olivia's house, Malvolio in a darkened room is teased mercilessly by Feste who tries unsuccessfully to convince Malvolio that he is mad.Sir Toby, fearing that his fight with Cesario (actually Sebastian) has put him on thin ice with Olivia, wants Feste's teasing of Malvolio to stop. Feste has other ideas but eventually lets Malvolio write a letter to Olivia proclaiming his sanity...Sebastian can barely believe his luck, a beautiful woman (Olivia) loves him and has given him a pearl. Sebastian briefly wonders if he is dreaming before he marries Olivia in a private chapel. Olivia explains that their now secret marriage will be revealed later...

**Act V.**

In the final scene, chaos ensues as the identical appearing Cesario (Viola) and Sebastian are each blamed for the other's actions. First Feste blames Sebastian for beckoning him, not realizing it was Cesario who called for him.Cesario spots Antonio the man who saved him from fighting Sir Andrew but was taken prisoner by Orsino's officers in Act III. Antonio again asks Cesario for his wallet back thinking he is Sebastian. Cesario (Viola), who does not know Antonio, does not and so Antonio curses him for his betrayal, not realizing he is talking to Cesario not Sebastian whom he lent his wallet to.We learn that Antonio is an enemy of Illyria and especially of Orsino for plundering his ships as a pirate in the past.Now a prisoner, Antonio baffles Orsino by telling him that he and Cesario (Viola) have been together night and day for three weeks when who Antonio is really thinking of is Sebastian. Orsino cannot believe this; Cesario has been with him for three weeks.Olivia arrives and we see that Orsino still loves her. The feeling is not mutual... Olivia scolds Cesario (Viola) for neglecting her, revealing that "he" is her husband.Cesario (Viola) amazed by this, pleads "his" innocence to Orsino who "he" truly loves and Orsino thinking his servant betrayed him by taking Olivia for himself, prepares to punish Cesario.

Olivia meanwhile despairs that her husband Cesario who really is Sebastian, would leave willingly with Orsino to be punished rather than be with his wife and she too claims betrayal by Cesario (Viola).Sebastian arrives, apologizing for attacking Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. Orsino seeing both Cesario and Sebastian together is amazed that he sees two copies of the same man. Olivia too is amazed.Sebastian and Cesario compare notes on how they arrived in Illyria each claiming that their sibling had drowned.Eventually they realize that since they knew the same father they are indeed brother and sister, Cesario revealing "his" real identity as the woman named Viola.Malvolio storms in and the cruel prank against him is revealed by Fabian who confesses.Orsino calls Olivia his sister, and Orsino takes Cesario for his mistress and we presume later his wife with Feste ending the play in song.

**Richard II**

SUMMARY

Richard II, written around 1595, is the first play in Shakespeare's second "history tetralogy," a series of four plays that chronicles the rise of the house of Lancaster to the British throne. (Its sequel plays are Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2, and Henry V.) Richard II, set around the year 1398, traces the fall from power of the last king of the house of Plantagenet, Richard II, and his replacement by the first Lancaster king, Henry IV (Henry Bolingbroke). Richard II, who ascended to the throne as a young man, is a regal and stately figure, but he is wasteful in his spending habits, unwise in his choice of counselors, and detached from his country and its common people. He spends too much of his time pursuing the latest Italian fashions, spending money on his close friends, and raising taxes to fund his pet wars in Ireland and elsewhere. When he begins to "rent out" parcels of English land to certain wealthy noblemen in order to raise funds for one of his wars, and seizes the lands and money of a recently deceased and much respected uncle to help fill his coffers, both the commoners and the king's noblemen decide that Richard has gone too far.

Richard has a cousin, named Henry Bolingbroke, who is a great favorite among the English commoners. Early in the play, Richard exiles him from England for six years due to an unresolved dispute over an earlier political murder. The dead uncle whose lands Richard seizes was the father of Bolingbroke; when Bolingbroke learns that Richard has stolen what should have been his inheritance, it is the straw that breaks the camel's back. When Richard unwisely departs to pursue a war in Ireland, Bolingbroke assembles an army and invades the north coast of England in his absence. The commoners, fond of Bolingbroke and angry at Richard's mismanagement of the country, welcome his invasion and join his forces. One by one, Richard's allies in the nobility desert him and defect to Bolingbroke's side as Bolingbroke marches through England. By the time Richard returns from Ireland, he has already lost his grasp on his country.

There is never an actual battle; instead, Bolingbroke peacefully takes Richard prisoner in Wales and brings him back to London, where Bolingbroke is crowned King Henry IV. Richard is imprisoned in the remote castle of Pomfret in the north of England, where he is left to ruminate upon his downfall. There, an assassin, who both is and is not acting upon King Henry's ambivalent wishes for Richard's expedient death, murders the former king. King Henry hypocritically repudiates the murderer and vows to journey to Jerusalem to cleanse himself of his part in Richard's death. As the play concludes, we see that the reign of the new King Henry IV has started off inauspiciously.

