DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS-ENGLISH
SEMESTER –I

SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

CORE-102

BLOCK-1

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

BLOCK 1

BLOCK 2

BLOCK-1 SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

Introduction to Block 1:

This subject helps to understand the various aspects of the life and literary work of Shakespeare. This module comprises of seven units related to Shakespeare studies and about his plays with the insight of his life in this module.

Unit **1** comprises of Introduction to Shakespeare studies which gives the insight of the language of literature used in his work.

Unit **2** moreover gives the interpretation and analysis of the three sonnets of Shakespeare and provides dimensions of the work of Shakespeare in them.

Unit **3** derives various aspects of vocabulary and rhetorical devices used in the play. It helps to understand the word play of Shakespeare.

Unit **4** helps to understand the critical analysis of the play by understanding its characters and understanding the play from various points of view.

Unit **5** find out that how Hamlet of Shakespeare got privatises and moved to various corners of the society.

Unit 6 gives the Modern theory of the play and shows how the play Hamlet gives insight into Feminism and Marxism.

Unit **7** discuss the play as a tragedy and also various shades of the play as in play as tragedy or revenge play.

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UNIT 1 HAMLET :BACKGROUND

STRUCUTRE

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to provide background information which will be useful for a better understanding of the play. After, reading this unit you will be able to appreciate why background information is relevant to the study of a text; acquire an understanding of the text of the play.

1 .1 INTRODUCTION

Hamlet has inspired more critical speculation and comment from critics and scholars than any other play by any dramatist in English Literature, including Shakespeare himself. The character of Hamlet has inspired even more varied, complex, and intense reaction among its audience as well critics and scholars, actors and directors. So much so that Hamlet has often found to have acquired a life of its own, a life outside the context of the play. And the play has become a cultural icon of our times. No other text commands instant recognition of such a large number of moments, images, lines and words as ***Hamlet*** does.

A work of such value, meaning, and complexity as ***Hamlet*** must, therefore, be studied in the context of professional knowledge that scholarship of several centuries has provided for us. Before we can go on to understanding the complex issues of meaning and interpretations of the play and the symbolic value of the vision embodied in it, we must understand how literary scholarship determines a number of related, subsidiary issues and how the tools of scholarship are used before we can learn to appreciate those issues: the issues such as when the play was published ,***Hamlet*** written or performed; the sources that Shakespeare drew upon to construct his plays; Shakespeare is notoriously known to have almost always borrowed his stories from outside sources rather than invent them himself. Shakespeare's plays have come down to us in many versions and the most authentic and reliable texts of his plays almost always need to be determined or reconstructed by scholars. We have to learn to understand how this determination is achieved.

1.2 THE DATE OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OFHAMLET.

There is general agreement that the date of the first performance of Hamlet falls in all probability within 1601-1602. There are two reasons offered by scholars who believe that the play was not written before 1598. One, Francis Mere's (1565- 1647) list of plays in his Palladis Tanzia published in this year makes no mention of Hamlet. Second, a children's company, the Children of the Chapel Royal—began acting at the Blackfriars theatre in London and Shakespeare and other playwrights of the time treated them with some hostility as they were considered to be a threat to the popularity of the Chamberlain's men, the group to which Shakespeare belonged and for which he wrote plays as well as acted in them. Hamlet contains a slurring reference to the child actors-an "aery of children" (11. ii. 354-355)--which could have been made only a year or two after they were in business long enough to cause professional discomfort to Shakespeare and other playwrights of the times. The speculative date of such a reference, thus, appears to be between 1598 and 160 1.

'There is yet another piece of evidence to help determine the date of the play. In an edition of Chaucer's works published in 1598, there is a marginal note by the bridge scholar and a friend of Edmund Spenser, Gabriel Harvey (1 545?- 1630),

11ch states:

The Earl of Essex much commends Albion England. . . .The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis: but his Lucrece, and his tragedy of, Icrrnlet, Prince of Denmark, have it in them, to please the wiser sort.,>**ex** was executed in 1601. Harvey refers to him in the present tense in the same Paragraph in which he refers to Hamlet, clearly establishing that the play must have been performed before 1601. It is not, then, without a certain knack for detective work that we are able to answer some of the ticklish questions for which we otherwise do not have definite answers.

1.3 THE SOURCES OF THE HAMLET STORY

Shakespeare appears to have used an earlier play which told the story of Hamlet.

Many references to this lost play have been traced and this play, much to the convenience of all, is referred to as Ur-Hamlet (the "origilial" Hamlet). Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) makes an indirect reference to it in his known, indeed, in London in the 1590s. Philip Henslowe (d. 16 16), the manager n t' Admiral's Company, a theatrical group, records a performance of a Hamlet on at the theatre at Newington Butts, when it was jointly occupied by Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men (the latter being the theatrical group to **Background** which Shakespeare belonged, wrote plays for and also acted). The fact that a mere eight shillings was the cost of the ticket suggests that the play was on the boards for some time and was not exactly sought after by the London theatre-goers. Thomas Lodge (1557J8-1625) in his Wits Miserie, and The Worlds Madness (1596) vividly describes a devil looking as pale as "the wizard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the theatre, like an oyster wife, Hamlet, revenge." As the theatre up to 1596 was occupied

by Shakespeare's company, the Chamberlain's Men, Hamlet obviously belonged to it. Thomas Dekker's (c. 15 72- 1632) play Satiromastix (1 60 1) contains a reference which is generally regarded as an allusion to Ur-Hamlet rather than to Shakespeare's play as the phrase "Hamlet revenge" does not occur in Shakespeare's play: "my name's Hamlet revenge: thou hast been at Parris garden, have you not?" (IV. I. 150)

Scholars have relied upon a German play, Der Bestrafte Bruder-,Word (Fratricide Punished) to gain an idea of what Ur-Hamlet was like. Ur-Hamlet itself owes its origins to the early Scandinavian folk tales focusing on the essential Hamlet story which acquired a literary form in the hands of the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (1 150?-1206). A version of the Hamlet story appears in Histoires Tragique by Francoise de Belleforest (1 530-1 583) which he found in Saxo. The author of Ur-Hamlet owed much; it seems, to both de Belleforest as well as Saxo for constructing his tale.

Shakespeare put together the story of Hamlet thus on the basis of his familiarity of Ur-Hamlet, which in turn was based on an account of Hamlet in Belleforest and Saxo. There are many elements of the story of Hamlet that Shakespeare took from the earlier sources: fratricide, incest, antic disposition and the shape and form of Hamlet's relationship with the other characters in the play. But then there is much that Shakespeare adds to the Hamlet-story on his own. The doubt regarding the

certainty of the crime as well as the criminal is planted in the play by Shakespeare himself. Many elements of Hamlet's character, such as his melancholic temperament, owes itself to Timothy Bright's (c. 155 1-1 61 5) Treatise of Melancholy (1586). Nashe provided a precedent for Hamlet's comments on the bibulous Danes. Some of the details of Ghost as well as Ophelia's burial have came from the Catholic practices in these matters. A skeptical frame of mind that Shakespeare gave to

Hamlet may have owed itself to Montaigne's (1533-1 592) Essais (1580; 1588; 1595) which had been widely known since their first publication in 1580. In the Saxo's version there are no mad songs of Ophelia, nor her suicide, nor the character of her brother. There is no Osric, nor the grave-diggers, or the play and the players. And finally there is good reason to believe the real life and career of the Earl of Essex may have provided a real-life model for Shakespeare to flame the Bard's most popular creation. Shakespeare's own stamp on the character of Hamlet is revealed in the play in the intensity of the impact on Hamlet of his encounter with the ghost, the ambiguity of Hamlet donning a mask of madness, his ambivalent attitude towards Ophelia, his peculiarly cold and insensitive response to the death of Polonius, his development as an unconventional avenger, his obsessive interest in suicide, elements of ambition and a sense of insecurity in his character--all these are the result of Shakespeare developing his tale in myriad directions for which sometimes there is no suggestion in any of the earlier sources, and sometimes earlier elements are put to a different use. **An** element of ambiguity, in a sense, thus, dominates the play and adds a degree of depth and mystery to the mind and character of Hamlet's character. With the result we have a profounder work of imaginative creativity than any of the earlier versions of the Hamlet story.

Shakespeare, it would appear, did much to distance himself from his original sources and make his own play essentially distinct: his use of long soliloquy points to his

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Hamlet emphasis on Hamlet's inner life, which makes his treatment of Hamlet singularly different from the handling of the character of Hamlet done before or after Shakespeare, created his Hamlet. Shakespeare's interest in the inner life of Hamlet fascinated his readers long after the play was first written. Both Goethe (1 749- 1832) and Coleridge (1 772-1834), for instance, were fascinated by inner spiritual depths of his character.

1.4 THE TEXT OF THE PLAY

But what exactly do we mean when we talk about the "play"? Contrary to our expectations, Shakespeare's ***Hamlet*** does not exist in an authentic manuscript-a text that we could claim Shakespeare wrote and left for us to read, study, examine and interpret. If you look around you might find that the text of ***Hamlet*** is available in a number of editions-all quotations for example from the present lesson are taken from the New Cambridge Shakespeare (second edition 1936; reprinted 197 1) edited by John Dover Wilson. Many other readers, scholars or students use different editions, such as the Oxford Shakespeare, the Arden edition or the Riverside the editions prepared by scholars in earlier centuries, such as by Pope(1 723), Theobald (1 733) and Rowe (1 709) in the eighteenth century, and by Clark and Wright (1872) and Dowden (1 899) in the nineteenth century. Different editions of the same play tend to be in some sense different from each other. And these differences are the result of thoughtful analysis rather than personal whims or fancies or mere individualistic preferences of the editors of these editions. The answer to the question with which we began this section is that there are so many editions because there is no standard text of the play-the play as it was written by Shakespeare and performed by his theatrical group to which he belonged.

Unfortunately there is no such thing as a finite, fixed object called Shakespeare's ***Hamlet.*** When we look around we find that there are at least three versions of the play which can claim to be the authentic Shakespearean text.

As was the custom, ***a Hamlet*** was entered in the Stationers' Register ("the official organizations of the Elizabethan printers and publishers") on July 26, 1602 as " A book called the ***Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark."*** And there are three different texts of the play: ***the first quarto*** edition which appeared in 1603, the ***second quarto*** edition which was published in the following year, in 1604, and the ***first folio*** edition which was published in 1623. (The quarto editions were so called on account of the size of the publication (approximately the size of an ordinary book today) while folio editions were larger in size, almost double the size of quarto editions.) The first quarto is generally believed o be the worst of all the texts, a "bad quarto" (bad quartos is a label attached to early corrupt quarto editions which are full of omissions and

interpolations and garbled passages), perhaps a pirated edition as its text "distorts the meaning and mutilates the verse" (as Campbell and Quinn have remarked in ***The Readers*** ' ***Encyclopedia of Shakespeare;*** p. 284), and this was the result, it is believed, of "memorial reconstruction" : either actors or the printers' agents who sat among the audience later tried to recollect the play from memory to publish unauthorized editions. When the memory failed the "writer" filled in lines from other sources, perhaps from the ***Ur-Hamlet,*** or lines from other parts spoken by other characters. The second quarto was published as ***"The Tragical Histoly of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.*** By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy. At London, Printed by I.R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shop under Saint Dunstan's Church in Fleet- **8** street. 1604." First folio edition is believed to be the transcript of a "prompt book (that is how the copies of the plays for use on the stage were referred to) made by a careful, even a professional scribe. It is shorter than the second quarto edition by about two hundred lines and leaves out many passages full of philosophical and or moral elements. For instance, it leaves out the last long soliloquy ('"How all occasions . . .") (IV. iv. 32-66).

Of all the three versions the second quarto is the longc it-about 4000 lines, and appears to have been printed from a corrected copy of the first quarto and partly from Shakespeare's "foul author's original but unconnected draft of a play, marked with deletions, interlineations and corrections, before it was finalized and copied on clean sheets and became a "fair copy," suitable for submission to a an acting company. Shakespeare is also thought to have generally worked only on foul
papers as his drafts of plays needed little revision and corrections. Any changes needed were worked into the drafts only. The second quarto contains many new scenes, some of the characters have been given new names (Corambis becomes Polonius, and Rosencraft, Rosencrantz) and some of the important passages are truly recast and enriched. The following lines from the first quarto

To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all . . .

are transformed to

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The Slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep-
No more . . .
(III.i.57-62)

The first folio leaves out some well known lines such as ("How all occasions do inform against me") - and it is shorter by a total of 222 lines but contains eighty three new lines.

Check in Progress

Q1. Give the source of the Hamlet

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Q1. Write a brief insight of the Hamlet

Answer

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1.5 TOOLS OF SCHOLARSHIP

What, then, we have is three versions of the printed text of ***Hamlet.*** But which one of these is ***the*** text of the play?--the authentic, correct, true, original, real text of the poet-playwright? And can we ever hope to find out which of these could possibly have been the text that Shakespeare either wrote, or approved for performance or publication? The answer to all this question is: perhaps not. On top of it, to bring in the question of performance is to make matters even more complicated. Why must we think of a play in terms of its manuscripts; what about the performance of the play; could one not claim that the first, original,

first night performance was ***the*** performance of the play. But performance of a play is never the same night after night. So which one is the authorial, authentic text--on stage or page?

Scholars down the centuries have dealt with this problem by using their judgments' on a variety of issues and have given us critical editions of the play that in their view represent the authorial intentions the most-most faithfully reflect the contemporary tastes and circumstances, the level and the kind of authorial skill that we have come to expect as the targeted audience, or the moral and intellectual Framework within which a playwright writing in the Elizabethan times functioned. Many indeed are ***Hamlet*** the scholarly tools, methodologies, analytical skills and arguments employed to recreate an authentic text of the play in the form of a critical edition of the play. essential! What an editor seeks to achieve is coherence, impart an architectonic quality to the form of the play so that the play can be made to embody, and then impart, a similarly coherent meaning-a coherent vision of man's predicament in the universe and meaningful insights into the value if any in human existence.

But before interpretation can be achieved scholarship employs tools to arrive at meanings in the parts before the whole can be imparted meaning. In other words, once the larger question of the text of the play has been established, scholarship gets to work on the subtler issues. "Textual critics," for instance, use "emendation" to free the text of errors due to careless printing. W. W. Greg has explained . "emendation" thus: ". . . A conjectural correction inserted in a Shakespearean text

by an editor in an attempt to restore the original meaning." He goes on to define an acceptable "emendation" as "one that strikes a trained intelligence as supplying exactly the sense required by the context, and which at the same time reveals to the critic the manner in which the corruption arose." One of the finest example of "emendation" in Hamlet was the one proposed by John Dover Wilson to correct a

first folio reading of Hamlet's first soliloquy in line 129 of act one, scene two, which reads: "0 that this too solid flesh would melt . . ." while both the first as well as the second quarto read this as "sallied" flesh. No emendation was traditionally felt necessary until John Dover Wilson pointed out that "sallied" should be treated as misprint for "sullied" as in Elizabethan handwriting "a" and "u" could be easily confused. Also, Wilson points out, "sullied flesh" is the key to the soliloquy and tells us that Hamlet is thinking of "kindless" incestuous marriage as personal defilement. Further, "sullied" fits the immediate context as : "solid" does not. There is something absurd in associating "solid flesh" with "meltyya nd "thaw"; whereas Shakespeare always uses "sully" or "sullied" elsewhere with the image . . . of dirt upon a surface of pure white; and the surface Hamlet obviously has in mind is snow, symbolically of the nature he shares with his mother, once pure but now befouled.[Hamlet. The New Shakespeare. John Dover Wilson, ed. (1971)' p. 15 1-2.1

Historical Criticism, heavily relying on scholarly research, similarly seeks to place Shakespeare in his own times and to study his plays in the light of Elizabethan philosophical, moral and dramatic traditions and beliefs and prepare a Shakespearean text for us to understand and appreciate it better. Historical critics study the contemporary language, social and philosophical concepts and the political strctures and relate them to the study of Shakespeare. New Criticism brought to bear upon the text of the play their finer insights and consolidated the meaning behind the authorial intentions through a focus on the texture of the play.

A great deal of scholarship focuses on the detail rather on the larger issues.

Some of the more stimulating and, in fact, provocative insights into the challenge that a scholar faces in interacting with Hamlet frequently take the form of brief notes and short comments. Journals such as The Explicator, Notes & Queries and The Shakespeare Newsletter provide much needed opportunities for the scholars to share

such insights with their peers. In a short note, Dominick I. Bongiomo

["Shakespeare's Hamlet, 1.5.23," The Explicator, 54(2) (Winter 1996):67.] points out how there is more to a distraught Hamlet's visit to Ophelia's chamber in Act 2, scene 1 than suggested in the theories generally held by scholars, such as Hamlet is pretending insanity or that he is mentally disordered. Bongiorno seeks to establish

that Hamlet's visit to Ophelia is exploited by the playwright to establish "the identity between the King's ghost and the son" through "the grammatical similitude intrinsic to their frightening entrances as also by establishing that Hamlet is driven, much like the ghost, by a need to find someone compassionate, as Ophelia puts it, "To speak of horrors."

Background

Describing Hamlet's visit to her chamber, Ophelia tells Polonius that Hamlet looked "Pale as shirt, his knees knocking each other, / And with a look so piteous in purport As if he had been loosed out of hell *1* To speak of horrors - ***he comes*** before me."

The use of the third person singular pronoun, "he", followed by "comes" occurs before Hamlet's visit to Ophelia only with reference to the dreadful coming of the ghost. Bernardo, in Act one, scene one, is interrupted by an excited Marcellus: "Peace! Break thee off! Look where ***it comes*** again!" Ninety lines later Horatio speaks: "But soft! Behold! Lo, where ***it comes*** again!" ; and then, late, again, "Look, my lord, ***it comes."***

In all the four instances grammar is combined with the a mood of dismay to create resemblance between Hamlet and the ghost. Also, Ophelia's later description of Hamlet's facial expression as similar to the ghost's establishes "an additional, shared identity, one of mood". In lines such as "Ghost: List, list, 0 list!" "list" is generally glossed as "listen" or "hear" as in OED, v2, 1. But it should be obvious. Christopher Baker ["Why Did Hamlet Enter Ophelia's Closet?," ***The Shakespeare Newsletter*** (Summer 1996): 32. maintains, that ghost does not want Hamlet merely to receive the information passively but more in the sense of "to desire, like, wish ***to do*** something" as in OED vl, 2. It is for example in this sense that this word is used in Wyatt's poem "Whoso list to hunt." Hamlet thus is commanded not only to "Hear of this murder!" but "Desire this revenge." The modem remnants of this sense of this word exist in, for example, "listlessness" which 'OED, b, defines as

"characterised by unwillingness to move, act or make any exertion." Lisa Hopkins draws attention ["Hell in ***Hamlet*** and ***'Tis Pity She*** b ***a Whore,"***

Whore (c. 1626) by John Ford (1 586-post 6 140): "But soft, methinks I see repentance work" appears to echo "But soft, methinks I scent the morning's air."

