**SHAKESPEARE-I**

 **Unit – V**

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 **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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