**Act I**

The play opens in King Richard's court, as Henry Bolingbroke, son of Gaunt (the Duke of Lancaster), challenges Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk. Henry accuses Mowbray of being involved in the recent death of the King's uncle (who is also Henry's uncle; Henry and the King are cousins). Richard gives in to their demands to work out their differences in one-on-one combat at Coventry. As the tournament begins, the uncertain and impulsive Richard stops the contest. Instead Richard chooses to exile both Henry and Mowbray. He banishes Mowbray for life. And responding to Henry's father Lancaster's pleas, he limits Henry's exile to six years.

**Act II**

In line with his customary behaviour, Richard is misled by his friends into poor government of the country. Henry's father, Gaunt, dies, finally broken by his son's banishment, and by the state of the kingdom under Richard's rule. Richard takes possession of Gaunt's land and money. It turns out that he has also been leasing out royal land. Both of these monetary acquisitions have helped him to fund wars with Ireland. His nobles are dismayed, not only because of the waste of the kingdom's money but also for fear over the security of their own estates.

To make matters worse, Richard leaves on an expedition to Ireland. When Henry hears that his father has died and that Richard took his inheritance, he returns from exile with an invading army. The commoners and nobles are already critical of Richard. They welcome Henry in the north, led by the powerful Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy. Henry marches through England, gathering his willing forces. This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle… This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

**Act III**

Richard arrives back after the Irish war to find that his Welsh allies have dispersed. Furthermore, his cousin, Duke of York, unable to prevent Henry's triumphant return, has joined him instead. Some more of Richard's friends have also betrayed the King's cause. Others have been executed on Henry's orders. After taking refuge at Flint castle, Richard surrenders and agrees to go to London, where the lords will decide what should happen next.

**Act IV-V**

In view of the insurrections against him, King Richard is persuaded to step down in favour of Henry Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV. Richard hands over his crown in a ceremony. Henry subsequently imprisons him in Pontefract castle. Richard's queen is sent home to France. Some lords join in a plot against Henry but York, the father of one of the nobles, relates their machinations to Henry. Henry spares the son of York, but he is now aware of his tenuous position as king.

Henry implies to Exton that he would like to be rid of his threats, and Exton then murders Richard. He brings the body to London. Henry claims innocence, blaming Exton for misunderstanding his intentions. The play ends as King Henry banishes Exton, orders a funeral for Richard, and swears to make reparation for his cousin's death by going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

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**Unit – V**

Shakespearean Theatre and Audience

Shakespearean Fools and Clowns

Shakespearean Women

Supernatural Elements in Shakespearean Plays

Shakespearean Soliloquies

Shakespeare as a Sonneteer and a Narrative Poet

**SHAKESPEARE’S STAGE AND AUDIENCE**

Shakespeare’s plays have been conditioned a great deal by the stage that he wrote for and the world that he lived in. The Elizabethan audience craved for noise and outcry, for pomp and pageantry and Shakespeare provided them with plenty of it in every one of his plays. They liked broad jests and puns and word-jugglery. Shakespeare did not hesitate to let them have their fill of the same. Shakespeare’s plays were mostly staged at the Globe and Black Friars as he was mostly connected with them.

The typical Elizabethan theatre was a wooden structure, hexagonal outside and round within. The stage and the boxes by the walls were covered. The rest of the theatre was open to the sky. The plays were staged by daylight. The stage was divided into four parts. The front stage projected far into the auditorium. This part of the stage served as a street or battlefield or garden and was open to the sky. The back stage was the part behind the pillars. It served as a large room, a palace hall; an office or a tavern as required. The walls of this part of the stage were hung with tapestry, black for tragedy and blue for comedy. At the back of the two side-walls were the entrance and the exit for the actors. There was a screened inner stage which served as the bedroom scene in Othello and Macbeth. It also served as Juliet‟s tomb and as Prospero‟s cell. Over the inner stage was the balcony or the upper stage. It served as the window in Shylock‟s house from which Jessica threw the casket on the street. It also served as Cleopatra‟s monument to which the dying Antony was raised to kiss Cleopatra farewell.

The audiences were made up of the groundlings in the pit and those in the galleries. The rich used the boxes, while the young gallants sat on seats provided at the edge of the stage itself. There was no curtain for the Elizabethan stage and very little of movable scenery. A scene therefore began with the entrance of the actors and ended with their exit. The dead bodies had to be carried off the stage in a funeral procession. In Julius Caesar, Antony and others carry off the dead by of Caesar. Hamlet drags away the body of Polonius from the stage. At the end of the comedies, generally and particularly in Much Ado About Nothing orders are given to the pipers to strike a tune and all exeunt dancing.