But this apparently minor verbal parallel serves to point up "both a larger similarity between the two plays as well as some fundamental difference between them." The two plays define the horrors of the Hell in similar terms to point to what awaits mankind after death. Both Hamlet and Vasques are very anxious for their victims to be killed while in the act of committing habitual crimes so that their souls may go straight to hell. Both the plays make an issue of Catholicism. Hopkins maintains:

"In the case of Hamlet, it is worryingly noticeable that the Protestant prince, hailing from the heartland of Lutheranism and educated at Wittenberg, ***ii*** university famous in England chiefly through its association with Luther and the Pope-baiting Faustus himself, nevertheless has a father whose ghost is in Purgatory, a location in which only Catholics believe." In ***'Tis Pity She's a Whore*** Ford presents two faces of Catholicism in the virtuous and conscientious Friar and the venal cardinal. Ford's invoking the earlier play is used to draw attention to the role purgatory plays in avoiding damnation.

James Persoon, in a provocative short note in ***The Explicator,*** ["Shakespeare's ***Hamlet," The Explicator, 55 (2)*** (Winter 1997): 70-711 focuses on Ophelia's words:

"There's rosemary, thatfs for remembrance; / pray you, love remember. And there is / pansies, that's for thoughts." Persoon wants us to ark ***what*** is Iaertes to remember and what are to be his thoughts. A meaningful interpretation of the symbolic function of the flowers can be arrived at, he suggests, by focusing on the "inner resonance" within the play. While conventionally flowers signify funerals, courtship or

marriages, and pansies specifically suggests love's wounds or an Ophelia bruised in

love, a useful way of looking at this context will be to look at the two conventional meanings Ophelia assigns to flowers. Remembrances echo throughout the play such as when Ghost seeks to goad Hamlet to avenge his death, "Remember me!"; or, ***Hamlet*** "do not forget", when in his mother's closet Hamlet seems to forget his darker purpose. Similarly "thoughts" too resonate throughout the play. Hamlet's thoughts are directed towards revenge: he blames them for impeding his immediate purpose in almost every soliloquy. Persoon concludes: "Ophelia's flowers are thus not so much funereal and memorialising, . . . , as they are epiphanies focusing the earlier energies of revenge into a camera-like close-up evoking the causes, meanings, and results of the revenges that are blossoming in the second half of the play."

David Thatcher points out how names for Shakespeare "confer status, reputation, lineage, legitimacy" ["Shakespeare's Hamlet," The Explicator, 54 (3) (Spring 1996):

134-363. And yet Claudius remains a nameless king. In Hamlet "The erasure of the pejorative Claudius seems complete. . . ." Only at one juncture the king's name makes its presence felt, paradoxically in the form of an elision. In the quatrain

For thou dost know, 0 Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself: and now reigns here

Editors have sought to emend "pajock" as "peacock" (as Pope felt it should be emended), "patchcock" , apart from arguing for emended spelling for "pajock" itself. It has been suggested that a clue to a meaningful emendation lies in Horatio's reply to this quatrain: " You might have rhymed" and a widespread view maintains that

Hamlet was about to finish with the word "assyy-a suggestion that Theobald first made. Thatcher proposes: 'Wot just "ass," . . . which is metrically deficient, but the word Hamlet cannot bring himself to utter: Claudius, that is, Claudi-ass. Claudius as the end word for this line was first proposed by Appleton Morgan a hundred years ago but has remained ignored even though it fits rhyme, meter, and context. Thatcher

offers three additional arguments in its favour. Throughout the play Hamlet is extremely partial to the word "ass"; he is addicted to word-play, especially to quibble; and the practice of punning on names rhyming or near-rhyming with ass was common in Shakespeare's time. Hamlet thus "took advantage of the latter end of his uncle's name to share a victor's witticism with comprehending confidant."

A valuable source of insights into the complexities of Hamlet is comparative studies that seek to examine Hamlet in the light of insights gained from one's study of literary texts from other cultures and languages. Over the last few decades the work of the Greek-Egyptian poet C. P. Cavafy (1 863- 193 3) has received a great deal of international attention and acclaim. The impact on the life and times of the poet of the culture and empire of Great Britain has been much analyzed. Martin McKinsey has translated some of Cavafy's original Greek material into English and has added valuable commentaries ["C. P. Cavafy on Shakespeare: 'King Claudius' and Two

Early Essays," In-between: Essays & Studies in Literary Criticism, 6 (i), No. 11 (March 1997):3-181.

This includes Cavafy's refashioning of the events of a literary text in "King Claudius," and two of his early essays, "Shakespeare on Life" and "Greek Traces in Shakespeare." In its eleven syllable blank verse the poem, "King Claudius" narrates:

In all the houses of the poor
they wept for him-secretly,
for fear of Fortinbras.
Claudius is portrayed as
A mild and peace-loving monarch
(the land had suffered much

CHARACTERS

CHARACTER LIST

Hamlet - The Prince of Denmark, the title character, and the protagonist. About thirty years old at the start of the play, Hamlet is the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet, and the nephew of the present king, Claudius. Hamlet is melancholy, bitter, and cynical, full of hatred for his uncle's scheming and disgust for his mother's sexuality. A reflective and thoughtful young man who has studied at the University of Wittenberg, Hamlet is often indecisive and hesitant, but at other times prone to rash and impulsive acts.

Claudius - The King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, and the play's antagonist. The villain of the play, Claudius is a calculating, ambitious politician, driven by his sexual appetites and his lust for power, but he occasionally shows signs of guilt and human feeling—his love for Gertrude, for instance, seems sincere.

Gertrude - The Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother, recently married to Claudius. Gertrude loves Hamlet deeply, but she is a shallow, weak woman who seeks affection and status more urgently than moral rectitude or truth.

Polonius - The Lord Chamberlain of Claudius's court, a pompous, conniving old man. Polonius is the father of Laertes and Ophelia.

Horatio - Hamlet's close friend, who studied with the prince at the university in Wittenberg. Horatio is loyal and helpful to Hamlet throughout the play. After Hamlet's death, Horatio remains alive to tell Hamlet's story.

Ophelia - Polonius's daughter, a beautiful young woman with whom Hamlet has been in love. Ophelia is a sweet and innocent young girl, who obeys her father and her brother, Laertes. Dependent on men to tell her how to behave, she gives in to Polonius's schemes to spy on Hamlet. Even in her lapse into madness and death, she remains maidenly, singing songs about flowers and finally drowning in the river amid the flower garlands she had gathered.

Laertes - Polonius's son and Ophelia's brother, a young man who spends much of the play in France. Passionate and quick to action, Laertes is clearly a foil for the reflective Hamlet.

Fortinbras - The young Prince of Norway, whose father the king (also named Fortinbras) was killed by Hamlet's father (also named Hamlet). Now Fortinbras wishes to attack Denmark to avenge his father's honor, making him another foil for Prince Hamlet.

The Ghost - The specter of Hamlet's recently deceased father. The ghost, who claims to have been murdered by Claudius, calls upon Hamlet to avenge him. However, it is not entirely certain whether the ghost is what it appears to be, or whether it is something else. Hamlet speculates that the ghost might be a devil sent to deceive him and tempt him into murder, and the question of what the ghost is or where it comes from is never definitively resolved.

Rosencrantz And Guildenstern - Two slightly bumbling courtiers, former friends of Hamlet from Wittenberg, who are summoned by Claudius and Gertrude to discover the cause of Hamlet's strange behavior.

Osric - The foolish courtier who summons Hamlet to his duel with Laertes.

Voltimand And Cornelius - Courtiers whom Claudius sends to Norway to persuade the king to prevent Fortinbras from attacking.

Marcellus And Bernardo - The officers who first see the ghost walking the ramparts of Elsinore and who summon Horatio to witness it. Marcellus is present when Hamlet first encounters the ghost.

Francisco - A soldier and guardsman at Elsinore.

Reynaldo - Polonius's servant, who is sent to France by Polonius to check up on and spy on Laertes.

Check in Progress

Q1. Give any two Characters of the Hamlet

Answer

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Q1. Write short note on tools of Hamlet

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1.6 LET'S SUM UP

More than any other play by Shakespeare, *Hamlet* focuses on the point of view of a single character: Hamlet himself, which makes him sympathetic even as he commits unsympathetic acts. Hamlet has more lines than any other character in Shakespeare, and nearly 40% of the lines in his play—the highest proportion of lines Shakespeare ever gave to a single character. Hamlet's speeches are also exceptionally revealing: he discusses his thoughts and feelings about profound questions like the meaning of life, the possibility of an afterlife, familial and sexual love, suicide, religion and suffering. Despite his many flaws—recklessness, cruelty, indecisiveness, misogyny—Hamlet has remained an enduringly popular and fascinating character because Shakespeare shows us so much of his inner life that we cannot help but sympathise with him. Hamlet reveals his mental state to the audience throughout the play, so the audience remains close to him and understands his motivations from beginning to end. Rather than becoming estranged from the audience as he becomes estranged from himself, like Macbeth, Hamlet continues to question himself and his actions up until his death.

The point of view in *Hamlet* is so close to Hamlet himself that it's sometimes impossible to be sure whether something is really happening in the play or whether Hamlet just thinks it's happening. Although Marcellus, Barnardo and Horatio see the Ghost, only Hamlet ever hears it speak, and when the Ghost makes its third appearance in Gertrude's closet, only Hamlet can see it. The discrepancy around who hears the ghost raises the question of whether the Ghost's speech might be a hallucination of Hamlet's, confirming a suspicion he already holds rather than giving him new information. In the play scene, Hamlet is convinced

that his play has made Claudius feel guilty—"What, freighted with false fire?" (III.ii)—but other characters seem to believe that Hamlet's own behavior has made Claudius feel not guilty but angry: "Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended" (III.iv.). The audience can't decide these questions either way, which contributes to the play's air of mystery, and also makes us feel that we are so close to Hamlet's point of view that we are seeing the play's events the way he sees them. By keeping the audience so close to Hamlet's perspective and interpretation, Shakespeare tells his story through the point of view of an unreliable narrator.

Despite the closeness of the play's point of view to Hamlet, and the amount of time other characters spend questioning him and spying on him, there are many mysteries about his character which are never solved, and these mysteries create the play's troubling sense that truth is ultimately unknowable. The audience never discovers how far Hamlet has really gone mad and how far he's pretending. We never find out what is making him so unhappy: his father's death, his mother's marriage, his failure to become king, his inability to take revenge, or his inability to work out what to believe. We never learn what his real feelings for Ophelia are; nor do we know why it takes him so long to finally kill Claudius. By bringing us so close to the point of view of a single character while ultimately making him mysterious, *Hamlet* suggests that the core of human nature is unknowable.

1.7KEYWORDS

- **adoption tried:** friendship that has stood the test of time.
  "Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried…"
  You have friends who have proven themselves faithful.
- **apoplex'd:** paralyzed
  "But sure, that sense is apoplex'd; for madness would not err."
  Surely your senses are paralyzed, otherwise you would behave this way.

- **arras:** a tapestry wall hanging.
  "Be you and I behind an arras then…" We will hide behind this tapestry to spy.
- **bodkin:** a dagger or stiletto.
  "When he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?" He could just as easily take out his knife and end it all.

1.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, what is prose? It happens in acts 2 and 3.
2. What are some examples quoted from the text that hamlet is, in fact, both morally justified to himself, and clever?
3. What are some examples of the use of prose in *Hamlet*?
4. In act 1, scene 2, Claudius urges Hamlet to stay at court instead of returning to Wittenberg. What might he be concerned about?

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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    - Hamlet at Project Gutenberg
    - Hamlet at the Internet Shakespeare Editions – Transcripts and facsimiles of Q1, Q2 and F1.

1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check In Progress I

Answer 1. Check 1.3

Answer 2 Check 1.4

Check In Progress II

Answer 1. Check 1.5

Answer 2 Check 1.5 Character set

UNIT 2 THREE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

STRUCTURE

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Shakespeare's works are far from easy to understand chiefly because of-changes in the meanings of particular words. A Sonnet in the English form or Shakespearean form consists of three quatrains and a couple. Hence a full understanding of a Shakespearean sonnet will involve :

i) an awareness of the relationship between the quatrain and the couplet;

ii) the pace of its movement; and **P**

iii) a sense of the development of its imagery.

Hence our aims in this unit are :

to offer a commentary on the three sonnets of Shakespeare

to gloss all the words which might cause some difficulty to a reader who is unfamiliar with Elizabethan diction to give a sense of the development of the imagery in the poem to establish the links between its different parts.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

We begin this course on poetry with a study of three poems of Shakespeare.

This unit deals with the Sonnet form.

Study the introduction to Shakespearean sonnets in the following section (2.3) before you read the individual sonnets. This will help you to recognise the distinguishing feature of a Shakespearean sonnet. All the three sonnets in your course deal with the theme of the power .

He mute 154 sonnets of which the first 126 sonnets were addressed to a friend and the,. Other 28 following them were addressed to his mistress or the Dark Lady. Even though most of the sonnets are addressed either to the friend or to the mistress, some of the very powerful among them are impersonal pronouncements, which do not make any allusion to these two main characters.

The **three** sonnets in your course (Sonnets 18.55 and 65) have for their subject the **power** of ***art.*** They do qt give us; portrait of the young friend nor suggest his personal qualities.

All that Shakespeare claims is that his verse will confer immortality on his friend. The 'I' in the poems **(see** Sonnet 18) ceases to be the centre of attention both for the speaker and for us, the readers. It will be naive to identify, the 'I' of the poems with Shakespeare himself. By doing so, we are in danger of losing contact with the poem and its meaning.

2.3 SONNET 18 "SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY?"

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes the hot eye of the sun shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines tetime thou grow'st;
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

2.3 Interpretations

Since these three sonnets (Sonnets 18.55 and 65) are addressed to a friend, we find the speaker in the twin roles of a friend and a poet. The poet contemplates on their close friendship against the inevitable **mutability** through the **eMux** of time. The poet's task in these three sonnets is to halt the passage of time and to preserve in his art (poetry) the fleeting life of his friend, who is very dear to him. The poem holds equally well if we substitute mistress or beloved for friend. Sannet 18 "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?'is the first of the full scale **immor~lisation**so f art (poetry) and through art, the immortalisation of his friend or beloved. In this sonnet, the poet steps up the power of time and then introduce the power of his verse as a defence against time. (Line numbers are given in brackets.) Read lines (1) and (9).

The poem suggests a comparison of>the youth's beauty with that of summer (1) and then appears to reject it by claiming permanence for the youth as against the inevitable transience of summer's glory (9). Now turn to the couplet (13-14). **Yeu** will notice that the poem's focus is not on the apparent comparison and contrast between the order of youth and the order of nature, but it shifts through these last two lines to affirm the eternity of time and Art. The subtle transition is effected by the phrase "eternal lines to time" (1 2).

Time is eternal. It never comes to a stop. It rolls on through days, months and years , bringing in its cyclical motion the different seasons in

organised succession. The eternal movement of Time through birth death and regeneration gives summer its immortality. In an similar manner, poetry (or Art) can encapsulate beauty, youth and love within its lines and thereby confer immortality on them. So long as life continues, neither Time nor Art shall **cease** to exist, whereby both the order of nature and the order of youth shall gain permanence.

The essential comparison is not between his young friend and the beautiful summer, but **17 Shakespeare and Milton** between the immortality of Time and the immortality of **Art** which together? will bestow eternity on summer and his friend.

2.3.2 Analysis

Lines'

1. "a summer's day" (i) a day in summer (ii) "day" in the Elizabethan usage "season". This give the meaning "summer time';. This meaning will make the progression of imagery in the next few lines logical. For in line 3, there is the description of rough winds. In line 4, there is a specific reference to the length of summer's tenure (4). in 5-6, to hot and cloudy weather (5-6)-all characteristic of summer season. So summer's day also suggests summer season.

2. "lovely" - : (i) kind, gentle

(ii) lovable

3. "temperate" : even-tempered, balanced, moderate in temperature (climate). The English summer is alternately hot and cold. The poet praises his friend that he is of equable temper.

4. "May*' : early part of summer in England. Note the skilful use of the word "buds" to characterise the early summer.

5. **"Qte"** : terminable period.

Summer has a short yearly tenure in England. The poet says that just like summer, youthful beauty also has a short duration. Thus the first quatrain (1-4) introduces a comparison between youth and summer in treks of ***shortness of duration.*** Both do not last forever. The second quatrain (5-8) institutes a comparison in terms of mutability or change which is to be seen in the decline or in the transience of beauty.

6. " "gold complexion" : relates to the bright, hot weather in summer. .

7. "fair,from fair .. ... declines" : in contrast, refers to the change from bright sunrise to cloudy weather.

: Stripped of its fairness. There is the inevitability of decline in beauty which is in keeping with the natural order of existence. All things, bright and beautiful , do not last forever. Youth and summer have to , surrender their beauty with the efflux of time.

In the third quatrain, the comparison seems to end with the three lines (9-1 1). "But thy eternal summer shall not fade ..,in his shade." The poet makes the claim that the summer of his young friend will not fade nor will he lose his beauty nor decline and decay. How can he' alone escape Death which overpowers all mortal beings? The answer is given by the ptin the last line of this quatrain (12) : "When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st."