The fact that at the end of every scene the players walked off the stage made the scenes end tamely. A scene could not be worked to a crisis. Two other characteristics of the Shakespearean stage deserve to be referred to. There was no painted backdrop. Shakespeare made good this lack with descriptive passages poetic in appeal. This also helped quick change of scenes. In Antony and Cleopatra for instance, there are as many as forty-two scenes flitting all around the Mediterranean coast. This also helped a more rapid action than in a modern play. In spite of complicated plots any Elizabethan play could be staged in two hours. Another significant fact about Elizabethan theatre that needs to be mentioned was that women‟s parts were played by boys. This explains why Shakespeare‟s plays do not have many women characters. In the tragedies they remain mostly in the background and some of the women characters like Portia, Nerissa, Jessica, Viola and Rosalind appear in the guise of men. It is difficult, however, to see how boy actors could have done full justice to women characters like Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra. This brings us to Shakespeare‟s audience and their tastes. Shakespeare‟s pre-eminent consideration was success on the stage. Shakespeare quite often catered to the taste of the audience and gave them what they wanted. The people were generally crude and rough. They came to the theatre to have a laugh at the antics of the clowns, the discomfiture of the pompous or the rough and tumble of tavern brawls. They enjoyed scenes of bloodshed and violence. They wanted a laugh even in the middle of a tragedy. Shakespeare, therefore, had to bring in Rosencrantz and Guildenstem as also the grave-diggers in Hamlet, the drunken porter in Macbeth, the clown in Othello and the fool in King Lear, Shakespeare also brought in a wrestling match in As You Like It, the rapier duels in Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet, the sword fight in Macbeth. He had to provide good songs and singers in his plays.

The Elizabethan audience was also superstitious. They believed in ghosts, witches and fairies. They also believed in supernatural happenings as in Julius Caesar. The average Elizabethan went to the theatre for an escape from the sordid realities of life into the world of romance and laughter. Shakespeare transported his audience into such a world on the wings of his imagination. Middleton Murray in his book on Shakespeare gives us a detailed description of the Elizabethan audience. “Nearly every country gentleman great or small went up to London to read a little law at one of the Inns of Court to equip himself for his duties as Justice of the Peace and manager of his own estates. They were the staples of the better class audience of the players. Murray also refers to the gentlemen of the Court and the captains and soldiers temporarily out of employment”. He also mentions that “the chief nuisance of the stage was the gallant on the stage”. The audience with which Shakespeare had to come to terms was not an audience of aristocrats but of the commonfolk. If they had a fault at all, it was that of uncritical catholicity of tastes. It was in fact the pit that above all demanded the poetic drama as well as horseplay mingled with vulgar wit. Thus of Shakespeare, his theatre and his audience it could truly be said: “The Drama‟s laws, the drama‟s patrons give For we that live to please, must please to live”

**WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SHAKESPEARE’S PLAYS**

The range and variety of women characters in Shakespeare tempts most critics to assert that Shakespeare has comprehensively covered the entire gallery of women in his plays and that his portraits of women have never been surpassed. Critics have also taken great pains to classify his heroines. Mrs. Jameson‟s classification may be accepted as briefer as and simpler than most others. The commonsense classification, however, would be to differentiate them as clever and assertive like Portia in „The Merchant of Venice‟, Beatrice in „Much Ado About Nothing‟ and Rosalind in „As You Like It‟.

The next group will be the loving and fanciful like Juliet, Helena, Viola, Ophelia and Miranda. In the third group would come the tragic heroines, Desdemona and Cordelia, even Hero in Much Ado About Nothing as also, Hermione. The last group would comprise aggressive and dominant creatures like Lady Macbeth, Goneril and Regan and Cleopatra. Women who stand out for their cleverness, their assertiveness and who come out unscathed from the conflicts in which they are involved are the favourites among Shakespeare‟s heroines. Among these may be included Viola, Beatrice and Rosalind of Shakespeare‟s most brilliant comedies, as also Portia in “The Merchant of Venice”. These glittering heroines, bright, beautiful and witty, always hold the front of the stage. They achieve the purpose by their practical wisdom and single-mindedness, in the final scenes of the play Beatrice displays the deeper and finer qualities of her nature. The next most lovable of Shakespeare‟s heroines is Viola in Twelfth Night.

The Viola who is lovable is not the Viola of the sentimental critics who see her as one who simply allows herself to be carried along by the stream of time and events to happiness at the end. The lovable Viola is more the character said to have been portrayed by the great Ellen Terry in her prime. Viola is hearty, though not heartwhole. In her scenes with Orsino, instead of very nearly betraying herself, she cleverly drops hints, the most blatant of which is “I am all the daughters of my father‟s house”. Viola is always as shrewd and sure of herself. She understands quickly that Olivia has fallen in love with her disguise and says to herself” „Disguise, I see; thou art a wickedness”. She is able to hold her own in her encounters with Feste and Malvolio as with Olivia. It is only when she is faced with having to fight a duel with Sir Andrew that she betrays her womanly weakness. Rosalind, displays her love and her womanliness in her scenes with Orlando.

In the second grouping of Shakespeare‟s women, is Helena in A Midsummer Night‟s Dream a passive and sentimental young woman. Lysander says of Helena that she “Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry” on Demetrius. When Demetrius tells her that he hates her she cries out. “And even for that do I love you the more I am your spaniel”, Juliet in Romeo and Juliet is passionate, constant and self-sacrificing. Love has transformed her. But the physical basis of love does, in no way, make her less pure of modest.

Even Portia, in The Merchant of Venice surrenders herself, her wealth and all to Bassanio who she has accepted as her lord and master. Even Portia, the wife of Brutus who asserts her right to share her husband‟s thoughts and worries, kills herself, unable to bear her separation from Brutus. Ophelia in Hamlet, like Hero in Much Ado shows herself passive in love and pathetic in her helplessness. Miranda in „The Tempest‟ is loving and fanciful, but a passive character in the play.

It is such women characters that lent credence to the contention of some critics that Shakespeare‟s female characters are inferior to his men. Of all Shakespeare‟s tragic heroines, Desdemona evokes our sympathy the most. In her extraordinary innocence she was, „Half the wooer‟ and almost invited Othello‟s courting and gave him all her love. Desdemona‟s love for Othello oversteps the brink of idolatry. She cannot bring herself to see any fault in him even when he strikes her publicly in his blind rage of jealousy. Emilia had been shocked by Desdemona‟s passive submission to Othello‟s brutality. Her docile reactions only show the strength of her love and the refinements of her nature. When Othello strangles her to death, her last words to Emilia who asks her who has killed her, are “Nobody; I myself, Farewell, Commend me to my kind Lord”.

In Cordelia, one could see passivity combined with pride. She is proud, she is obstinate and she is strong in mind. Cordelia‟s character holds unadulterated tenderness and love with strength when occasion demands it. She has foresight and practical sense. She exercises the influence of a strong nature over others. But she is selfless. She does not see things from the standpoint of her own loss or gain.

Among the aggressive and evil women in the gallery of Shakespeare‟s women characters, Lady Macbeth stands out as the Clytemnestra of English tragedy. She possesses a frightful, determined will, and iron stability of resolve. But this in the end proves her ruin. In self-reliance and in intelligence, she is superior to Macbeth as Portia is to Bassanio and Rosalind to Orlando. Her womanliness comes out in her last minute reluctance to kill Duncan in his sleep because she saw her father‟s face in his. It is also to be seen in her tender concern for Macbeth to the last. She stands out in contrast to Goneril and Regan in that she suffers the compunctious visiting‟s of Nature.

The other two are seen as absolutely remorseless. In the delineation of the characters of Goneril and Regan, however, Shakespeare appears to be content to assure that there are really incorrigibly wicked people. They are realists. They give their father the smooth speech which he wants of them. Goneril is a schemer. Regan but echoes Goneril. She appears to shrink from acting on her own. The two sisters are different even in their monstrous cruelty. Goneril is cruel with a method and purpose. Regan positively delights in the infliction of pain. Granville-Barker has pointed out how the devil of lust comes to match the devil of cruelty in the two women. In their separate but illicit love for one and the same man, Edmund, they become reckless, shameless and foolish.

The last to be considered among Shakespeare‟s women characters but certainly not the least of them is Cleopatra, daughter of the Ptolemy. Her ability to attract and hold men like Pompey, Julius Caesar and Antony lies in her skilful wit and feminine changeableness. Enobarbus says of her: “Age cannot wither her nor custom Stale her infinite variety”.

**SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS**

Shakespeare‟s sonnets have been for long looked upon as the secret key to the poet‟s love. “With this same key Shakespeare unlocked his heart” writes Wordsworth. Browning echoes Wordsworth‟s tribute. Shelley and Tennyson eulogize the sonnets in the same strain. In the complete modern edition of Shakespeare‟s sonnets Dowden traces a fairly clear outline of that section of Shakespeare‟s personal life during which he wrote the sonnets, “A young man, the poet‟s friend, beautiful and brilliant, is exposed to temptations. It is possible that his mother wants to see him married. The poet certainly wants it; he urges marriage upon his friend. First, Shakespeare urges the Fair Youth to „perpetuate his beauty in his offspring.

In the fair youth refuses, the poet will fight against Time and Decay and confer immortality upon his friend by his verse. This Fair Youth is eulogized by the poet as the pattern of Beauty, including both the male and female, Adonis and Aphrodite, even the Hermaphrodite principle of beauty. The image of Hermaphrodite in Ovid‟s Metamorphoses must have possessed the imagination of Renaissance literature. It is this image, projected in the Elizabethan theatre by the boy actors of women‟s parts which have given sensual substance to the cult of friendship and the tradition of the praise of lovely boys. Stephen Spender‟s speculation that the Fair Youth could well be Will Huges comes nearest the mark. It is right to presume therefore that the language of the sonnets addressed to the Fair Youth, extravagant as it now seems, is the language of complement and passion. It cannot therefore be mistaken “for anything else than the expression of a friendship is delicate enough to be wounded and manly enough to be outraged”.

The Fair Youth has been variously identified as Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Both these young men were Shakespeare‟s patrons, whose favour he sought. The internal evidence is against the Fair Youth being either Southampton or Pembroke. R.L. Eagle argues that the lines in one of his sonnets can possibly refer only to a favourite boy actor. The lines are as follows:

What is your substance, whereof are you

That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

Oscar Wilde indulges in a fond fancy evoking before our vision the image of beautiful youth. Shakespeare loved the youth on the verge of idolatory. The sonnets are addressed to a particular young man whose personality for some reason seems to have filled the soul of Shakespeare with terrible joy and no less terrible despair.