The keywords are "eternal lines", where "lines" refer to lines of poetry. It is evident that the word "lines "suggests the power of poetry to encapsulate and immortalise his young friend within its lines. But when taken in conjunction with the preceding adjective "eternal", it also suggests the permanence of youth's summer if he grows parallel to time's movement through eternity. In the context of the **linear** movement of time, no mortal being can escape decline, decay and death. But viewed in the background of timelessness of Time which 18 operates through cycles of birth death and regeneration, the beauty of summer (order of nature) will last forever. Summer will regain its lost glory as ~immeo ves in cyclical **Three Sonnets of Shakespeare** progression through Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer. This is the rationale behind the rise and decline and rise of natural order. Thus the apparent contrast between the summers of youth and nature in the third quatrain yields to **ari** underlying similarity. Both nature and youth alike tend to lose their beauty aid brightness only to regain them when they &e framed within the confines of Eternal Time and Art.

The word "lines" (12) helps to link the last quatrain with the concluding couplet. Here the poet shifts his attention from the order of nature to the order of Art. The comparisons made in the last quatrain had affirmed the eternity of summer in the context of timelessness of existence. As long as life lasts, summer will keep returning in full glory. While time can thus confer immortality on the order of nature, it is Art which can confer

immortality on the youth. As long as men have eyes to see as long as Time moves on its wheels, Art will continue to breathe life into the youth and preserve him for posterity.

You will notice that up to line 8, the poet makes a strong case for mortality (summer will fade and so will youth), but in the next four lines he makes a subtle turn to present the consolation of immortality. The concluding lines of the couplet assert and affirm the same point. The couplet thus reverses the tendency of the first two quatrains and takes the lead from the third quatrain to give Art the power to confer immortality on his young friend. Thus you can discern the logical development of the sonnet with the turn coming in line 9.

2.4 SONNET 55 "NOT MARBLE, NOR THE GILDED MONUMENTS"

Not Marblei nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than upswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn;
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
Against death-and all oblivious enmity
Shall pace you forth: your praise shall still find roopl
Even in the eyes of al1,posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgement that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

2.4.1 Interpretations

This is one of the four or five greatest of Shakespeare's sonnets. It is also considered as one of the greatest immortalisation poems in English language. This sonnet reflects a supremely self-confident poet who claims for his poetry the power to confer immortality on his friend.

As in the previous sonnet which you studied in **2.4** (Sonnet 18), we notice that the poet gives no portrait of his friend. This sonnet also talks a good deal about the power of poetry to triumph over decay, deduction and other ravages of war and time. The poet says that his sonnet, "the living record of your (his friend's) memory (8) is built on a powerful rhyme which can withstand the onslaught of war and fire, death and oblivion. verse shall outlive all other erected memorials and monuments in marble md gold and thereby preserve his friend within its lines for posterity till the world draws to its 'ending dobm'.

Analysis

Lines

1. "Marble.. .gilded monuments": the imagery used in this sonnet is concerned with

monument; and memorials (ref. : 'statues' (5) 'work of masonry' (6) and 'living record' (8)). This poem itself is a monument built on a 'powerful rhyme',

(2). So the poet claims that his monument in verse **Shakespeare and Milton** which shall be ;l living record of I tis is stronger than other monuments erected in marble and gold to preserve and honour the memory of dear . . departed souls. Further his monument is **to** the living unlike the others which are dedicated to the &ad. Shakespeare's reference to marble and monuments can **be** traced to the classical Latin poets, Horace and Ovid. But the earlier poets were celebrating their own immortality by saying that "because of my poem, I will never die." Shakespeare, on the other hand says, "because of my poem, you will never die." (Refer

Line- 14)

2. "outlive" : his powerful rhyme will outlive the other monuments. The usage of the word out-live highlights the special quality of his monument (i.e. his verse) for in it, his voice will remain ever alive as a living record of his friend's memory.

3. "you shall ... contents" : develops the imagery of the first line and asserts that the friend in his verse shall shine brighter than tho? interned in the gilded monuments.

4. "unswept . .. Sluttish time" : The marble and gilded monuments have **turned** to "unswept stone" in the sense tha tthey are now neglected

monuments. We also notice the reference **to** the power of time that had turned these monuments I into uncared for ancient ruins.

The first quatrain compares the verse monument and the gilded monuments to establish the time-proof quality of strength, superiority and richness of the former. There is the poet's defiance of **tip?** and the assertive boast that his verse can confer immortality on his friend. These four lines claim not only eternity for the verse, but through it they ' **seek** to perpetuate the memory of his friend. The second quatrain speaks about the ravages of war resulting in the destruction of all monuments other than his verse. I

6. "masonry" : building in stones

7. "Mars his sword" : Mars' sword.

An Elizabethan genitive form to mean the sword of Mars, the God of War.

Neither war nor fire can obliterate the living record of your memory. So both the quatrains have a similar refrain to affirm the penhanence of verse monuments set-off against stone and gilded erections. 'Living Record' relates to the voice of the. poet in the verse which shall remain a permanent record. The wood 'memory' in the last line of the second quatrain connects the idea of permanence in the next four lines by claiming his friend's triumphant resistance to I death and oblivion. All the hostile forces of time, such as war and death cannot reduce either the verse or the friend embodied therein to oblivion.

10. "pace you forth" "still"

12. "wear this world out"

1**3:** "judgement" Stride on without any need to escape the hostile. Forces. , Glory always Will last as long as this world lasts. His friend will live in the eyes of all posterity till this world comes to its final end. the final day of Judgement on mankind. When all souls shall rise in front of the Lord who will make a reckoning of their deeds and pronounce his final judgement. "that " when

14. '.'in this" in verse, in this powerful rhyme "dWl". ' . Contrast this with the word 'live'. The two are not identical. 'dwell' means to abide, to remain long. Hence it carries an extended meaning of permanence, of in-dwelling. So the line suggests that you will live on in verse and make other lovers' eyes your permanent ' habitation. Here Shakespeare speaks

of the artistic immortality of the verse and the personal immortality of his friend who shall remain forever in the eyes of all those lovers who read this verse. The poet's friend thus becomes the image of love. He shall remain beyond time and verse in the lives of others who are capable of discerning and experiencing such love.

The day of judgement marks the end of the world. So long as life lasts, his verse will last and so long as the verse lasts, his friend will last. But the emphasis shifts at this point in the couplet when the poet asserts the normality of his friend not just through the lines of poetry but in his own right as a symbol of love. As in Sonnet 18, it can be said that so long as men have the capability to feel and experience love they will remember and cherish his memory. The friend is what all lovers see when they look into each others' eyes. Can you recognise the logical development of the Sonnet? The three quatrains logically

4 develop the concept of permanence of ***art*** (or poetry) whereby ***art*** bestows immortality on its contents. This sonnet confers immortality on his beloved friend. The first quatrain describes ravages of time on ancient monuments; the second speaks of the ravages of war while the third states the on slaughter of death and consequent oblivion. Against all these, stands the verse monument. The couplet at the end makes a swift arid sudden departure by shifting the emphasis from the world of art to the sphere of Love. His friend will gain immortality not only by virtue of **poetry.** But in his own right because he personifies eternal Love which is ineffaceable from earth, so long as men have eyes to see and hearts to feel. Love has the power to resist the passage of time and the poet's proper mode **of love** is poetry.

How does pay confer immortality on his friend or beloved? This sonnet as it exists is a living record of his friend's memory. It is in itself a strong monument which recognises not only its own power, but also recognises the existence of the friend (or beloved) and other lovers throughout the history of mankind. The sonnet which represents art (or poetry) seeks its inspiration from the friend (or beloved) who in turn gains immortality through its lines. The friend, ,who embodies love is the inspirer of the immortal verse. In sonnet 18, there is a reference to Time and Art as the repositories of eternity. Here in Sonnet 55, it is Art and Love that have the power to retain within and to bestow immortality on their creations.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short interpretation of Sonnet 55

Answer

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Q1. Write short analysis of Sonnet 18

Answer

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2.5 SONNET 65 "SINCE BRASS, NOR STONE, NOR EARTH, NOR BOUNDLESS SEA"

Since Brass, nor stone, nor earth. nor boundless sea,

But sad mortality o'ersways .their power, ***I***

How this rage shall beauty hold a plea,

Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

Oh how shall summer's honey breath hold out

Against the wrackful siege of battering days. . -

,. **1** When rocks impregnable are not so stout **-,**

Shakespeare. and Milton

i *a* Nor gates of steel so strong but time decays?

Oh fearful meditation! where, alack,

Shall Time'S best jewel from Time's chest lie hid? .

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?

Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

Oh none, unless this_mhcLe have might -

That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

2.5.1 Interpretations

In line with the two sonnets you have studied, attempt an analysis of this sonnet. Beauty is so frail that it can neither escape mortality nor arrest the ravages of time. There is no strong force that can prevent the detection of beauty that takes place with the inexorable march of time. The first twelve lines (the three quatrains) thus present a strong case for the inescapability of mortality that spares neither the animate nor the inanimate creations on earth. Beauty pleads in vain against the awesome power of the twin forces of time and mortality. But the couplet at the end reverses this gloomy trend of the quatrains and with one deft stroke holds out the miraculous possibility of preserving beauty by confining it within the lines of poetry. Line 13 speaks of "this miracle" which has a double-edge demeaning-in the sense of -

i) a possibility to effect a miracle; and

ii) a reference to this miracle of verse that has incarnated the beauty of his friend within .its lines.

Lines

1. recalls the opening line of sonnet **55,** "Not Marble nor the gilded monuments." The glitter of brass, the hardness of stone, the vastness of earth and the expansiveness of sea are in themselves a marvel of beauty, force and power. But the order of nahire in all its awesome majesty is subject to mortality like any other created thing on earth.

2. "sad mortality": tumble destruction of a fatal kind.

3-4 beauty is compared to a delicate flower. When measured against the rage of time and mortality, beauty is in physical terns no stronger than a flower.

4. "action" : power of action i.e.. vitality.

5-8 The power of beauty is no match for the ravages of time. The second quatrain continues the "fearful meditation" of the-first quatrain on the defencelessness of beauty. From the visual imagery of the earIier lines which saw beauty in the likeness of a flower, the poet moves to the **factory** image when he describes ' beauty in terms of summer's sweet fragrance. The diffusive and pervasive nature of beauty is seen all, the more fragile when it is placed in continuity with the solid rocks and gates of steel which are shown equally vulnerable to the battering of time. ,

9-12 The third quatrain reiterates the argument that nothing can stand against time. Here the image is that of a jewel. Beauty is the most

precious gift which we are anxious to hide from time who will take jt back and lock it in his treasure chest.

10 "Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?" notice the use of capital 'T' in this line **as** against the employment of the small letter in link **8.** This gives a " new dimension to the argument of the poem. The **incipient** personification of time in line **8** as a fearsome opponent is enhanced here with the employment of the capital letter 'T'. It points to the timelessness of the operation of time-an echo of sonn.9 **18** which had established the ceaseless motion of time as long as life exists on earth. Beauty, which in the last line **14** is made synonymous with "my love" is not just a physical attribute, but it includes all that is lovely and inspires loveliney in orders. Beauty thus acquires a timeless quality and thereby gains imrnorulity.

Time which does not take away from beauty its eternal distinction can still keep it hidden from mortal be'n s. The poet wonders which mortal, has the power to unlock Time's **treaslurc:** chest and release it for mortal eyes to See. Who can prevent Time from enjoying the booty of its precious jewel? On this note of human **Three Sonnets of Shakespeare** powedessness against Time, the quatrain ends and prepares us for the magnificent couplet on a different conceptual plane.

:* The gloom of the previous twelve lines can be removed possibly by a miracle-the miracle of his verse in black ink. Nothing is asserted here except a possibility. This miracle-this verse may have the might to obliterate Time's concealed activity. What cannot be achieved by "the boundless sea", "impregnable rocks", or "gates of steel" is possible through the passionate lines of poetry. The witty remark that "his black ink may still shine bright", so nonchalantly expressed after the gloom of the douzain (1 2 lines) can alone prove miraculous.

The end of the sonnet is tentative, suggesting a possibility (reference 'may') and there is , nothing of unreal optimism in the statement. It is this that gives weightage to the couplet.

The "fearful meditation" on the widespread ruin that occurs with time and which will make even "Time's best jewel" almost hidden from sight give way to its possible recovery through the means of poetry. The couplet thus counters the overwhelming arguments of the three quatrains

and lends credibility to its faith in the aft of poetry by the judicious introduction of the word "miracle".

In all the three sonnets, we notice the skilful use of the couplet to suggest the possibility of

Art to confer immortality both on itself and on the subject it is concerned with. The poet's friend (or beloved) can be preserved in the verse which will last as long as Time lasts. We also notice that a couplet in Shakespeare's sonnet recapitulates or extends the thought implicitly present in the rest of the poem and invariably it begins with a logical assertion "Therefore" or "so" or with an apostrophe. In some of his not so powerful sonnets, the couplets tend to be weak and begin host with an apdogetic "but" or "and yet". The three sonnets 18,55 and 65 are examples of a strong and unified structure built on "a powerful rhyme" and therefore they speak with credible authenticity about the immortality of Art.

INFLUENCE

Hamlet is one of the most quoted works in the English language, and is often included on lists of the world's greatest literature. As such, it reverberates through the writing of later centuries. Academic Laurie Osborne identifies the direct influence of *Hamlet* in numerous modern narratives, and divides them into four main categories: fictional accounts of the play's composition, simplifications of the story for young readers, stories expanding the role of one or more characters, and narratives featuring performances of the play.

English poet John Milton was an early admirer of Shakespeare and took evident inspiration from his work. As John Kerrigan discusses, Milton originally considered writing his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) as a tragedy. While Milton did not ultimately go that route, the poem still shows distinct echoes of Shakespearean revenge tragedy, and of *Hamlet* in particular. As scholar Christopher N. Warren argues, *Paradise Lost*'s Satan "undergoes a transformation in the poem from a Hamlet-like avenger into a Claudius-like usurper," a plot device that supports Milton's larger Republican internationalist project. The poem also reworks theatrical language from *Hamlet*, especially around

the idea of "putting on" certain dispositions, as when Hamlet puts on "an antic disposition," similarly to the Son in *Paradise Lost* who "can put on / [God's] terrors."[

Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, published about 1749, describes a visit to *Hamlet* by Tom Jones and Mr Partridge, with similarities to the "play within a play".In contrast, Goethe's Bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, written between 1776 and 1796, not only has a production of *Hamlet* at its core but also creates parallels between the ghost and Wilhelm Meister's dead father.[135] In the early 1850s, in *Pierre*, Herman Melville focuses on a Hamlet-like character's long development as a writer. Ten years later, Dickens's *Great Expectations* contains many Hamlet-like plot elements: it is driven by revenge-motivated actions, contains ghost-like characters (Abel Magwitch and Miss Havisham), and focuses on the hero's guilt.[135] Academic Alexander Welsh notes that *Great Expectations* is an "autobiographical novel" and "anticipates psychoanalytic readings of *Hamlet* itself" About the same time, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* was published, introducing Maggie Tulliver "who is explicitly compared with Hamlet"[though "with a reputation for sanity".[

L. Frank Baum's first published short story was "They Played a New Hamlet" (1895). When Baum had been touring New York State in the title role, the actor playing the ghost fell through the floorboards, and the rural audience thought it was part of the show and demanded that the actor repeat the fall, because they thought it was funny. Baum would later recount the actual story in an article, but the short story is told from the point of view of the actor playing the ghost.

In the 1920s, James Joyce managed "a more upbeat version" of *Hamlet*—stripped of obsession and revenge—in *Ulysses*, though its main parallels are with Homer's *Odyssey*. In the 1990s, two novelists were explicitly influenced by *Hamlet*. In Angela Carter's *Wise Children*, *To be or not to be*[is reworked as a song and dance routine, and Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince* has Oedipal themes and murder intertwined with a love affair between a *Hamlet*-obsessed writer, Bradley Pearson, and the daughter of his rival. In the late 20th century, David Foster Wallace's novel Infinite Jest draws heavily from *Hamlet* and takes

its title from the play's text; Wallace incorporates references to the gravedigger scene, the marriage of the main character's mother to his uncle, and the re-appearance of the main character's father as a ghost.

There is the story of the woman who read Hamlet for the first time and said, "I don't see why people admire that play so. It is nothing but a bunch of quotations strung together."

2.6 POETIC DEVICES

Another interesting observation relates to the use of personal pronouns. Sonn

et 18 refers to

the friend (or the beloved) as "thou" and "thee" as against Sonnet 55 which uses the in formal"you" in its address. Sonnet 65 makes no use of personal pronoun except for "my love" in the last line of the poem. Why does Shakespeare exchange 'thou' of Sonnet 18 for 'you' in Sonnet 55? While it is difficult to answer with certainty, it can be reasoned that Sonnet 18 is the first of Shakespeare's Sonnets to immortalise poetry, and hence the employment of formal address. There is a certain hesitation to claim such a status for poetry-(art) which in turn will acquire the power to confer immortality on his friend. By the, time he writes his fifty-fifth Sonnet, Shakespeare's self-confidence asserts itself to claim this distinction for poetry. Hence the tone in 55 changes to'a personal, intimate tone with the use of "you" in - place of "thou". Since sonnet 65 pitches 'beauty' against the ravages of time, the sonnet keeps clear of personal address except to identify 'beauty' with "my love" in the last line.

(See note on line 10 in the analysis of Sonnet 65).

The first quatrain is an attempt to compare his friend with nature : here represented by the beautiful English Summer. "Darling buds of May" refers to the spring of early flowers. The adjective "darling" carries with it the association of tenderness, love and beauty that relates to his tender. Bummer's lease" (4) is of a short duration. 'Summer' is personified as a tenant whose **my**is fo r a brief time. Time has given a very short lease for

summer, at the end of which, has to yield its place to Autumn. Thus you can observe the figure of speech - "persofification"4n this reference to "summer". You will see the same figure of speech in

7 operation.wkn he describes the 'sun' with its 'gold complexion' (6) and 'hot eye' (5) and later when he refers to Death as boasting and bragging about its power (4). All the images in this **soilnet** are derived from Summer season only to establish that his friend is "more lovely" and **'"more** temperate" than summer and shall remain eternal in the lines of his an you identify the figures of speech and imagery in the other two sonnets (sonnets **Shakespeare and Milton (Hints** : "Sluttish time" (Personification) (Sonnet 55) "Work of Masonry (Synecdoche) (Sonnet 55)

Lines 9- 1 2 (Apostrophe). (Sonnet 65). In Sonnet 55, **race** the imagery of mbiru.ments, marble, stone, masonry to recognise memorials erected in honour of the dead. This imagery is built up steadily only40 show their fragility .in contrast to his monumental verses to his living friend which will outlast the foster. In Sonnet 65, using the imagery of flower with its associate I

Connotations of beauty and fragrance ("Summer's honey breath"), he presents the delicate loveliness of his friend as against the steely gates and impregnable rocks, doomed to destruction due to the siege of time.

Let us look at the syntax. The noticeable feature is inversion - that is, the placement of adjectives following the nouns - as for example: ‘rocks **impregnable",** "gates of steel so **strong"** (Sonnet 65). These adjectives coming at the end of, the nouns give greater weightage to the solidity and strength of rocks and gates of steel. We also notice the placement of the verbs at the end of the lines as in "when wasteful war shall statues **overturn"** (Sonnet 55). "so, till the judgement that yourself **arise"** (55) or "or who Ilk spoil of beauty can **forbid"** (65) "when in eternal lines to time thou **grow'st"** etc. The verbs at the end lend force and strength to the action described. In turn, they reinforce the comparison or the contrast between the brittleness of the power of war or time **and** strength of poetry (an) that sustains itself against these forces. ,

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give any two analysis of Sonnet 65.

Answer

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Q1. Write short note on poetic Devices

Answer

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2.7 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit, you studied three Sonnets of Shakespeare. You learnt that: The English sonnet differs from the Italian sonnet in its rhyme scheme and in the 'arrangement of the fourteen lines. Shakespeare's sonnets (18,55 and 65) deal with the power of art or poetry to bestow immortality on mortal beings. And the poetic devices that Shakespeare employs include figures of speech, inversion and use of personal pronouns.

2.8 KEYWORDS

Bipartite : division into two pans

Epigram~i; : short and witty in expression

Encapsulate , ' : to enclose in a capsule form: (herpi the couplet holds the thought of the whole sonnet wi .lln its two lines.

Mutability : change

Efflux : flowing out; (here) the passage of time . .

Immortalisation: give endless life or fame td

Linear / : in'lines; (here) linear movement of time refers to thesuccessive stages of birth, growth, decay and death in aMan's life

Incipient . : beginning; in an early stage.

2.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

i) Distinguish between an Italian Sonnet and an English Sonnet.

ii) Identify the central theme of the three sonnets- Sonnet 18,55,65. ,

iii) Explain the word "lines" in "when in eternal lines' to dme thou grow'st" (1.12 of sonnet 18).

iv) In Sonnet 55, how does the poet claim for his poetry the power to confer immortality on his friend?

I

V) Explain the Poet's use of capital letter 'T' i" line 8 of ~bnne6t 5 which reads "shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?"

2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- *Hamlet* Complete text on one page with definitions of difficult words and explanations of difficult passages.
- *Hamlet* – Digital text by the Folger Shakespeare Library
- *Hamlet* at Project Gutenberg
- *Hamlet* at the Internet Shakespeare Editions – Transcripts and facsimiles of Q1, Q2 and F1.
- Shakespeare Quartos Archive – Transcriptions and facsimiles of thirty-two copies of the five pre-1642 quarto editions.
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2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check in Progress II

Answer 1 : Check 2.4.1

Answer 2 : Check 2.3.2

Check in Progress II

Answer 1 : Check 2.5.1

Answer 2 : Check 2.6

UNIT 3 LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

STRUCTURE

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to acquaint you with Shakespeare's use of language in ***Hamlet*** and how words have been used to convey the meaning of what is being said. At the end of this unit you will understand the use of rhetorical devices as well as the imagery employed in ***Hamlet.***

3.1 INTRODUCTION

When we, along with Hamlet, finally arrive at the end of the play and gain our share of the wisdom, "The rest is silence!"-we suddenly realise that in one sense ***Hamlet*** progresses through a whole series of events, actions and ruminations to grapple with the significance of the absence of silence. Language seeks to make possible apparently that is not possible through silence communication and in ***Hamlet*** characters constantly question the wisdom of relying upon words. Words fascinate them, and there is an ongoing debate in the play about the use, abuse and futility of resorting or not resorting to the medium of words. One of the major issues in ***Hamlet*** appears to be: Does language stand in polar opposition to action? Is it irreconcilable to action? Can it, or can it not, further or motivate action? Can language be considered a valid tool to evaluate actions, their validity,

morality and justness. The philosophical relationship between thoughts, words and deeds, thus, turns out to be a major issue in the play.

3.2 WORDS

Critical history

From the early 17th century, the play was famous for its ghost and vivid dramatization of melancholy and insanity, leading to a procession of mad courtiers and ladies in Jacobean and Caroline drama. Though it remained popular with mass audiences, late 17th-century Restoration critics saw *Hamlet* as primitive and disapproved of its lack of unity and decorum. This view changed drastically in the 18th century, when critics regarded Hamlet as a hero—a pure, brilliant young man thrust into unfortunate circumstances. By the mid-18th century, however, the advent of Gothic literature brought psychological and mystical readings, returning madness and the ghost to the fore frontNot until the late 18th century did critics and performers begin to view Hamlet as confusing and inconsistent. Before then, he was either mad, or not; either a hero, or not; with no in-betweens. These developments represented a fundamental change in literary criticism, which came to focus more on character and less on plot. By the 19th century, Romantic critics valued *Hamlet* for its internal, individual conflict reflecting the strong contemporary emphasis on internal struggles and inner character in general. Then too, critics started to focus on Hamlet's delay as a character trait, rather than a plot device. This focus on character and internal struggle continued into the 20th century, when criticism branched in several directions, discussed in context and interpretation below.

Dramatic structure

Hamlet departed from contemporary dramatic convention in several ways. For example, in Shakespeare's day, plays were usually expected to follow the advice of Aristotle in his *Poetics*: that a drama should focus on action, not character. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare reverses this so that it is through the soliloquies, not the action, that the audience learns Hamlet's motives and thoughts. The play is full of seeming discontinuities and

irregularities of action, except in the "bad" quarto. At one point, as in the Gravedigger scene, Hamlet seems resolved to kill Claudius: in the next scene, however, when Claudius appears, he is suddenly tame. Scholars still debate whether these twists are mistakes or intentional additions to add to the play's themes of confusion and duality. *Hamlet* also contains a recurrent Shakespearean device, a play within the play, a literary device or conceit in which one story is told during the action of another story.

Length

Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play. The Riverside edition constitutes 4,042 lines totaling 29,551 words, typically requiring over four hours to stage. It is rare that the play is performed without some abridgments, and only one film adaptation has used a full-text conflation: Kenneth Branagh's 1996 version, which runs slightly more than four hours.

Language

Much of *Hamlet*'s language is courtly: elaborate, witty discourse, as recommended by Baldassare Castiglione's 1528 etiquette guide, *The Courtier*. This work specifically advises royal retainers to amuse their masters with inventive language. Osric and Polonius, especially, seem to respect this injunction. Claudius's speech is rich with rhetorical figures—as is Hamlet's and, at times, Ophelia's—while the language of Horatio, the guards, and the gravediggers is simpler. Claudius's high status is reinforced by using the royal first person plural ("we" or "us"), and anaphora mixed with metaphor to resonate with Greek political speeches.

Of all the characters, Hamlet has the greatest rhetorical skill. He uses highly developed metaphors, stichomythia, and in nine memorable words deploys both anaphora and asyndeton: "to die: to sleep— / To sleep, perchance to dream". In contrast, when occasion demands, he is precise and straightforward, as when he explains his inward emotion to his mother: "But I have that within which passes show, / These but the trappings and the suits of woe". At times, he relies heavily on puns to express his true thoughts while simultaneously concealing them His "nunnery" remarks to Ophelia are an example of a cruel double

meaning as *nunnery* was Elizabethan slang for *brothel*. His very first words in the play are a pun; when Claudius addresses him as "my cousin Hamlet, and my son", Hamlet says as an aside: "A little more than kin, and less than kind."

An unusual rhetorical device, hendiadys, appears in several places in the play. Examples are found in Ophelia's speech at the end of the nunnery scene: "Th'*expectancy and rose* of the fair state"[and "And I, of ladies most *deject and wretched*". Many scholars have found it odd that Shakespeare would, seemingly arbitrarily, use this rhetorical form throughout the play. One explanation may be that *Hamlet* was written later in Shakespeare's life, when he was adept at matching rhetorical devices to characters and the plot. Linguist George T. Wright suggests that hendiadys had been used deliberately to heighten the play's sense of duality and dislocation.[Pauline Kiernan argues that Shakespeare changed English drama forever in *Hamlet* because he "showed how a character's language can often be saying several things at once, and contradictory meanings at that, to reflect fragmented thoughts and disturbed feelings". She gives the example of Hamlet's advice to Ophelia, "get thee to a nunnery", which is simultaneously a reference to a place of chastity and a slang term for a brothel, reflecting Hamlet's confused feelings about female sexuality.

Hamlet's soliloquies have also captured the attention of scholars. Hamlet interrupts himself, vocalizing either disgust or agreement with himself and embellishing his own words. He has difficulty expressing himself directly and instead blunts the thrust of his thought with wordplay. It is not until late in the play, after his experience with the pirates, that Hamlet is able to articulate his feelings freely.

Words stand out in our recollection of ***Hamlet*** as much as vivid visual images. One of the intriguing things about ***Hamlet*** is the fact that everybody remembers words from ***Hamlet*** -more than any other play by Shakespeare or any one else. Everyone can recollect, quote, or recognise quotations from ***Hamlet;***

To be, or not to be, that is the question . . .

There is divinity that shapes our end . . .

What a piece of work is man . . .

The time is out of joint . . .

The undiscovered country from whose bourn

No traveller returns . . .

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy . . .

If almost all these words that linger in our mind long after we finish reading the play belong to Hamlet, it is also because the prince who speaks these words is much better with words than with actions. To justify his procrastinating taking action he plays with words, argues with them, through them, for and against them--of course in words. ***Hamlet*** is full of long conversations with Polonius, Claudius, Gertrude, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and just about every other major or minor character.

He talks too much. He repeats. **Repetition** of words and phrases occurs so frequently in the speeches of ***Hamlet*** as also in those of other characters that one suspects that an ongoing march of words is used to reflect one of the major themes of the play, procrastination. Expressions such as "This ***too too*** sullied flesh," abound in the play. Horatio's language is full of a different kind of repetitive effect: "law and heraldry," "hot and full," "here and there," "food and diet," "strong hand and terms compensatory." Hamlet has a knack for deliberately "misunderstanding" other people's words and indulge in puns.

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Hamlet. Not so, my lord, I am too much in the "son." [I. ii. 66-67]

Polonius . . . What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet. Words, words, words.

Polonius. What is the matter, my lord?

Hamlet. Between who?

Polonius. I mean the matter that you read, my lord? [II. ii. 192- 1961

And so does one of the grave-diggers:

Hamlet: Whose grave's this sirrah?

Clown. Mine sir-- . . .

Hamlet. What man dost thou dig it for?

Clown. For no man, sir.

Hamlet. What woman then?

Clown. For none neither.

Hamlet. Who is to be buried in't?

Clown. One that was a woman, sir, but rests her soul she's dead.

[V. i. 126-1321

Characters are sensitive to words and their implications: Claudius in the prayer scene

Language of Literature

Hamlet My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:

Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

Speech is important; understanding what one may hear is important: Horatio, the scholar, is asked to make sense of what the Ghost says--"Thou art a scholar, speak to it Horatio" [I. i. 421-and at the end of the play he is requested by Hamlet to "tell my story" [V. iii. 349.1 whose "mouth" Horatio offers to become to tell Fortinbras the story of the prince. Ophelia's language of madness draws a response:

Her speech is nothing.

Yet the unshaped use of it doth move

The hearers to collection; they yawn at it,

And botch the words up to fit their own thoughts,

Which as her winks and nods and gestures yield them?

Indeed would make one think there might, be thought,

Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

[IV. V. 7- 131

Polonius, whose verbosity provokes Claudius to demand "More matter with less art" [II. ii. 951 himself objects to the speech by the First Player as "This is too long." [II. ii. 498.1 As he reads Hamlet's letter to Ophelia, he comments: "That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, 'beautified' is a vile phrase." [II. ii. 11 1-12]

They all **play** with words. Hamlet indulges in a quibble in responding to Claudius: "A little more than kin, and less than kind." [I. ii. 651 "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" [II. ii. 17- 181, he later tells the players. "Is thy union here? / Follow my mother" [V. ii. 326-271, Hamlet tells Claudius after he forces the king to drink the poison. But Hamlet is not the only who indulges in puns and quibbles. Claudius describes Laertes as one who "wants not buzzers to infect his earl With

pestilent speeches of his father's death." [IV. V. 90-911 Polonius quibbles with words in his advice to Ophelia:

Think yourself a baby

That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay

, Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,

Or-not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,

Running it thus-you'll tender me a fool.

[I. iii. 105-91

All the characters resort to **language** to communicate with each other, but in the process they reveal a great deal of their inner selves to us. Shakespeare chooses his words carefully and gives them to his characters in subtler combinations of syntactical complexity and semantic choice. Claudius's speech in ACT I [I. ii. 1- 16.]is a case in point:

. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death

The memory be green, and that is us befitted

To bear our hearts in grief, and our' whole kingdom

. To be contracted in one brow of woe,

Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature

That *we* with wisest sorrow *think on him*

Together *with remembrance of ourselves.*

Therefore *our* sometime *sister,* now our Queen,

Thy imperial join tress of this warlike state,.

Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,

With an auspicious and a dropping eye,

With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,

13. . In equal scale weighing delight and dole,.

14. Taken to wife

Claudius the political manipulator has mastered the art of manipulation through speech and language. It is in his interest that he in his first royal address to the court keeps the focus of attention on matters other than himself. And if he can keep the focus on something that is dear to the heart of people at large, and can practice a degree of self-effacement, even better. He after all had taken over the kingdom of his own brother and married his brother's wife. The people had old King Hamlet. In the whole speech, you would notice, the major part [lines 1-51 is focused on matters away from himself.

And finally he allows the speech to change its course and the focus finally rests on him: ". . . we with wisest sorrow think on him / Together with remembrance of ourselves." But reference to himself, despite the royal plural personal pronoun, is not assertive, but an understatement tagged to the "wisest sorrow."

The second section [lines 8-17] seeks to assert that he has possessed his brother's wife but the assertion emerges at the end, after a long and meandering passage through the mixed emotions of sorrow over his brother's death and the happiness of having married her.

The political upheaval that has preceded his ascending the throne has to be given a direction. The subjects' minds have to be made to rest upon, not the usurper's violent wresting of the throne from its lawful possessors, but away from it. The whole speech is an exercise in political rhetoric that seeks to manipulate people to respond to the new king in a certain way. And to begin with, Claudius succeeds. Through the play one would notice, characters are forever asking **questions.** Hamlet is forever inquisitive about something or the other. "Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer?" "Is not parchment made of sheep-skin?'The questioning frame of mind of Hamlet questions, above all, his own self, his own actions, words, and gestures. The play opens with a question, "Who is there?', and, as if, sets the tone for the whole play.

3.3 RHETORICAL DEVICES

Language plays a major role in the definition of a character's trait in conditioning our response to him. We must appreciate that great popularity that Shakespeare and his characters have enjoyed over the last four centuries owes itself in a major way to the language of his plays. What the characters say is important, because they linger in our minds for what they say as much as for what they do or feel or suffer. But the way they say what they say is of paramount importance. The manner and method of

a speaker affects the response of the audience to what they hear. Theatre-goers respond not merely to the meaning of words, but also how the words are conveyed to them. Shakespeare's choice of metre, rhythm, imagery and, of course, diction, determines how we respond to what the characters say,

and to the characters themselves. Ultimately this affects-enriches--the total experience of interacting with a play on stage or on page. The meaning of the word is important but attention ***Hamlet*** should be paid to what goes into making the meaning of words effective communication and manipulation of audience response.

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An interesting aspect of Shakespeare's use of language is the fact that certain linguistic features are meant to be appreciated as **rhetorical** devices for their own sake and not merely as starting points for generalisations for the larger context of tlle text. Rhetorical devices and figures of speech such as chiasmus ("His time a moment, and a point his space9'-Pope; "Love's fire heats water, water cools not love Shakespeare) or anaphora ("This royal throne of kings, this sceptre isle, / This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden . . ."--Shakespeare) are considered of little importance on a closer examination of the text today. Thompson and Taylor have drawn attention to George T. Wright's analysis of Shakespeare's use of hendiadys, a rhetorical figure which Shakespeare uses over 300 times and there are sixty-six examples of it in Hamlet alone. J. A. Cuddon defines a hendiadys as "a figure of speech in which one idea is expressed by two substantives, as in "gloom and despondency", or "darkness and the shadow of death": but as Thompson and Taylor elaborate, there is more to it:

It is necessary that two entities being joined should be related but not in exact parallel: there is something odd, unexpected, even uneasy about hendiadys, as if the relationship between the two terms does not quite fit. But this can make the resulting expression more intense, as in Edmund's "nothing like the image and horror of it" [King Lear, I. ii. 1751 as compared with "nothing like the horrible image of it", or Macbeth's "full of sound and fury (Macbeth, V. v. 271, as compared with "full of furious sound." In the examples quoted from Cuddon, it is not the same thing if "darkness and the shadow of death" is reduced to the "dark shadow of death," or "we drink from cups and from gold" [pateris libamus et ***auro*** is the original Latin sentence from Vergil] is reduced to "we drink from golden cups." Hamlet provides many exciting examples of hendiadys:

The very age and body of the time. [III. ii. 23-41

So far from cheer and your former state. [II. ii. 1641

Out of the shot and danger of desire. [I. iii. 351

Divided from herself and her fair judgement. [IV. V. 861

Wrights points out how different characters in the play use hendiadys on different occasions and for different purposes. Laertes's use of hendiadys in his advice to Ophelia reveals his uncertain and divided sensibility while Polonius's se of hendiadys in his instruction to Reynaldo reveals his devious nature. If "misleading dualism and false parallels" is one of the obsessive concerns of Hamlet, hendiadys draws our attention to it in vivid detail.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short description of the structure of hamlet

Answer

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Q1. Write short analysis of Rhetoric Devices

Answer

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3.4 IMAGERY

Hamlet is rich with **imagery.** Vivid descriptions, carefully chosen words and phrases and used with deliberate effort and intention provoke us to see imaginative reconstruction of what is otherwise mere communication through words on a page- They add to the pleasure of interacting with a text. Shakespeare appears to have loved imagery. **Dr** Samuel Johnson remarks: A quibble is to Shakespeare what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way and sure to

engulf him in the mire. . . . its fascinations are irresistible. . . . A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it.