Shakespeare however was involved not only with a fair youth but also with a dark lady. Dowden observes “Shakespeare at some time of his life was snared by a woman, the reverse of a beautiful lady according to the conventional Elizabethan standard. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, pale-cheeked, skilled in touching the virginal (a form of harpsichord), skilled also in playing on the heart of man, who could attract and repel, irritate and soothe; join reproach with caress, a woman faithless to her vow in wedlock”.

Shakespeare praises the dark lady as a woman without beauty. She is voluptuous and clever, she is a coquette and she is cruel. When the Dark Lady makes her delayed but most effective entry (in the 127th sonnet) one would almost think that Shakespeare‟s theatrical cunning had something to do with it. The process of introspection continues at a faster tempo and with ever-increasing intensity. The lady is depicted with grossly familiar equality, a bitter and bawdy ferocity. Her promiscuity is described in a language of indecent and unpoetic realism. The poet‟s perception that the Dark Lady is a whore makes him write in a moral tone far fiercer and deeper, and self-examination more searching than anything before. In the last couplet of his 150th sonnet, the poet writes that he has loved the dark lady for her unworthiness. This, in turn, has infected him. It has made him unworthy. His unworthiness makes him worthy of her. In the next sonnet the poet admits in terms unusually religious for Shakespeare, that his love is betraying his soul. The dark lady has been variously identified as Mary Fitton or even as a creature of Shakespeare‟s own invention.

Critics like Sidney Lee believe that Shakespeare‟s fertile dramatic imagination was not content with borrowing the conventional portrait of cruel mistress from the Italian Sonneteers. He went one step further and made her immoral as well as cruel. „The dark lady‟ says Nothrop Frye, „is an incarnation of desire rather than of love‟ Shaw has rightly pointed out that the cruelty about which the poet writs is in the language of sexual passion. In this context, Stephen Spender asks the pertinent question

“Is not the poet‟s love-hate for the Dark Lady related to the disgust for physical sex which is a feature of the last plays and of King Lear?”

We may then see in the idealized relationship of the poet with his friend a sublimation of sex, and an escape from that kind of relationship which leads to revulsion and disgust.One finds in the sonnets an occasional autobiographical reference to a rival poet. Pinto however opines that the rival poet referred to was Chapman who also claimed Pembroke and Southampton as his patrons. Studying the sonnets as a whole we find that as the sequence precedes the texture of the poems show a slowly increasing complexity. They become more introspective.

The interest is often far more on the state of the mind than the object of his love or even the love itself. IN the sixty-sixth sonnet Shakespeare writes „tired with all these for restful death I cry”. Self-disgust and self-reproach are the usual tones of his introspection. The poet is bitter at the thought of age. He feels even more deeply the conviction of failure as a poet.The Mutual Flame in consuming the grossness of love attains a spiritual consummation dreamt of by Dante in his “Divine Comedy”. Such a sacred flame, doubtless, is burning behind the sonnets of Shakespeare.

**FOOLS OF SHAKESPEARE**

Shakespeare fools are usually clever peasants or commoners that use their wits to outdo people of higher social standing. They are very similar to the real fools and Jesters of the time. They are largely heterogeneous. The groundlings (theatre goers who were too poor to pay for seats thus stood on the „ground‟ in the front by the stage) that frequented the Globe theatre were more likely to be drawn to these Shakespearean fools.

Shakespearian fools may be generally divided into two category – the clown, a general term that was originally intended to designate a rustic or otherwise uneducated individual who‟s dramatic purpose was to evoke laughter with his ignorance and the courtly fool or Jester in whom wit pointed satire accompany low comedy. The dramatic sources of Shakespeare‟s simple minded clowns are as old as classical antiquity.

In the play themselves, such figures as Bottom of a Midsummer Night‟s Dream and Dogberry of Much ado about nothing are typically classified as clowns, their principle function being to arouse the mirth of audiences. By the time of Queen Elizabeth reign courtly fools were a common feature of English society and where seen as one of two types - Natural (or) Artificial, the former could include misshapen (or) mentally deficient individuals afflicted with dwarfism. The artificial fool in contrast, was possessed of a verbal wit and talent for intellectual repartee.

In to this category critics place Shakespeare intellectual or wise fools notably Touchstone of As You Like It, Feste of Twelfth Night and King Lear‟s unnamed fool. Shakespeare‟s fools generally appear as servants of principal characters. Touchstone is the servant of the Duke in „As You Like It‟. Feste is a dependant of Olivia. The fool is invariably a lover of creature comforts. Launcelot Gobbo complains that he is famished in the Jew‟s household. Feste is seen cringing for money. Sir John Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch are drunkards and big eaters. They are also braggarts and cowards.

The clowns are also shown indulging in pranks. They enjoy baiting as seen from the baiting of Malvolio by Feste and others. The clowns also indulge in vulgar jokes and word jugglery. This sometimes leads to sheer nonsensical talk as indulged in by Feste and the fool in „Lear‟. The fool as stated already plays an integral and significant function in Shakespeare‟s plays. He adds spice to the comedy by his humour and foolery. He provides dramatic relief as well as heightens the intensity of the tragic scenes in the tragedies. This heightening of the tragic effect is by the properly timed juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic. This is best seen in Antony and Cleopatra and King Lear.

In the comedies, the fool frequently corrects the extra sentimentality of the romantic characters as does Feste in Twelfth Night and Touchstone in As You Like It. In Twelfth Night, Feste ridicules the ridiculously inflated grief of Olivia for her dead brother. He suggests to Duke Orsino that he should get his tailor to make his clothes of changeable taffeta to suit his quick changing romantic moods. “It is the clown‟s office to restore the equilibrium of life which is the essence of comedy, whenever that equilibrium is too much disturbed”.

The fool in Shakespeare sometimes performs the function of the chorus in Greek Tragedy. He frequently comments on the course of action and on the different characters as well as supplies the information necessary for a proper understanding of a play. If any character in the plays of Shakespeare may be said to express the view of the playwright, he is certainly the fool. The fool in Shakespeare is not just a purveyor of wit and pranks. He is also a philosopher and a critic. The true function of the fool, the clown or the clumsy rustics is to help bring out the ridiculous and the incongruous in the action of the play. Feste in „Twelfth Night‟ clashes with Malvolio who strongly disapproves of him. Feste plays a great part in the gulling and baiting of the pretentious and unfortunate steward. Feste acts as a goad in bringing out the pretentions of Malvolio. Feste is also shown crossing swords with Viola who comes in the guise of Cesario as an ambassador of love from Olivia. Feste, then appears as the boon companion of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in the caterwauling scene. Feste is seen at his best exposing the sentimentality of Olivia and Orsino.

In Shakespeare‟s plays we come across lasting types of ridiculous humanity who are not exactly fools or clowns. Topping the list of such characters is Sir John Falstaff. He is a great figure of fun. He is witty in himself and evokes the wit of others. He is irrepressible. Bottom, the weaver, is another such classic character. He is preposterously vain and ambitious to play all roles in „Pyramus and Thisbe‟. He is not at all perturbed when his head is transformed into an ass‟s head. He takes Titania‟s falling in love with him as a matter of course. Dogberry and Verges, pompous fools parading their legal knowledge and wisely dodging dangers, are exquisite comic characters. Shakespeare‟s fools are integral manifestations of his humour which is generally kind and tolerant. Shakespeare laughs with the fool and the coxcomb and not at them. He at times, indulges in lash-like satire. Malvolio, cross-gartered and yellow-stockinged with the eternal smile on his face, quoting repeatedly from Olivia‟s supposed love letter is a cruel satire on vanity and Puritanism.

Sometimes Shakespeare’s humour can be grim and morbid as in the grave-digger’s scene in “Hamlet”. In King Lear the fool has been introduced in the most tragic situations not only to heighten the tragic effect by contrast but also to serve as the chorus of the play to kindle the sentiments of the audience. Thus Shakespeare’s characterization of fools is a fine design of wit which the author owns.

**SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS IN SHAKESPEARE**

In his early romantic comedy---A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the author presents the readers a wonderland full of magic and enchantment: the beautiful scenery of the forests and the rejoiced fairies and spirits in a summer night. Mid-Summer Night’s Dream tells a story between two Athen couples---Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius. At beginning, both Lysander and Demetrius fell in love with the same girl, Hermia. Despite Helena’s intense affection for Demetrius, he refused her courting. Oberon, the king of the fairies, out of sympathy, instructed one of his fairies Puck to apply love potion on Demetrius eyelids in order for him to fall in love with the next person he saw. However, Puck’s mis-application of his enchantment led to both Lysander and Demetrius falling for Helena. After a series of bizarre and hilarious situations, the enchantment was reversed and things were set right again. The supernatural elements in this play reflect the writer’s optimism towards love and human morality. The little spirit---Puck, serves as a main thread in this play, by using his magic power; he brings the relations between three pairs of lovers into a series of changes. From time to time, the play arouses among the audience great astonishment and confusion as well as laughter. Because of the naughty spirit and their magical power, the plot always takes sudden turns which one would never expect and it is full of situational irony. Shakespeare in this play uses magic to embody supernatural power of love to create a surreal world. Unlike his latter tragedies, the supernatural figures are benign characters who tried to help human being. Their meddling with human’s love affair is out of good will rather than wishing them harm. Plus, the supernatural characters are more humane. The fairies bear great resemblance to humans in terms of their emotions. The bickering between the fairy king Oberon and fairy queen Titania are somewhat like the ones among human couples.

Oberon: Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Titania: What! Jealous Oberon. Fairies, skip hence: I have forsworn his bed and company.

Oberon: Tarry, rash wanton! Am not I thy lord?

Titania: Then, I must be thy lady; but I know….

Oberon: How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

Glance at my credit with Hippolyta? (Act 2, Scene 1)

Despite a series of torments and inflictions, the tension of the play is ultimately resolved which probably manifests Shakespeare’s optimism toward the world and human nature. Puck is kind of protagonist in the play who is depicted as extremely lovely though a little bit mischievous. He brings a lot of laughter to the audience and is considered one of the favorite characters in Shakespeare’s comedies. Different from the first period of his plays, in his second writing period---the period of great tragedies, there is no longer merriness and laughter. The appearance of the ghost in Hamlet leads to the prince’s revenge. The three witches’ prophecy in Macbeth results in the murder of the king. Here, Hamlet is taken as an example.