But Dryden was exasperated by the bard's habit of saying "nothing without a metaphor, a simile, an image, or description" [Preface to ***Troilus*** and ***Cressida]*** and he decided to improve Shakespeare by removing as many the text as possible. It was later that imagery was found to work by spreading its wings through the whole fabric of a piay. Imagery enriches specific moments-

There's such divinity doth hedge a king,

That can but peep to what it would.[IV. V. 1231

But, look, the morn in russet mantle clad

Walks ov'r the dew of yon high eastern hill. [I. i.166-71

For 'tis sport to have the engineer

Hoist with his own petar.

1111. iv. 206-71

--and gains a sharper focus of our attention.

All major plays by Shakespeare have been found to have clusters of images that centre around certain concepts and colour our understanding of the play. The image clusters that dominate a play help us arrive at the "symbolic" vision of the play. Spread through the whole, imagery affluences the way we respond to the play and its major issues. That is one of many ways a playwright determines the direction he wants us to take in appreciating his view point as expressed in a work of art.

Caroline Spurgeon who did pioneering work in this are drew attention to the fact that: recurrent images play a part in raising, developing, sustaining, and repeating emotion in the tragedies, which is somewhat analogous to the action of a recurrent theme of "motif' in a musical fugue or

sonata, or in one of Wagner's operas. . . .

. . . as the leaping tongues of flame which illuminate the pages of

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell show the visual form which Blake's thought evoked in his mind, the beauty, and the two edged quality of life and danger in his words, so the recurrent images in Macbeth and Hamlet reveal the dominant picture or sensation-in terms of which [Shakespeare] sees and feels the main problem or theme of the play, thus giving us an unerring

clue to the way he looked at it . . . . When Spurgeon closely looks at

Hamlet she finds images of sickness, disease, or blemish of the body and "we discover that the idea of an ulcer or tumour, as descriptive of the

unwholesome condition of Denmark morally, is, on the whole, the dominating one. Hamlet finds in her mother "rank corruption, mining all within, / Infects all unseen." Later he compares the fight between Norway and Poland as a kind of tumour. When he comes upon Claudius in the prayer scene, he exclaims:

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days." Claudius later says: "diseases desperate grown / By desperate appliance are relieved, 1 Or not at all." He begs the English king to help him get rid of Hamlet: "For like the hectic in my blood he rages, / And thou must cure me." He tells Laertes: "Goodness, growing to a pleurisy, / Dies in his own too much." And he describes Hamlet's arrival as: "But to the wick o' the ulcer: / Hamlet comes back." The dominating thought in Hamlet is not even sickness but, Spurgeon points out, "rottenness, disease, corruption, the result of dirt."

Film and TV performances

The earliest screen success for *Hamlet* was Sarah Bernhardt's five-minute film of the fencing scene which was produced in 1900. The film was an early attempt at combining sound and film, music and words were recorded on phonograph records, to be played along with the film. Silent versions were released in 1907, 1908, 1910, 1913, 1917, and 1920In the 1921 film *Hamlet*, Danish actress Asta Nielsen played the role of Hamlet as a woman who spends her life disguised as a man.

Laurence Olivier's 1948 moody black-and-white *Hamlet* won Best Picture and Best Actor Academy Awards, and is still, as of 2017, the only Shakespeare film to have done so. His interpretation stressed the Oedipal overtones of the play, and cast 28-year-old Eileen Herlie as Hamlet's mother, opposite himself, at 41, as Hamlet.

In 1953, actor Jack Manning performed the play in 15-minute segments over two weeks in the short-lived late night DuMont series *Monodrama Theater*. *New York Times* TV critic Jack Gould praised Manning's performance as Hamlet.[

The 1964 Soviet film *Hamlet* (Russian: *Гамлет*) is based on a translation by Boris Pasternak and directed by Grigori Kozintsev, with a score by Dmitri Shostakovich. Innokenty Smoktunovsky was cast in the role of Hamlet.

John Gielgud directed Richard Burton in a Broadway production at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre in 1964–65, the longest-running *Hamlet* in the U.S. to date. A live film of the production was produced using "Electron vision", a method of recording a live performance with multiple video cameras and converting the image to film Eileen Herlie repeated her role from Olivier's film version as the Queen, and the voice of Gielgud was heard as the ghost. The Gielgud/Burton production was also recorded complete and released on LP by Columbia Masterworks.

Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet, with Yorick's skull (photographer: James Lafayette, c. 1885–1900).

The first *Hamlet* in color was a 1969 film directed by Tony Richardson with Nicol Williamson as Hamlet and Marianne Faithfull as Ophelia.

In 1990 Franco Zeffirelli, whose Shakespeare films have been described as "sensual rather than cerebral", cast Mel Gibson—then famous for the *Mad Max* and *Lethal Weapon* movies—in the title role of his 1990 version; Glenn Close—then famous as the psychotic "other woman" in *Fatal Attraction*—played Gertrude, and Paul Scofield played Hamlet's father.

Kenneth Branagh adapted, directed, and starred in a 1996 film version of *Hamlet* that contained material from the First Folio and the Second Quarto. Branagh's *Hamlet* runs for just over four hours. Branagh set the film with late 19th-century costuming and furnishings, a production in many ways reminiscent of a Russian novel of the time; and Blenheim Palace, built in the early 18th century, became Elsinore Castle in the external scenes. The film is structured as an epic and makes frequent use of flashbacks to highlight elements not made explicit in the play: Hamlet's sexual relationship with Kate Winslet's Ophelia, for example, or his childhood affection for Yorick (played by Ken Dodd).

In 2000, Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* set the story in contemporary Manhattan, with Ethan Hawke playing Hamlet as a film student. Claudius (played by Kyle MacLachlan) became the CEO of "Denmark Corporation", having taken over the company by killing his brother.

There have also been several films that transposed the general storyline of *Hamlet* or elements thereof to other settings. For example, the 2014 Bollywood film *Haider* is an adaptation set in Kashmir. There have also been many films which included performances of scenes from *Hamlet* as a play-within-a-film.

Stage pastiches

There have been various "derivative works" of *Hamlet* which recast the story from the point of view of other characters, or transpose the story into a new setting or act as sequels or prequels to *Hamlet*. This section is limited to those written for the stage.

The best-known is Tom Stoppard's 1966 play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which retells many of the events of the story from the point of view of the characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and gives them a back story of their own. Several times since 1995, the American Shakespeare Center has mounted repertories that included both *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, with the same actors performing the same roles in each; in their 2001 and 2009 seasons the two plays were "directed, designed, and rehearsed together to make the most out of the shared scenes and situations".

W. S. Gilbert wrote a short comic play titled *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, in which Hamlet's play is presented as a tragedy written by Claudius in his youth of which he is greatly embarrassed. Through the chaos triggered by Hamlet's staging of it, Guildenstern helps Rosencrantz vie with Hamlet to make Ophelia his bride.

Lee Blessing's *Fortinbras* is a comical sequel to *Hamlet* in which all the deceased characters come back as ghosts. The *New York Times* reviewed the play, saying it is "scarcely more than an extended comedy sketch, lacking the portent and linguistic complexity of Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. Fortinbras operates on a far less ambitious plane, but it is a ripping yarn and offers Keith Reddin a role in which he can commit comic mayhem".

Caridad Svich's *12 Ophelias (a play with broken songs)* includes elements of the story of *Hamlet* but focuses on Ophelia. In Svich's play, Ophelia is resurrected and rises from a pool of water, after her death

in *Hamlet*. The play is a series of scenes and songs, and was first staged at a public swimming pool in Brooklyn.

David Davalos' *Wittenberg* is a "tragical-comical-historical" prequel to *Hamlet* that depicts the Danish prince as a student at Wittenberg University (now known as the University of Halle-Wittenberg), where he is torn between the conflicting teachings of his mentors John Faustus and Martin Luther. The *New York Times* reviewed the play, saying, "Mr. Davalos has molded a daft campus comedy out of this unlikely convergence," and *Nytheatre.com*'s review said the playwright "has imagined a fascinating alternate reality, and quite possibly, given the fictional Hamlet a back story that will inform the role for the future."

Mad Boy Chronicle by Canadian playwright Michael O'Brien is a dark comedy loosely based on *Hamlet*, set in Viking Denmark in 999 AD.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give short Films and Performances

Answer

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Q1. Write short analysis of stage Pastiches.

Answer

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3.5 LET'S SUM UP

Freud suggests that the character Hamlet goes through an experience that has three characteristics, which he numbered: 1) "the hero is not psychopathic, but becomes so" during the course of the play. 2) "the repressed desire is one of those that are similarly repressed in all of us." It is a repression that "belongs to an early stage of our individual development". The audience identifies with the character of Hamlet,

because "we are victims of the same conflict." 3) It is the nature of theatre that "the struggle of the repressed impulse to become conscious" occurs in both the hero onstage and the spectator, when they are in the grip of their emotions, "in the manner seen in psychoanalytic treatment".

Freud points out that *Hamlet* is an exception in that psychopathic characters are usually ineffective in stage plays; they "become as useless for the stage as they are for life itself", because they do not inspire insight or empathy, unless the audience is familiar with the character's inner conflict. Freud says, "It is thus the task of the dramatist to transport us into the same illness."

John Barrymore's long-running 1922 performance in New York, directed by Thomas Hopkins, "broke new ground in its Freudian approach to character", in keeping with the post-World War I rebellion against everything Victorian. He had a "blunter intention" than presenting the genteel, sweet prince of 19th-century tradition, imbuing his character with virility and lust.

Beginning in 1910, with the publication of "The Œ dipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: A Study in Motive "Ernest Jones—a psychoanalyst and Freud's biographer—developed Freud's ideas into a series of essays that culminated in his book *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949). Influenced by Jones's psychoanalytic approach, several productions have portrayed the "closet scene", where Hamlet confronts his mother in her private quarters, in a sexual light. In this reading, Hamlet is disgusted by his mother's "incestuous" relationship with Claudius while simultaneously fearful of killing him, as this would clear Hamlet's path to his mother's bed. Ophelia's madness after her father's death may also be read through the Freudian lens: as a reaction to the death of her hoped-for lover, her father. Ophelia is overwhelmed by having her unfulfilled love for him so abruptly terminated and drifts into the oblivion of insanity. In 1937, Tyrone Guthrie directed Laurence Olivier in a Jones-inspired *Hamlet* at The Old Vic. Olivier later used some of these same ideas in his 1948 film version of the play.

In the *Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages* volume on Hamlet, editors Bloom and Foster express a conviction that the intentions of Shakespeare

in portraying the character of Hamlet in the play exceeded the capacity of the Freudian Oedipus complex to completely encompass the extent of characteristics depicted in Hamlet throughout the tragedy: "For once, Freud regressed in attempting to fasten the Oedipus Complex upon Hamlet: it will not stick, and merely showed that Freud did better than T.S. Eliot, who preferred *Coriolanus* to *Hamlet*, or so he said. Who can believe Eliot, when he exposes his own Hamlet Complex by declaring the play to be an aesthetic failure?" The book also notes James Joyce's interpretation, stating that he "did far better in the Library Scene of *Ulysses*, where Stephen marvelously credits Shakespeare, in this play, with universal fatherhood while accurately implying that Hamlet is fatherless, thus opening a pragmatic gap between Shakespeare and Hamlet."

Joshua Rothman has written in *The New Yorker* that "we tell the story wrong when we say that Freud used the idea of the Oedipus complex to understand *Hamlet*". Rothman suggests that "it was the other way around: *Hamlet* helped Freud understand, and perhaps even invent, psychoanalysis". He concludes, "The Oedipus complex is a misnomer. It should be called the 'Hamlet complex'."

3.6 KEYWORDS

candied: sugared/sweet.

“No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp, and crook the pregnant hinges of the knee where thrift may follow fawning.”

cozenage: treachery.

“And with such cozenage--is't not perfect conscience, to quit him with this arm?”

And because he’s so treacherous would it not be moral to kill him now with this sword.

distemper: mental disturbance.

“Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper?” Rosencrantz 3.2.302

What’s making you so upset?

fain: wish.

"I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze, but that this folly doubts it."

3.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Hamlet is full of comments and observations made by various characters on the failure and success of words as a means of communication. Comment.

2. Write a short note on the use Shakespeare makes of hendiadys to enrich verbal exchanges between various characters. Illustrate and analyse.

3. Comment on Shakespeare's use of recurrent cluster images. What use does Shakespeare make of them to further his major thematic concern in the play?.

4. Comment on the use of words by Claudius to manipulate his audience on many occasions in the play.

5. Analyse Claudius' first court speech in act one scene two for what it seeks to Communicate as well as hide

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check in Progress I

Answer 1. Check 3.2

Answer 2. Check 3.3

Check in Progress II

Answer 1. Check 3.4

Answer2. Check 3.4

UNIT 4 HAMLET : OTHER DIMENSIONS

STRUCTURE

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to acquaint you with the soliloquy as an important dramatic convention, as well as focus on the many soliloquies present in ***Hamlet.*** By the end of this Unit you will also be made familiar with the various characters present in the play ***Hamlet.***

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A linguistic phenomenon has been described as "the outcome (of natural situations and the state of character's emotions" [Liisa Dahl, ***Nominal Style in Shakespearean Soliloquy with Reference to Early English Drama.*** . . ,(sic.) 19691. Charles Lamb, therefore, thought of the dramatic language as imperfect means of communicating "the inner structure and workings of mind in a character." Characters do, and at some length, what persons never do-speak alone for a considerable

length of time, and in verse, too. But the soliloquy, as we shall see, has his unique ability to suggest the subtleties of the hidden self of the speaker. In the Elizabethan dramatic tradition soliloquy became widely used as a vehicle for subjective utterance and became an important dramatic convention. ***Hamlet, Othello, biacbeth, Dr Eaustus,*** all contain impudent examples. In the Elizabethan and Jacobean period the playwrights made extensive use of the soliloquy in their plays and the soliloquy, in turn, opened up many dramatic opportunities for the development of theatre. In the process of developing the soliloquy, the Elizabethan verse found an opportunity to attain superior levels of achievement.

Hamlet Much like a monologue a soliloquy implies a single speaker. It also implies a . Listener. In the imaginative space of a soliloquy, a speaker as well as a listener becomes legitimate dramatis personae. Frequently, the listeners are the audience. The dramatists, thus, were able to convey a great deal of information about characters their innermost thoughts, feelings, passions and motives--directly to the audience.

One must add that in Hamlet what Richard Hillman describes as "fictional interiority" is created and communicated not only through soliloquies but also "various kinds of monologues, asides and even silences" [Self Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern Drama: Subjectivity, Discourse and the Stage, 19971. Other mechanisms by which the illusion of interiority is maintained include Hamlet's book in act 11: reading can be considered as "one way of presenting interiority, or at least contemplation, on stage," Edward Bums [Character: Acting and Being on the

Pre-Modern Stage, 19901 maintains.

The development of the villain as an important ingredient in the dramatic tradition of this period further contributed to the refinement of the soliloquy. Much like the Devil in the Morality plays, the villains, too, comment on other characters and action of the play, manipulate the plot and reveal their own mind and thoughts to the audience. For instance. Iago's soliloquy in Othello.

Soliloquies often tend to be interior debates -that is what Hamlet's soliloquies are-- as much as direct addresses, such as the one Falstaff makes on honour while speaking directly to the audience.

4.2 HAMLET'S SOLILOQUIES

Two of the seven soliloquies in Hamlet occur in act I [scene ii, lines 129 159 and scene v, lines 92-1 111, and one in act I1 [scene ii, lines 553 5851. There are three soliloquies in act 111, one each in scene one [lines 56-88], scene two [lines371-3821 and scene three [lines 73-95].' The last soliloquy occurs in act IV, scene iv [lines 32- 661:

1. that this too too, sullied flesh would melt, . . . I.ii. 129- 159
2. 0 all you host of heaven! . . . I.v.92- 1 1 1
3. 0 what a rogue and peasant slave am I! . . . II.ii.553-585
4. To be, or not to be, that is the question, . . . III.i.56-88
5. 'Tis now the very witching time of night, . . . 1II.ii. 371-382
6. Now might I do it pat, now a'is praying-- . . . 1II.iii. 73-95
7. How all occasions do inform against me, . . . IV.iv.33-66

The first soliloquy occurs before the ghost has appeared and the suggestions of a possible treacherous murder have been made to Hamlet. He comes to the world of Elsinore, so to say, with his heart heavy with grief for his father's death and the haste with which his mother disowns his father posthumously and accepts Claudius as her husband. Hamlet emerges as a ruminative, reflective and a private person, much loyal to the memory of his father and stunned at his mother's incestuous conduct. This soliloquy also marks Hamlet's recognition that the world is full of both evil and good-a world in which Hyperion and satyr are brothers. His mother's conduct pains him the most so loving to my mother

That he might not between the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly . . . .
. . . Why she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it had fed on; and yet within a month-- . . .
. . . ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears . . .
. . . married my uncle, . . .

It is the corruption in his mother's conduct that makes him feel his own flesh "too, too sullied." It is in this frame of mind that Hamlet reacts to what life in the world of Elsinore offers him.

The next soliloquy shows Hamlet committing himself to avenge his father death.

This soliloquy too deepens his disgust with his mother conduct and the fact that he is his mother's flesh and blood receives **a** reminder. The third soliloquy finds him remorseful for not having taken any action to avenge his father's death. There is yet another implied and understated reference to his mother in the lines in which he describes Claudius as "bloody, ***bawdy*** villain! / Remorseless, treacherous, ***lecherous, kindless*** villain!"

To be, **or not to** be," the fourth soliloquy, is the most philosophical statement that Hamlet makes in the play and has provoked much debate and is perhaps the most discussed and interpreted. One of the major concerns that Hamlet's ruminations focus on in this soliloquy is the conflict between passion and reason. In the seventeenth century books such as Robert Burton's ***The Anatom-v of Melancholy*** (1621) and Thomas Wright's ***The Passions of the Minde*** (1601) as well as in books published abroad and circulated in the original as well as in English translation Including Philippe de Mornay's ***The Defence of Death*** (1577) and Nicolas Coeffeteau's ***A Table of Humane Passions*** (1621), passions clouded reason and it was in the interest of the individual as well as the society to keep them in check.

Cicero had described passions as "perturbations, the troubled or stirred motions of the mind strayed from reason: enemies of the mind, and also of a quiet life."

Hamlet is portrayed as possessed of the passion of melancholy--sorrow and fear being two other emotions, it was believed, that accompanied melancholy. Right from the beginning Hamlet is portrayed as melancholic. He himself says: "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seems to me all the uses of' the world." His mother begs him to "cast" his "nighted colour off." *"The dread of something after death" constantly hangs heavy upon tp mind and thoughts of Hamlet. And yet he admires anyone who can control passions and rise above them. A stoic response to the misfortunes of life is something he aspires to be able to show. He

praises Horatio as one who "is not passion's slave." He finds Ophelia, Polonius and especially his own mother slaves of passion.

While reviewing a performance of ***Hamlet,*** G. B. Shaw once wrote:

And please note that this is not a cold Hamlet. He is none of your logicians who reason their way through the world because they cannot feel their way through it: his intellect is the organ of his passion: his eternal self-criticism is as alive and thrilling as it can possibly be. The great soliloquy-no: I do NOT mean "To be or not to be"; I mean the dramatic one, "0 what a rogue

and peasant slave am I!"-is as passionate in its scorn of brute passion as the most bull-necked affirmation or sentimental dilution of it could be.

All the soliloquies express various passions associated with melancholy and the longer soliloquies seek to attain the stoic ideal of "imperturbability." "To be, or not

Hamlet : **Other Dimensions**

Hamlet to be," shows Hamlet holding a book, a characteristic gesture on the part of a melancholic-nothing would seem to be more natural.

The fifth soliloquy, "'Tis now the very witching time of night," reveals Hamlet resolute: "Now I could drink hot blood, / And do such bitter business of the day / Would quake to look on." He, in this soliloquy, returns to his mother's incestuous, unnatural conduct, refers to Nero (who had had his mother Agrippina put to death, who had poisoned her husband, the emperor Claudius), hopes to be able to control his anger while confronting her with the truth of her actions. The sixth occurs in the prayer scene and contains one more reference to his mother-"My mother stays,"

as does the last soliloquy-". . . my mother stained . . . . "

All the soliloquies emphasise the idea of the delay in the mental make-up of Hamlet, as well as the delay embedded in the plot-structure of the play. They reveal Hamlet given to self-reflection and excessively speculative, indecisive, and irresolute. Hamlet also comes across as a scholar, and a poet. The soliloquies reveal Hamlet's tragic flaw that turns Hamlet into a tragedy and Hamlet as the prime agent whobrings about the tragic denouement: Hamlet thinks too much. He weighs the consequences of action to such an excessive length that action becomes postponed as reflection takes the place of action itself. In a sense, one can

characterise all the soliloquies as variations on the same theme: an obsessive concern with his mother's incestuous conduct and the contamination that he feels has befouled him, too, as her son.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short note on SOLILOQUIES.

Answer

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Q1. Write short note on Pitch of Hamlet

Answer

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4.3 THE QUESTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

Laurel Amtower, ["The Ethics of Subjectivity in Hamlet, " Studies in the Humanities,

2 1.2 (December 1994): 120- 1 3 31 examines the "uncomfortably close connection between the subjective bias of human values and the so called moral enforcement of an absolute law." Hamlet, Amtower maintains, exemplifies a situation in which there exist no absolutes. The task before Hamlet is left to him to interpret, to his discretion. The specifics of his obligation are not identified. Each character's attempt to construct meaning for her himself according to a perspective is severely limited by a context. If the subject is guided by its culture's value system, the answer is that conformity is illusionary as in the play value is always recreated from the standpoint of a subjective agency. Amtower counters the assumption of cultural materialists such as Dolimore, Barker, Reiss and Belsey, that the individual consciousness of the Middle Ages was essentialist and monolithic, isolated from the political and natural spheres, and naively comfortable with its moral responsibilities.

Amtower believes that Hamlet's subjectivity is "profoundly and imperturbably pre-modern, a summation in a single character of an entire age and its point of view." Middle Ages thus for him had a highly developed sense of subjectivity. Hamlet thus has to justify his task not only politically and theologically but in the light of "who he is". An early Hamlet seeks to efface his own subjectivity to the fulfilment of absolute prescription. His madness thus is the abandonment of ethics to solipsism of the subject, the abnegating of the social for the fullest satisfaction of the private. Amtower goes on: "Instead of realising that he, like every entity of the play, is moved by the greater contexts of discourse and community that immerse him, Hamlet responds with greater attempts at control and repression, marked by irrational outbursts, manslaughter, and finally murder." The later Hamlet "judges by absolute law--but that absolute law is his own." The tyrannical Hamlet, Amtower believes. "at the end of the play actually prefigures the tyrannical, moralising repression that will later characterise the Puritan Commonwealth. It is thus the later he maintains, "The concept of a balanced subject disintegrates, leaving in its stead only victims and tyrants."

4.4 OSRIC

Osric is generally considered a minor character and the only useful function his character serves in the play is to present a contrast through his ridiculous behaviour to Hamlet's serious and dignified conduct. He is also treated by the readers as well as the directors of the play as a clown who provides comic relief in the play. But the attention that Shakespeare bestows upon his character would suggest that he had much more than this in his mind. He is surely not meant to be a comic character and, thus, a mere source of comic relief in the play this is clear from the fact that the source of comic entertainment is, more often than not, the prince himself. Also, the grave diggers are the ones who provide comic pleasure in the play either through their own interaction with each other or with Hamlet. Osric performs no function in the play other than propose a wager-an action that Shakespeare could easily have assigned to any other unimportant character. He appears in one of the most important scenes in

the play, in an important moment, and is slows interacting at some length with the play's most important character. The Allenton then that Shakespeare lavishes upon Osric is not without a larger purpose. But, then, where does lie the significance of the character of Osric?

He lends a certain lightness of tone to the play's last sombre moments and presents a contrast to the protagonist himself. Apart from this, Osric by his presence lends a sharper focus to some of the major themes of the play. He signifies the hollow courtier which is one philosophical strand in the thought-pattern of the play, and gf which Claudius is the most important icon in the play. Osric stands for the emptiness of the youth and its predilection for the pointless pi~rsuingo f current fashions in dress, conduct and behaviour. Hamlet alludes to a lack of balance between the individual merit and reward; Osric is a perfect example of it. He is a double-dealing hypocrite, has scrupulous disregard for everything that could stand in his way of "advancement."

Claudius plans a scheme for involving Hamlet in the fencing match:

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you, bring you, in fine, together,
And wager o'er your heads. [Hamlet], being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils, . . .
[IV. vii. 130- 1351

Osric, like Laertes, is a stooge and a pawn, and a weapon in the hands of Claudius. He is the source of dread and tension-as he sets out to encourage Hamlet to lay a wager--as much as he is the source of immediate comic pleasure. Our sense of the impending disaster does not allow us to treat him merely as a source of comic relief. More than comic relief or comic pleasure he provides what has been described as "comic tension."

4.5 CLAUDIUS

Hamlet : **Other Dimensions**

Hamlet tables-meet it is I set it down *1* That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain." Villain in the sense of "That character in a play, whose motives or actions forms an important element in the plot" [OED] is the attribute easily and most commonly associated with Claudius. Hamlet refers to Claudius again later as "Bloody, bawdy villain. / Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain." [II. ii. 608-91. Here are seven other occasions when Hamlet refers to Claudius as a villain.

Apart from the meaning that "villain" is commonly understood to have, for Shakespeare, it also meant "a low born base-minded rustic"; OED also describes "villein" to mean as "one of the class serfs in the feudal system." The two words in the Elizabethan English were interchangeable and, therefore, denoted base or bastard birth. Therefore, when Hamlet calls Claudius "A murderer and a villain" it means, "a murderer and a bastard" and not "a murderer and a wicked man." As David Berkeley points out: "Villain" is the richest, most stinging, most unsheddable curse that can be offered a king in Shakespeare's rich vocabulary of swearing. Hamlet's extreme indignation against Claudius, partly founded on his knowledge that he a true born son of a true born father must yield the throne of Denmark to a bastard "villein" cannot be reconciled with the reiteration of the relatively waterish "villain" [in the ethical sense of the word]." That each time Hamlet refers to Claudius as a bastard has far reaching implications in the play and is of singular importance and must be appreciated.

Generally, Claudius is accused of incest, hurried remarriage, murder and being a usurper of the throne of Denmark. We must remember that Hamlet's one major accusation against him is that he is a bastard. In a society to which Shakespeare belonged and which was essentially a class-ridden society, being a bastard meant a searing flaw. Shakespeare constantly invokes the images of "weed" and uses words such as "rank" and "gross" to imply "the base-born." In his first soliloquy ["that this too sullied flesh would melt," . . . I.ii.129-1591, Hamlet remarks: "Tis an unweeded garden, / That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature *1* Possess it merely." Later in act 111, he tells the queen: "And do not spread the compost on the weeds / To make them ranker." Shakespeare describes Claudius in comparison with his brother not in terms of wickedness but in terms of a bastard birth. Hamlet draws attention to

Claudius's unprepossessing appearance --"hyperion to a satyr." Hamlet asks his mother: "Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed / And batten on this moor?'For Shakespeare, lack of pleasant looks indicates an unethical character, while those of "gentle" birth had attractive looks. For the poet "beauty breedeth beauty" [Venus and Adonis, line 1671. In act I11 Hamlet himself is described as "the rose of the fair state" and "the mould of the from." Claudius lacks courage: he meekly listens to Laertes accusation, "0 thou vile king," and submits to Hamlet's forcing poison down his throat without much resistance.

Bastards, the Elizabethans believed, had envy as their ruling passion. As Francis . Bacon remarked: " . . . bastards are envious, for he that cannot possibly mend his case will do what he can to impair another's." [Of Enyy]. Claudius's whole life arrears to be a series of attemtps to "legitimise himself." In Unit One I referred to C. P. Cavafy's version in which he recreates Claudius's character in the light of his own post-colonial pre-occupations. You might like to compare his version with the assessment of Claudius's character given above. The poem "King Claudius" is as follows:

King Claudius

My mind travels to distant parts.

I walk the streets of Elsinore,

I wander its squares, and remember that sorrowful tale of an ill-starred king slain by his nephew, on grounds of certain abstract suspicions.

In all the houses of the poor they wept for him--secretly, for fear of Fortinbras.

A mild and peace-loving monarch (the land had suffered much from the campaigns of his predecessor) he treated everyone with respect, both great and small. He avoided throwing his weight around, and always, in affairs of state, sought advice from serious, seasoned counsellors. They never said with certainty why it was his nephew killed him. He suspected him of murder.

His grounds for this suspicion were that one night, while walking the ancient battlements, he saw, or thought he saw, a ghost, with whom he held a conversation.

They say the ghost made certain allegations concerning the king.

It was just his overheated imagination, of course, his eyes playing tricks.

(The prince was exceedingly high-strung.

As a student at Wittenberg, he was thought quite deranged by many of his fellows.)

A few days later, he went to see his mother about certain family matters. Suddenly, in mid sentence, he lost control that the ghost stood there in front of him.

But his mother saw nothing. The very same day he slew an elderly nobleman, for no reason whatsoever. Since in a day or two the prince was due to sail to England, the king Hamlet : Other did all he could to hasten his Dimensions departure and deliver him from harm.

But people were so outraged by this brutal, creaseless murder that a rebellious mob tried to storm the palace gates let by Laertes, son of the victim (a bold and ambitious youth; in the confusion, certain of his friends shouted "Long live King Laertes! ").

When things had quieted down and the king, thanks to his nephew, was in his tomb (the prince had never gone to England-- he'd skipped ship along the way), a certain Horatio came forward and tried to clear the prince's name with all sorts of convoluted stories.

He said the trip to England has just a ploy: word had been sent to put the prince to death (though this was never clearly proved)

He also spoke of poisoned wine, the king's handiwork. True, Laertes said the same thing. But what if he was lying? What if he'd been duped? And when did he say it? While dying--his mind wandering, no idea what he was saying. As for the poisoned swords, it later turned out the king had nothing to do with it, - Laertes himself put the poison there. But when pressed, Horatio brought in the ghost as witness.

The ghost said this, the ghost said that.

The ghost did this and that. So while they may have listened to what the fellow said, in private most people mourned the goodly king, who with phantasms and fairytales was basely slain, and flung aside. Fortinbras, however, who'd had the kingship fall into his lap, paid close attention to every word IIoratio said.

4.6 HORATIO

Horatio is generally considered an uninteresting if not a completely unimportant character in the play. He speaks some memorable lines but generally his role is expected to be a mere foil to the protagonist. But Horatio appears in nine scenes of the play compared to Ophelia's six. He speaks about half as many more lines as she does and is the most important speaker both at the beginning and at the end of the play. He delivers a long speech in act I, scene i on the preparation of war in Denmark and the long history of discord between Denmark and Norway, vividly. Recalls the portents of Caesar's fall and how the spirits behave. His second speech is often remembered: "**A** mote it is to trouble the mind's eye." He speaks minor passages of little significance until the last act when he grabs the poisoned cup from

Hamlet.

Careful readers of the play have encountered a number of inconsistencies involving Horatio in the play. Horatio comes across to the readers as the primary source of information on the appearance of the old King Hamlet and the likeness of the ghost to him.

Hamlet. Is it not like the king? *Horatio.* As thou art to thyself. Such was the very armour he had on When he th'ambitious Norway combated. So frowned he once, when in an angry parle He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.

[I. i. 63-66]

Later he remarks: "I knew your father; these hands are not more like." In reply to Hamlet, he says about the ghost's beard, Horatio says: "It was as I have seen it in his life, **A** sable silver7d." Horatio thus gives the impression that Horatio knew the king personally well, at least was well acquainted with the old King Hamlet's personal appearance. But he later says, "I saw him once; a was a goodly king."

Suggesting that he had not known him well enough-not well enough to account for all that he has earlier said about him. But the answer lies in not reading "I saw him once; a was a goodly king" literally to mean that he had seen the old King Hamlet only *once.* After all, "once" can also be taken to mean "when": "I saw him once; a was a goodly king" can also be read to mean that when Horatio saw him on a certain occasion, "a was a goodly king."

Hamlet addresses Horatio as a "fellow student" and therefore it is naturally assumed that both Hamlet and Horatio are about the same age. But the later elements in the play do not bear this out. We are told in the gravediggers7 scene that the duel between the old King Hamlet and Fortinbas took place thirty years ago, the same year young prince Hamlet was born. So if Horatio was among those who witnessed the duel, he must be appreciably older than Hamlet. But there is no reason to be believed that fellow students, even those who are closely acquainted with each other must be of the same age group.

Yet again Horatio is presented as one who is unacquainted with the custom of accompanying royal toasts with cannonade even though he also gives the impression of having been closely familiar with the current Danish political and other matters. There is nothing in the play to suggest that Horatio came from Elsinore. He, in fact, could have come from anywhere in Denmark and may have, thus, been unfamiliar with customs of the royal court and the city life and its ways in Elsinore.

There is yet another matter involving Horatio. We discover that a month elapses between the royal funeral and the royal wedding. Horatio tells Harrilet that he had come to Elisnore for the funeral but they meet only after the royal wedding.

Obviously he had remained in Elsinore for the whole month without having once met Hamlet. How is it that they did not meet during this period? But this too appears understandable in view of the fact that during this month Hamlet should have been preoccupied with the funeral of his father and political and other developments in the court.

There is little doubt that Hamlet and Horatio were friends but their friendship need not have been too close as is obvious from the fact that Hamlet uses "you" while addressing him. He uses "thou" when he addresses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

It is only later that he starts using "thou" for Horatio. Of course, when he discovers the truth about his two friends, he uses "you" for Guildenstern in act 11, scene ii.

There is little doubt that Horatio matters to Shakespeare as he does to Hamlet.

Shakespeare draws upon the long-standing tradition of heroes' companions which imparts much significance to such a character.

Hamlet forever addresses his friend by his name in the second scene Hamlet addresses Horatio by his name five' times in about twenty lines. Horatio is portrayed as a scholar and a sceptic. He is a man of much courage: he is not afraid to confront the ghost, though his loyalty to the prince demands that he try and dissuade him from confronting his father ghost. For Shakespeare's audience that was .a dangerous enterprise.

Horatio enjoys Hamlet's trust, friendship, and confidence. More than that, Hamlet respects Horatio for some of his personal virtues: Horatio, thou. art even as just a man

As my conversation cop'd withal. . . .

Nay Do not think I flatter,

For what advancement may I hope from thee

That no revenue hast but thy god spirits

To feed and clothe thee? Why should be flattered? . . .

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice, -

And could of men distinguish her election,

Sh'ath seal'd thee for herself: for thou has been

As one, in suffering all that suffers nothing,

A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards

Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those

Whose blood and judgement are so well commeddled

' That they are not a pipe for Fortune's fingure

To sound what stop she pleases. Give me that man

that is not passion's slave, and I will wear him

In my heart's core, ay in my heart of heart,

As I do thee. . . .

[III. ii. 54-55; 56-59; 63-73]

Hamlet : **Other Dimensions**

He does come across as a "foil" to Hamlet after the play-within-the-play scene: to Hamlet's feverish questioning, he gives replies that are cool, objective and his demeanour calm. "Didst perceive?" "Very well, my lord." "Upon the talk of the poisoning?" "I did very well note him." Horatio's stoic calm is Hamlet's greatest advantage.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give short note on Horito

Answer

……

……

……

……

Q2. Write short analysis of Claudius

Answer

……

……

……

……

4.7 LET'S SUM UP

There are, in addition, many aspects of the play that should be looked into. The opening scenes in the plays of Shakespeare always have a major significance. In ***Hamlet*** a number of other scenes must be carefully analysed for additional value; the closet scene, the nunnery scene, the prayer scene, the grave-diggers' scene, the dumb-show and the play scene, the fencing scene: these are some of the situations in the play that are imbued with meaning. Similarly, a careful analysis of the characters --other than the most important ones-Hamlet, Claudius, and Getrude should be done. The characters of Ophelia and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern should be examined. Hamlet's character can be further studied as a scourge or purifying agent or even as a Fool. His madness, his attitude to his mother remarriage, his father's death, his attitude to his father, his character as pulled in the opposing directions of the twin forces of sentimentality and intellectualism, his divided nature, his eloquence, his romantic nature are other angles which provide useful insights into his personality. You might like to look up a reference work such as ***Index to Hamlet***

***Studies* 9901:** there are numerous entries listed under appropriate headings which would suggest various approaches to a topic. There are, in fact, hundreds of entries under the heading "Hamlet."