The Ghost in Hamlet is perhaps one of the most fascinating and enigmatic characters in Shakespeare’s plays. In Hamlet, the Ghost appeared 3 times. It made its first appearance in front of two soldiers---Bernardo and Marcellus and Hamlet’s good friend Horatio who told about its existence to Hamlet. Through talking with the Ghost, Hamlet was told that the Ghost was his deceased father and was also informed about the truth of his father’s death. It turned out that Hamlet’s uncle--- Claudius poisoned his father, married his mother and became the king. The Ghost made its third appearance in Gertrude’s closet. He rebuked Hamlet for not carrying the revenge. In this play, the Ghost is subjected to many interpretations by the scholars. While the Ghost’s first two appearances were proved by different people, the third appearance is considered by some experts merely a hallucination of Hamlet. In Act 3, Scene 4, when Hamlet came to confront his mother, he saw his father’s ghost in the queen’s closet who urged him to speak to his mother. Gertrude, the queen, on the other hand could neither hear the Ghost nor see him as Hamlet claimed.

Queen: To whom did you speak this?

Hamlet: Do you see nothing there?

Queen: Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.

Hamlet: Nor did you nothing I hear?

Queen: No, nothing but ourselves.

Hamlet: Why, you look there! Look how it steals away!

My father in his habit as he lived…

Queen: This is the very coinage of your brain!

This bodiless creation ecstasy is very cunning in. (Act 3, Scene 4)

The Ghost in the play can neither be labeled as evil nor good. When Hamlet was first told about the existence of the Ghost, he doubted his honesty and quite suspicious of his intention.

My father’s spiritual arms! All is not well;

I doubt some foul play; Would the night were come!

Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds with rise,

Though all the earth o’erwhelm them, to men’s eyes (Act 1, Scene 2)

Is it what it appears to be or is it a misleading friend? The appearance of the Ghost and what he pushed Hamlet to do partly drove Hamlet mad or as some scholars explained, the Ghost is nothing but a hallucination of Hamlet. The Ghost also foreshadowed Claudio’s death and Hamlet’s madness. He told Hamlet that Claudius killed him by putting poison into his ears and urged him to take revenge and kill Claudius who was indeed killed by his own nephew. What’s more, in his conversation with Hamlet, he warned Hamlet of the possible madness “But howsomever thou pursue this act, Taint not thy mind or let thy soul against thy mother aught ”(Act 1, Scene 5). The existence of the Ghost has added a tune of sadness and sorrow in the play.

If in the first two periods, the supernatural serves as a thread to link the plot together, the supernatural elements in The Tempest have become the main content of the story. The play is different from all other dramas of his. It resembles A Midsummer Night’s Dream in having a supernatural atmosphere and presence of many supernatural beings (Ariel resembling Puck) but it has a much more serious theme than that in the earlier play where we find nothing but “cross purpose in love”. There is the idealized figure of Prospero---the duke-turned-philosopher-magician, plus the Utopian dreams of Gonzalo and running through all is the presence of magic employed everywhere by Prospero until he breaks the wand and dismisses Ariel towards the end of the drama. “There is not only the mixture of the comic with the tragic, the farcical (particularly in the episodes involving Stephano and Trinado) with what is downright serious (the plot for murder), but there is a hotchpotch of gods and goddesses, all made possible by magic.” (Chen, 1981, p169) In The Tempest, the supernatural power lied in the hands of a human being. The protagonist—Prospero, the Duke of Milan, was obsessed with sorcery and neglected daily matters. After his brother’s attempted murder of him, he escaped to an island and sought revenge twelve years later. He conjured up a big storm and caused the ship carrying his brother to wreck on the island he was living. He then separated his brother—Antonio and his fellowman to different groups, each one cutting off from their loved ones. Because of his manipulation, the situation descended into chaos. His enemies suffered the similar torments and inflictions he used to have. Prospero ask his servant Ariel—a spirit to guide his groups to him. The conflict was finally resolved through his forgiveness. Unlike Hamlet and A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream whose human characters have to leave up their fate in the hands of ghost and fairies, the human being in The Tempest seized control of everything. Throughout the play, Prospero used magic to manipulate other characters both human and non-human. Even though Ariel is a spirit who possessed many forms of supernatural abilities, he was nothing but a slave who must carry out what Prospero needed him to accomplish, as can be seen in Act 1, Scene 2.

Prospero: Dull thing, I say so!

When I arrived and hear thee, that made gape

The pine and let thee out.

Ariel: I thank thee, master.

Prospero: If thou more murmur’st, I will rend an oak

And peg thee in his knotty entrails, till

Thou hast howled away twelve winers.

Ariel: Pardon, master,

I will be correspondent to command,

And do my spriting gently. (Act 1, Scene 2)

Shakespeare wrote this play at the end of his career. His reflection on supernatural powers and supernatural being perhaps had changed along with his perspectives toward the world. During the time he wrote his tragedies, the supernatural being are something untouchable, terrifying and beyond human’s knowledge, as can be seen in Hamlet’s famous soliloquy wondering about the aftermath of death. In The Tempest, Shakespeare showed human’s capability of mastering super power and using of it to their own ends. Shakespeare’s belief in what human beings are capable of is clearly manifested in this play.

Shakespeare’s plays whether in modern times or in ancient times are frequently staged and televised because of their popularity. The staging method in the Elizabethan theatre is very simple and interesting. The stages were in the center of the audience, when the actors were acting; the audience crowded the stage from the front and two sideways. So the actors were very close to the audience. The stage was about 5 or 6 feet high. The floor of the stage can be opened; the actors who played the ghost or spirits would appear and disappear through this door. When the door was open, it could also serve as a grave. It maybe seems to be too simple for the modern audience to believe, but that’s how the play was acted at that time. As Russel Jackson puts it “The Tempest has many dreadful objects in it as several spirits in horrid shapes flying down from the sailors, then rising and crossing in the air. And when the ship is sinking, the whole house is darkened and shower of fireballs upon’em. Lightening, and several claps of thunder, to the end of the storm, accompanies this. Subsequent producers of The Tempest would also find the storm an irresistible challenge to the skill of the scenic artist. With the attraction of music, song and scenery, it must have been a splendid show, but it lacks the ambiguities and mystery of the original play” . With the coming of the 21st century, as the technology develops, more and more modern equipment’s, costumes have been applied on the stage, so what seems to be impossible to achieve in the Elizabethan period can now be easily achieved. People don’t have to worry about scene of “flying witches” any more. Audience can get much more visual enjoyment than before.

**USE OF SOLILOQUIES IN SHAKESPEARE’S**

A soliloquy is a type of monologue, but it is not an aside: a monologue is a speech where one character addresses other characters, or the audience; or it is a speech that is self-directed; an aside is a (usually short) comment by one character towards the audience, though during the play it may seem like the character is addressing him or herself.

Soliloquies were frequently used in dramas but went out of fashion when drama shifted towards realism in the late 18th century. But now a days, with budget restrictions in theatre, they have come back into fashion. Good examples in literature can be seen in the words of the character of Iago, who has a leading role in Shakespeare's famous play Othello.

There are seven soliloquy in 'Hamlet' out of which four made by Hamlet are most well-known.Their dramatic significance lies in this that they revel the inner workings of Hamlet's mind. Several conflicting theories have been put forward to explain the contradictory trends in Hamlet's sharacter but the mystery of his personality, for they are the spontaneous outbursts of his inmost thoughts and feelings.

In Othello, soliloquy is used mainly for the revelation of secret plans and conspiracies of lago. lago is involved in soliloquy for ten times in the play, and each time he plans how to destroy the life and happiness of others by thinking out loud to himself. He also describes himself as "I am not what I am" or his philosophy of life as the "divinity of hell" in his soliloquies. This helps Shakespeare portray his character more easily.

At this point in Shakespeare's Othello, Desdemona is sleeping innocently in her bed, where her husband has sent her like a naughty child. Othello comes in with a lantern and launches into a speech. In a play, when a character talks to himself on stage while none of the other characters can hear him, it is called a soliloquy. That's what we have here.

The reason for this soliloquy is that Othello has some things to work out with himself - he comes into this room expressly to kill Desdemona, but he has some pesky little reservations about committing murder that he needs to overcome. He begins by convincing himself she deserves it: '…it is the cause, my soul.' Here he is reminding himself that the 'cause' of Desdemona's death is her (alleged) adultery, not his desire to smother her with a pillow out of revenge.

King Lear is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare. It depicts the gradual descent into madness of the title character, after he disposes of his kingdom by giving bequests to two of his three daughters egged on by their continual flattery, bringing tragic consequences for all. Derived from the legend of Leir of Britain, a mythological pre-Roman Celtic king, the play has been widely adapted for the stage and motion pictures, with the title role coveted by many of the world's most accomplished actors.

Certain plays and characters, namely Hamlet, often match soliloquies with the character's personality. In King Lear, Shakespeare rarely does that. Lear's "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!" monologue in Act III, Scene 2 is considered a soliloquy because he is not conversing with Fool. Rather, he is addressing the winds and other elements, and in many respects describing his interior state.

Here I stand, your slave—

A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.

Edmund's "Thou, nature" speech in Act I, Scene 2, with its concluding line, "Now, gods, stand up for bastards!" is another well known soliloquy.

While Goneril and Cordelia have monologues, those are not soliloquies.

One example of a soliloquy in William Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar" is found in Act II Scene 1 in lines 10 through 34. It is delivered by the character Brutus, one of the key conspirators in Caesar's death.

Brutus is alone in his orchard. He reveals that he knows Caesar must die. It is obvious that Caesar is to be crowned king, and Brutus believes that receiving this power is likely to change Caesar for the worse.

In his speech, Brutus speaks of how, once a person has climbed a ladder, he often turns against those he has passed while climbing. At the end of the soliloquy, Brutus concludes that the prospect of Caesar's rise to power is a danger that must be averted by his death.

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