There are many issues that are part of the current critical debate about ***Hamlet:*** the question of "delay" is one of those issues. It has been on the minds of readers theatre goers- scholars for longer than two hundred years in the history of ***Hamlet*** criticism. Hamlet's attitude to Ophelia is also a question that deserves a closer examination. ***Hamlet*** has been examined in the light of philosophical notions such as appearance and reality, or idealism versus pragmatism. The dominance in ***Hamlet*** of the ideas of death, decay and corruption, both of the body as well as mind and soul, has caught the readers7 attention. ***Hamlet*** has been studied in comparison with

Greek tragedies, in the context of Elizabethan culture, Elizabethan and Jacobean politics and in many other contexts such as current interest in psychoanalytical literary criticism.

Some of these issues are discussed in greater detail in many books and articles listed in the bibliography appended to the last unit.

4.8 KEYWORDS

- **Fishmonger:** a dealer in fish, or someone who sells women.
  "Yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger."
  He didn't recognize me at first, he called me a fish seller.
- **gib:** tomcat.
  "Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib, such dear concerning hide?"
  Why would you hide such things from a toad, a pig, a cat, a monster like him?
- **harbingers:** persons or things that come before to announce of what is coming
  "As harbingers preceding still the fates and prologue to the omen coming on…" Horatio 1.1.122
  We've had similar omens of terrible things to come.

- **mountebank:** quack doctor.
  "I bought an unction of a mountebank…" Laertes 4.7.138
  I bought this poisonous oil from a quack doctor

4.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What are the major themes in ***Hamlet's*** soliloquies?. How do they contribute to the major thematic concerns of the play?

2. Analyse "To be, or not to be" in act **111,** scene i, for its dramatic significance in the context of the play.

3. Analyse the role played by Osric in the larger context of the Danish politics as reflected in the play.

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4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check in Progress I

Answer 1. Check 4.1

Answer 2 . Check 4.2

Check in Progress II

Answer 1. Check 4.5

Answer 2 . Check 4.6

UNIT 5 "THE WORLD AS STAGE" : WIDER

STRUCTURE

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to make you look at ***Hamlet*** from a wider perspective. By the end of this Unit you will be able to see how other cultures respond to ***Hamlet*** and how it has emerged as a cultural icon and also be able to assess its canonical status.

5.1 INTRODUCTION.

In the first four units we have looked at ***Hamlet*** with a close-focused eye. We began, in **Unit** I, with an appreciation of the problems of identifying the text of ***Hamlet:*** the long gap of four hundred years has surely put us at a disadvantage. We tried to determine the date of the first performance of Hamlet, the sources that Shakespeare drew upon to construct the ***Hamlet*** story, the various versions of the text of the play that have come down to us from various sources. We then went on to appreciate the tools of scholarship and various methodologies such as textual criticism, emendation, historical criticism, new criticism, among others.

In **Unit I1** we attempted to examine the meaning of ***Hamlet*** in the light of the Elizabethan revenge tradition-a perspective which perhaps brings us closer to seeing ***Hamlet*** as the Elizabethan audience themselves might have understood and enjoyed the play. We examined ways of determining the meaning of a Shakespearean text, attempted to interpret ***Hamlet*** as a revenge play, and looked, albeit briefly, into various other interpretations of ***Hamlet*** that have found favour with scholars as well readers and theatre-goers.

Subsequently, **Unit III** was devoted to learning how to read ***Hamlet*** between the lines: the language of Shakespeare, his interest in rhetorical devices and imagery and other related matters. **Unit IV** focused on Hamlet's soliloquies, the question of subjectivity in the play as well its general philosophical implications in the context of the early modern literature, and looked at the issues raised by various characters such as Osric, Claudius and Horatio.

Having looked at *Hamlet* at such close quarters, it is time we withdraw ourselves a little and look at *Hamlet* from a wider perspective, in larger contexts. We can look at *Hamlet* in the context of Shakespeare's work. We can assess its canonical status down the centuries, as well as at the present time. We shall take a look at the raging controversies among the lovers of *Hamlet* and the admirers of ***King*** *Lear* for allotting the pinnacle of glory to either play. *Hamlet* has emerged as cultural icon in the twentieth century: it has emerged as a cultural icon not only in the Western world but also elsewhere in the world. It might be interesting to look at how other cultures have responded to the mystery and joy of interacting with *Hamlet.* There are *Hamlet* versions in print, on stage, and screen in which *Hamlet* is re-constructed according to the needs, pressures, and the inner urges of those who have dealt with the play as creators and artists and even as readers arid theatre- and cine-goers.

5.2 KING LEAR AND HAMELT

R. A. Foakes in his 1993 study *Hamlet 'versus'* King *Lear* demonstrates how an unprecedented shift took place in the canonical status of *Hamlet* between 1955 and 1965. During the decade *Hamlet* was displaced by

King *Lear* as the Bard's greatest tragedy. *Lear* was interpreted "not as a redemptive parable but as bleak version of suffering and despair. The mood of the cold war period with it's threat of total nuclear devastation found a new topical meaning in lines such as "Is this promised end *I* Or image of that horror?"King *Lear,* V.iii.264-51. In the late twentieth century world controlled by old men obsessed with power, *Lear* echoed the thoughts of men more than did the violent musings of the brooding prince. *Lear* surely speaks to us in more ways than one. But Hamlet is surely back at its eminent position. *Hamlet* occupies a significant place in the cultural landscapes all over the world.

No wonder *Hamlet* is described as a "cultural work of formidable status, " and "a literary and cultural phenomenon of enormous proportions." Words and phrases in no other play by Shakespeare are so instantly recognisable to anyone anywhere.

The language of *Hamlet* can be found to be seeping into the very fabric of the mind or thought everywhere in the world. *Hamlet* is a challenge of immense proportion for any actor/director creative artist as *Hamlet* becomes a milestone in the life of any artist. No other of work of Shakespeare has been subjected to such varied and myriad transmutations as *Hamlet.* As Thompson and Taylor argue later in their book:

If a political interpretation of Hamlet was topical around 1600, it has also seemed relevant when *Hamlet* has been staged more recently in countries where there has been a real fear of the secret police, such as the former Soviet Union and the eastern Europe .

PLOT

Act I

The protagonist of *Hamlet* is Prince Hamlet of Denmark, son of the recently deceased King Hamlet, and nephew of King Claudius, his father's brother and successor. Claudius hastily married King Hamlet's widow, Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, and took the throne for himself. Denmark has a long-standing feud with neighboring Norway, in which King Hamlet slew King Fortinbras of Norway in a battle some years ago.

Although Denmark defeated Norway and the Norwegian throne fell to King Fortinbras's infirm brother, Denmark fears that an invasion led by the dead Norwegian king's son, Prince Fortinbras, is imminent.

On a cold night on the ramparts of Elsinore, the Danish royal castle, the sentries Bernardo and Marcellus discuss a ghost resembling the late King Hamlet which they have recently seen, and bring Prince Hamlet's friend Horatio as a witness. After the ghost appears again, the three vow to tell Prince Hamlet what they have witnessed.

As the court gathers the next day, while King Claudius and Queen Gertrude discuss affairs of state with their elderly adviser Polonius, Hamlet looks on glumly. During the court, Claudius grants permission for Polonius's son Laertes to return to school in France and sends envoys to inform the King of Norway about Fortinbras. Claudius also scolds Hamlet for continuing to grieve over his father and forbids him to return to his schooling in Wittenberg. After the court exits, Hamlet despairs of his father's death and his mother's hasty remarriage. Learning of the ghost from Horatio, Hamlet resolves to see it himself.

As Polonius's son Laertes prepares to depart for a visit to France, Polonius offers him advice that culminates in the maxim "to thine own self be true." Polonius's daughter, Ophelia, admits her interest in Hamlet, but Laertes warns her against seeking the prince's attention, and Polonius orders her to reject his advances. That night on the rampart, the ghost appears to Hamlet, telling the prince that he was murdered by Claudius and demanding that Hamlet avenge him. Hamlet agrees, and the ghost vanishes. The prince confides to Horatio and the sentries that from now on he plans to "put an antic disposition on", or act as though he has gone mad, and forces them to swear to keep his plans for revenge secret. Privately, however, he remains uncertain of the ghost's reliability.

Act II

Soon thereafter, Ophelia rushes to her father, telling him that Hamlet arrived at her door the prior night half-undressed and behaving erratically. Polonius blames love for Hamlet's madness and resolves to inform Claudius and Gertrude. As he enters to do so, the king and queen finish welcoming Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two student

acquaintances of Hamlet, to Elsinore. The royal couple has requested that the students investigate the cause of Hamlet's mood and behavior. Additional news requires that Polonius wait to be heard: messengers from Norway inform Claudius that the King of Norway has rebuked Prince Fortinbras for attempting to re-fight his father's battles. The forces that Fortinbras had conscripted to march against Denmark will instead be sent against Poland, though they will pass through Danish territory to get there.

Polonius tells Claudius and Gertrude his theory regarding Hamlet's behavior and speaks to Hamlet in a hall of the castle to try to uncover more information. Hamlet feigns madness but subtly insults Polonius all the while. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive, Hamlet greets his "friends" warmly but quickly discerns that they are spies. Hamlet admits that he is upset at his situation but refuses to give the true reason, instead commenting on "What a piece of work is a man". Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Hamlet that they have brought along a troupe of actors that they met while traveling to Elsinore. Hamlet, after welcoming the actors and dismissing his friends-turned-spies, asks them to deliver a soliloquy about the death of King Priam and Queen Hecuba at the climax of the Trojan War. Impressed by their delivery of the speech, he plots to stage *The Murder of Gonzago*, a play featuring a death in the style of his father's murder and to determine the truth of the ghost's story, as well as Claudius's guilt or innocence, by studying Claudius's reaction.

Act III

Polonius forces Ophelia to return Hamlet's love letters and tokens of affection to the prince while he and Claudius watch from afar to evaluate Hamlet's reaction. Hamlet is walking alone in the hall as the King and Polonius await Ophelia's entrance, musing whether "to be or not to be". When Ophelia enters and tries to return Hamlet's things, Hamlet accuses her of immodesty and cries "get thee to a nunnery", though it is unclear whether this, too, is a show of madness or genuine distress. His reaction convinces Claudius that Hamlet is not mad for love. Shortly thereafter, the court assembles to watch the play Hamlet has commissioned. After seeing the Player King murdered by his rival pouring poison in his ear,

Claudius abruptly rises and runs from the room; for Hamlet, this is proof positive of his uncle's guilt.

Gertrude summons Hamlet to her chamber to demand an explanation. Meanwhile, Claudius talks to himself about the impossibility of repenting, since he still has possession of his ill-gotten goods: his brother's crown and wife. He sinks to his knees. Hamlet, on his way to visit his mother, sneaks up behind him but does not kill him, reasoning that killing Claudius while he is praying will send him straight to heaven while his father's ghost is stuck in purgatory. In the queen's bedchamber, Hamlet and Gertrude fight bitterly. Polonius, spying on the conversation from behind a tapestry, calls for help as Gertrude, believing Hamlet wants to kill her, calls out for help herself.

Hamlet, believing it is Claudius, stabs wildly, killing Polonius, but he pulls aside the curtain and sees his mistake. In a rage, Hamlet brutally insults his mother for her apparent ignorance of Claudius's villainy, but the ghost enters and reprimands Hamlet for his inaction and harsh words. Unable to see or hear the ghost herself, Gertrude takes Hamlet's conversation with it as further evidence of madness. After begging the queen to stop sleeping with Claudius, Hamlet leaves, dragging Polonius's corpse away.

Act IV

Hamlet jokes with Claudius about where he has hidden Polonius's body, and the king, fearing for his life, sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to accompany Hamlet to England with a sealed letter to the English king requesting that Hamlet be executed immediately.

Unhinged by grief at Polonius's death, Ophelia wanders Elsinore. Laertes arrives back from France, enraged by his father's death and his sister's madness. Claudius convinces Laertes that Hamlet is solely responsible, but a letter soon arrives indicating that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, foiling Claudius' plan. Claudius switches tactics, proposing a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet to settle their differences. Laertes will be given a poison-tipped foil, and, if that fails, Claudius will offer Hamlet poisoned wine as a congratulation. Gertrude interrupts to report

that Ophelia has drowned, though it is unclear whether it was suicide or an accident exacerbated by her madness.

Act V

Horatio has received a letter from Hamlet, explaining that the prince escaped by negotiating with pirates who attempted to attack his England-bound ship, and the friends reunite offstage. Two gravediggers discuss Ophelia's apparent suicide while digging her grave. Hamlet arrives with Horatio and banters with one of the gravediggers, who unearth the skull of a jester from Hamlet's childhood, Yorick. Hamlet picks up the skull, saying "alas, poor Yorick" as he contemplates mortality. Ophelia's funeral procession approaches, led by Laertes. Hamlet and Horatio initially hide, but when Hamlet realizes that Ophelia is the one being buried, he reveals himself, proclaiming his love for her. Laertes and Hamlet fight by Ophelia's graveside, but the brawl is broken up.

Back at Elsinore, Hamlet explains to Horatio that he had discovered Claudius's letter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's belongings and replaced it with a forged copy indicating that his former friends should be killed instead. A foppish courtier, Osric, interrupts the conversation to deliver the fencing challenge to Hamlet. Hamlet, despite Horatio's pleas, accepts it. Hamlet does well at first, leading the match by two hits to none, and Gertrude raises a toast to him using the poisoned glass of wine Claudius had set aside for Hamlet. Claudius tries to stop her but is too late: she drinks, and Laertes realizes the plot will be revealed. Laertes slashes Hamlet with his poisoned blade. In the ensuing scuffle, they switch weapons, and Hamlet wounds Laertes with his own poisoned sword. Gertrude collapses and, claiming she has been poisoned, dies. In his dying moments, Laertes reconciles with Hamlet and reveals Claudius's plan. Hamlet rushes at Claudius and kills him. As the poison takes effect, Hamlet, hearing that Fortinbras is marching through the area, names the Norwegian prince as his successor. Horatio, distraught at the thought of being the last survivor and living whilst Hamlet does not, says he will commit suicide by drinking the dregs of Gertrude's poisoned wine, but Hamlet begs him to live on and tell his story. Hamlet dies in Horatio's arms, proclaiming "the rest is silence". Fortinbras, who was

ostensibly marching towards Poland with his army, arrives at the palace, along with an English ambassador bringing news of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's deaths. Horatio promises to recount the full story of what happened, and Fortinbras, seeing the entire Danish royal family dead, takes the crown for himself and orders a military funeral to honour Hamlet.

5.3 RE-INVENTING HAMLET

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, often shortened to ***Hamlet*** (/ˈhæmlɪt/), is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare sometime between 1599 and 1602. Set in Denmark, the play depicts Prince Hamlet and his revenge against his uncle, Claudius, who has murdered Hamlet's father in order to seize his throne and marry Hamlet's mother.

Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play and is considered among the most powerful and influential works of world literature, with a story capable of "seemingly endless retelling and adaptation by others". It was one of Shakespeare's most popular works during his lifetime and still ranks among his most performed, topping the performance list of the Royal Shakespeare Company and its predecessors in Stratford-upon-Avon since 1879.[3] It has inspired many other writers—from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Charles Dickens to James Joyce and Iris Murdoch—and has been described as "the world's most filmed story after *Cinderella*".[4]

The story of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was derived from the legend of Amleth, preserved by 13th-century chronicler Saxo Grammaticus in his *Gesta Danorum*, as subsequently retold by the 16th-century scholar François de Belleforest. Shakespeare may also have drawn on an earlier Elizabethan play known today as the *Ur-Hamlet*, though some scholars believe Shakespeare wrote the *Ur-Hamlet*, later revising it to create the version of *Hamlet* we now have. He almost certainly wrote his version of the title role for his fellow actor, Richard Burbage, the leading tragedian of Shakespeare's time. In the 400 years since its inception, the

role has been performed by numerous highly acclaimed actors in each successive century.

Three different early versions of the play are extant: the First Quarto (Q1, 1603); the Second Quarto (Q2, 1604); and the First Folio (F1, 1623). Each version includes lines and entire scenes missing from the others. The play's structure and depth of characterization have inspired much critical scrutiny. One such example is the centuries-old debate about Hamlet's hesitation to kill his uncle, which some see as merely a plot device to prolong the action but which others argue is a dramatisation of the complex philosophical and ethical issues that surround cold-blooded murder, calculated revenge, and thwarted desire. More recently, psychoanalytic critics have examined Hamlet's unconscious desires, while feminist critics have re-evaluated and attempted to rehabilitate the often-maligned characters of Ophelia and Gertrude.

Michael Cohen ["On Reading *Hamlet* for the First Time" *[College Literature,* 19.1 (1992):48-591 considers "the desirability and the difficulty of approaching *Hamlet* without preconception, without a kind of 'pre-reading'." He wonders whether it is possible to find someone who does not come to the play with foreknowledge of the details of the play or whether one can create conditions in which one can read the play for the "first time." Considering the power the play wields as, a cultural icon- "the extra textual ***Hamlet*** has a real, unquenchable and even frightening existence"

-- it would be a gigantic task to shed, or persuade readers, students and others to shed, the baggage of familiarity, to "unteach" before one could teach!

There is little doubt that an innocent first reading of ***Hamlet*** unencumbered by one's prejudices--acquired by being part of a social and cultural context--has always been considered an ideal pre-condition to a fuller and meaningful appreciation of the play.

An innocent first reading of the play, the recovery of that pristine experience "uncounted innate by our subsequent intellectualising" of the play has been considered inescapable to our attaining the truth. And there

are a great many believers in the truth of the first impressions: Cohen refers to G. B. Harrison, Thomas Kettle, Karl Werder, A. C. Bradley, G. Wilson Knight, C. S. Lewis, and Maynard Mack, among others.

Attempts have been made to view the question of reading ***Hamler*** for the "first" time as a historical problem and to recover what must have been the initial response of the Bard's own audience. Cohen refers to the studies done in this regard by Mushat and McGee. What both the first-impression school of critics as well as the historical-retrieval school of critics seek to do is to offer an ***ideal reading*** of the play.

That Shakespeare seems to have made an attempt to "make new" (and to take away the predictability of the plot from an existing story) can be easily inferred. Cohen quotes Susan Snyder who believes that Shakespeare did his best to make the plot of ***Hamlet*** less predictable by throwing a shadow of obscurity, for example, on the queen's guilt and ghost's reliability. In other words "Shakespeare did his part towards making it possible to read or see ***Hamlet*** for the first time." In other words Shakespeare saw the "merit of reading a play for the first time."

What we have today is "a reading of ***Hamlet*** . . . over determines from the beginning: in the mind of the person reading ***Hamlet*** for the 'first' time, a culturally determined received extra textual interpretation of ***Hamlet*** joins a culturally determined way of receiving any text."

But what is the solution to this problem? Cohen locates the genesis of his problem in the scholarly practice of preparing an "editorial" text which the editor always insists is the real thing. We have looked into this question at some length in Unit I. Cohen finds these scholarly reconstructed editions of the play as "social constructions." The current editions of the play are nothing but a modem-type, modern-spelling conflations of early printed texts that reflect the individual editor’s whims and outdated, unexamined assumptions and prejudices about the early printed texts.

For Cohen the solution lies in the suggestion made by Michael Warren when the latter recommended a text providing "the earliest versions--the First Quarto, the Second Quarto, and the First Folio--in photographic reproduction with their original confusions and corruptions unobscured by the interference of later sophistications

. . . the editions get between the student or the scholar and the peculiar originals from which they derive." Editors generally privilege the Second Quarto but almost all editors adopt readings from the other versions of the play, too. The editorial principles themselves, thus, are not consistently followed.

"The World As Stage": Wider Perspective

It is in one sense no exaggeration to say that no student reading only a modem edition of title play has read the play yet. A student who reads either all or any one of ***Hamlet*** the three versions of the play has the best chance of reading the play for the first time. If then it is desirable to be able to have a first reading of the play at all, the solution lies in abandoning the editorially reconstructed textual editions of the play as "given" and allow the students to "compose" their own texts by reading all the three versions in photographic facsimiles. Leaving the student alone to decide what the real ***Hamlet*** is to offer them the best chance of achieving the first reading of the play.

On the other hand this also is true that admirers of ***Hamlet*** have sought to make up, in more ways than one, for the unfortunate lack of opportunity of having been there when the play was first staged to taste the flavour of the original! There are ***Hamlet*** versions in print, on stage, and screen in which ***Hamlet*** is re-constructed according to the needs, pressures, and the inner urges of those who have dealt with the play as creators and artists and even as readers and theatre- and cine-goers: and these reconstructions are unique, different and new. ***Hamlet*** has been printed, screened and staged in many different ways to give it a new shape and form and fit the needs

of the time and space in which, and for which, it was being reconstructed.

5.4 PRIVATISATION OF HAMLET

Bowdlerised Shakespeare. Thomas Bowdler [1754-18251 was a clergyman and editor. He prepared a four volume edition of the works of Shakespeare in 1807 (which he later expanded to ten volumes in 181 8) in which his objective was to offer to the readers an edition "in which

nothing is added to the original, but those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read in a family."

Shakespeare's plays, he felt, had given us " an inexhaustible fund of instructions as well as pleasure which even the severest moralist would not wish to withhold from innocent minds." He thus prepared a version of Shakespeare's plays which could be read in a family in the presence of women and children "unmixed with anything that could raise a blush on the cheek of modesty," or that could be unfit "to read aloud by a gentlemen to a company of ladies." The Bowdlerised Shakespeare, called ***The Family Shakespeare,*** was widely read throughout the nineteenth century and earned high praise from many including the poet Swinburne who remarked that "no man ever did better service to Shakespeare than the man who made it possible to put him **Marowitz** Hamlet. Charles Marowitz, the author, critic, playwright and director, has decided to take ***Hamlet*** "imprisoned by three-and-a-half centuries of critical appreciation and grand acting," (as the blurb to the Penguin Plays edition [I9681 of ***The Marowitz Hamlet and The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*** describes it), "boldly, broken it into pieces and reassembled it in a collage which he hopes makes its meaning real again." ***Hamlet*** is described in the sub-title as "A Collage Version of the Shakespeare's Play." In his introduction to this edition Marowitz says:

Can a play which is well known be reconstructed and redistributed so as to make a new work of art? If ***Hamlet*** were a precious old vase which shattered into thousand pieces, could one glue the pieces all together into a completely new shape and still retain the spirit of the original. . . . if Shakespeare is our contemporary, why can't we speak to him in our own tone of voice, in our own rhythm about our own concerns? . . . [p.10]

And that is what precisely the play turns out to be: a collage of broken pieces put together again into a shape. And the play opens in the very first scene with: ***Hamlet and*** Fortinbras ***standing facing each other. After*** **cr** ***moment*** Fortinbras ***moves down to meet the*** Captain. ***Hamlet falls*** in ***behind the*** Captain ***like soldier in the ranks.*** Fortinbras: Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish King . . . and we have ***Hamlet*** beginning his all occasions . . ." at line sixteen of act one, scene one! **The Haunted House** Hamlet. Tamahous Theatre of Vancouver, Canada presented a version of ***Hamlet*** in the summer of 1986) which was spread

all over a three-storey house. Every room in the house had a scene from ***Hamlet*** being staged and the audience were free to roalii about the three floors, peep into different rooms and piece together what was going on in those rooms and re-construct a ***Hamlet*** for themselves. The beginning of the play as well as the ending, along with the Players' scene was all that the entire audience shared in common. Otherwise while some watched Claudius in his court, some others went and eavesdropped on the conversation between Horatio and Hamlet or between Polonius and Ophelia. There was the whole house full of goings on that would remind the audience of the play that they know as ***Hamlet,*** but it was also a new play. The angry outbursts of Hamlet could be heard when Ophelia sat whimpering in one room and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern plotted their own plans in another. The house became a metaphor and the householders revealed themselves, an unhappy lot, each with a tale of his own to tell.

Hamlet was staged outside Britain fairly soon. It reached France in 1745, Russia in 1748 and in America 1759. Within the next hundred it was being staged all over the world: so much so that foreign companies would come to London to perform their versions of ***Hamlet.*** An Indian company was in London 1877 to stage a performance of ***Hamlet.*** There are more than half a dozen film versions known to exist: those by Olivier, Kozintsev, Rochardson, Bennet, and Zeffirelli.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short note on King Lear and Hamlet

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Q2. Write short analysis on Privatization of hamlet

Answer

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5.5 UNIVERSALIZATION

Hamlet thus appears to speak **a universal language.** In the West Shakespeare occupies a position of unique centrality. Harold Bloom has recently maintained in ***The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*** [1994], Shakespeare "is the central figure of the Western Canon" [p.2] " . . . more central to the Western culture than Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, Heidegger and Wittegenstein." [p. 101 Shakespeare's "aesthetic supremacy has been confirmed by the universal judgement of the four centuries," [p. 231 Bloom tells us. "His powers of assirnilation and contamination are unique." [P.3] "We owe to Shakespeare not only our representation of cognition but much of our capacity for cognition." [p. 401 "The enigma of Shakespeare, " Bloom says elsewhere, "is his universalism: Kurusawa's film versions of Macbeth and King Lear are thoroughly Kurusawa and thoroughly Shakespeare." [p. 5241 Bloom then isolates what makes Shakespeare so unique and so universal:

What is the Shakespearean difference that demands Dante, Cemantes, Tolstoy and only a few others as aesthetic companions? TO ask the questions is to undertake the quest that is the final aim of literary study, the search for a kind of value that transcends the particular prejudices and needs of societies at fixed points in time. Such a quest is illusory, according to all our

"The World As Stage" : **Wider**

Perspective

Hamlet current ideologies . . . ***.There is substance in Shakespeare's work that prevails and that has proved multicultural, so universally apprehended in all languages as to have established a pragmatic multiculturalism around the globe,*** one that already far surpasses our politicised fumbling towards such an ideal. Shakespeare is the centre of the embryo of a world canon, not

Western or Eastern and less and less Eurocentric; . . . [p. 62; emphasis added]

But let us not forget that even in the West Shakespeare's supremacy has not gone unchallenged. Charles Forker, a noted Shakespeare scholar, once remarked to this writer in an interview:

In America black American response to Shakespeare is a racial response. A black American student regards Shakespeare as a white 'man's cultural baggage. In my classes very few black American students take interest in Shakespeare or even attend classes. When they are educated at higher levels, they respond to Shakespeare much the same manner as educated Indians.

But an average educated black American tends to contain his interest in Shakespeare. . . ."

Referring to one of his black American student who did his doctoral work on Shakespeare, Forker said, "But then he is not too popular with his fellow black American students who regard him as having identified with a symbol of white man's oppression." But generally speaking one could say that Shakespeare in America is an off-shoot of British literature and the Bible and Shakespeare are the two most profound and pervasive influences on American literature. Even the Gettysburgh address by Abraham Lincoln, Forker claimed, could be shown to embody these two influences. Not only in Britain, but also in America, Shakespeare is treated not merely ad literature or theatre but has become a cultural construct. Indian failure to respond to deal with Shakespeare at deeper levels is perhaps because English language and literature is associated in the minds of the people with the oppressors which the British colonisers were for such a long time. In Japan, where they did not have the advantage or the disadvantage of a similar cultural interaction forced upon them, Shakespeare has permeated the life of the Japanese obviously because of a choice deliberately made and consciously cultivated. Thus the cultural and literary scene in Japan is inundated with novels, poems, films and other artistic manifestation derived from, or inspired by, Shakespeare. But Shakespeare came to India early, indeed.

***Hamlet* in India**.

Hamlet's Indian connection took shape even before the play crossed over to the Indian Ocean. The third voyage sponsored by the East India

Company to India left England in 1607. One of the three ships, ***Hector,*** while anchored at Sierra Leone, is reported to have had two performances of ***Hamlet*** aboard done by the sailors of the ship. The development of the Parsi theatre in the mid-nineteenth century led to an upsurge of interest in Shakespeare in India. The Parsi theatre companies had grown out of amateur theatrical activities organised by the Parsi community, British-run schools and colleges and clubs such as the Elphinstone Club. About this time British administrators were looking for ways and means to create a class of Indians who would share the burden of running the administration of the country at lower levels. The desire to improve the native cultures through the means of British education too was not far from their minds.

Even the educated Indian leadership believed in the need for revitalising the Indian culture. The Parsi theatre's attempt to appropriate Shakespeare and package it for the Indian audience received a great deal of encouragement. ***Hamlet*** in Urdu translation done by Munshi Mehdi Hasan with a new title, ***Khune Nahaq, was*** performed in 1898 by Parsi Alfred Company. ***Hamlet,*** we must remember was not "The World **A,i**the only play that was being staged by the Parsi theatrical campaniles. ***Othello*** and Stage" : Wider

Macbeth were frequently staged, as also ***Cymbeline, Twelfth Night, The Winters Tale,*** **Perspective**

All 's Well that Ends Well, The Merchant of Venice, and ***Measure jbr Measure.*** With the advent of the motion pictures, many theatrical companies turned to film-making. Sohrab Modi and his elder brother Rustem filmed their popular play ***Hamlet*** or ***Khlolon ka Khloon*** in 1935 in which Sohrab and Naseem performedl Another Marathi adaptation of ***Hamlet*** called ***Vikar Vilasit*** featured Kamlabai Gokliale at the age of four as a boy in the "play" scene.

I remarked in an earlier unit that ***Hamlet*** has often found to have acquired a life of its own, a life outside the context of the play. No other text commands instant recognition of such a large number of moments, images, lines and words as ***Hamlet*** does. Words and phrases from the play have become part of our daily vocabulary. In a recent edition of the Delhi ***Statesman,*** a news item commenting on the uncertainty surrounding a politician's joining a political party carried the title: "To be

or not to be-that is the question Madam!" [March 1 1, 19981 ***Hamlet*** exists in translation in many vernacular languages. In fact, there are many translations of

Hamlet even in Sanskrit!

Another interesting example of an alien culture taking to Shakespeare is South Africa. ***Hamlet*** was first produced in South Africa in 1799 in Port Elizabeth and has enjoyed continued popularity ever since. Most Shakespeare productions were organised by English speaking whites and one of their objectives used to be to ensure the triumph of English culture in a society where the Blacks and the other minorities were considered, under the then prevailing laws, inferior. The first Afrikaans productions were staged in 1947 and were received with a great deal of enthusiasm. Afrikaners travelled from all over the country to see the production. So much so that first Afrikaans production was seen as part of the resurgence of Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikaans culture, considered crude and inferior by the English speaking whites, sought to claim for itself the sophistication of a great English playwright by staging ***Hamlet*** in Afrikaans.

Shakespeare in South Africa thus, always. became a showcase for cultural sophistication whenever staged by the English speaking whites, Afrikaners, Coloured, or Indians. The English speaking whites used Shakespeare to maintain their cultural superiority, the Afrikaners sought to challenge this colonial-imperial pride and to validate their own culture. Other minorities groups such as Indian, Coloured and Blacks to claim a place in an equal opportunity, just society. Their

access and ability to negotiate a play by Shakespeare was used to prove that they, too, were cultured or sophisticated groups within the South African society.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give short note on Univerlisation of Hamlet

Answer

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Q2. Write short analysis on Hamlet in India

Answer

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5.6 LET'S SUM UP

Hamlet, thus, should be understood and appreciated not merely as a literary text in the context of the times and the literarily conventions in which it was written. Over the last many centuries the world has become a much smaller place and cultural artifacts have tended to break loose from the tyranny of their geographical roots. In the larger context of today a play such as ***Hamlet*** has been appropriated by many other cultures. It is useful to examine how such diverse and varied readers from diverse and varied cultures have responded to it.

5.7 KEYWORDS

- **scullion:** a servant doing the rough, dirty work in a kitchen.
  "Unpack my heart with words, and fall a-cursing, like a very drab, a scullion!"
  I want to act upon the anger in my heart, but all I can do is stand around cursing like a common kitchen wretch.
- **tenures:** titles to property.
  Where is his eloquent speech, his important legal cases, his titles and his courtroom tricks?

- **to the manner:** born accustomed to it since a child.
  Even though I was born here and am used to the tradition, I think I'd rather not celebrate it.
- **unfold yourself:** to make known or lay open to view.

5.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. ***Hamlet*** is credited with a unique ability to communicate with diverse audiences in varied countries and cultures all over the world. Which elements of the play make it possible for the play to achieve this universal appeal?

2. Analyse Cohen's views on the significance of reading a play "for the first time" with reference to ***Hamlet.***

3. Bowdlerised Shakespeare represents censorship at its worst.

5.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- *Lott, Bernard, ed. (1970). Hamlet. New Swan Shakespeare, Advanced series (New ed.). London: Longman. ISBN 0-582-52742-2.*
- *Thompson, Ann; Taylor, Neil, eds. (2006). Hamlet. The Arden Shakespeare, third series. **1**. London: Cengage Learning. ISBN 1-904271-33-2.*
- *Thompson, Ann; Taylor, Neil, eds. (2006). Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623. The Arden Shakespeare, third series. **2**. London: Cengage Learning. ISBN 1-904271-80-4.*
- *Wells, Stanley; Taylor, Gary, eds. (1988). The Complete Works. The Oxford Shakespeare(Compact ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press. ISBN 0-19-871190-5.*
- Hamlet on the Ramparts – The MIT's Shakespeare Electronic Archive.

- Hamletworks.org – Scholarly resource with multiple versions of *Hamlet*, commentaries, concordances, and more.
- Depictions and commentary of Hamlet paintings
- Clear Shakespeare *Hamlet* – A word-by-word audio guide through the play.

5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check in Progress I

Answer 1. Check 5.2

Answer 2. Check 5.4

Check in Progress II

Answer 1. Check 5.5

Answer 2. Check 5.5

UNIT 6 CURRENT CRITICAL APPROACHES TO HAMLET

STRUCTURE

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will gain knowledge of

- **Critical approaches : Twentieth Century Scene up to the sixties**
- **New literary theory : major approaches and**
- **New Literary theory and *Hamlet.***

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As professional students of literature post-graduate students must realise that their obligations as students, and as future researchers and scholars, are not confined merely to reading literature, however diligently and meaningfully. The joy of immersing oneself into mankind's endless source of pleasure and instruction is in itself a great reward. But works of literature have to be studied for a fuller appreciation of their meaning and significance, also in the light of the organised body of thought that has

developed in response to scholastic attaints to understand and appreciate literature.

Over a period of time an organised body of literature about literature-many schools of thought, approaches and view-points governing literary criticism—of myriad hues and shapes and forms has emerged. Some of the finest minds over the last many centuries have developed the discipline of literary studies and studied ***Hamlet*** works of literature in the light of intellectual methodologies specially created to make study of literature a rewarding exercise. Even when critics do not consciously belong to a specific school of thought and subscribe to a definite ideology, they certainly speak from a position of reasoned thought.

6.2 TWENTIETH CENTURY APPROACHES UPTO THE SIXTIES

In the twentieth century up to about the sixties literary criticism developed in many more complex ways. RenC Wellek's monumental study of the twentieth century criticism initiates his study with "symbolism" and goes on to devote a section to the academic critics who functioned within the universities and furthered the discipline of literary studies. He then devotes a chapter each to The Bloomsbury Group and another to The New Romantics. The focus then shifts to the early pioneering work done by T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis and the consolidation of the early work into a substantial body of admirable proportions by T. S Eliot and I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis and the contributors to Scrutiny, the widely influential literary journal that Leavis helped found and edited for twenty years, and critics such as F. W. Bateson and William Empson.

Some of these approaches particularly benefited students of Shakespeare. Some other schools of thought and critical approaches, in turn, received a fillip because of their attempts to engage the Shakespearean canon.

Up to the sixties, then, the islands of certainty included a number of notions: That there is an entity called literature as different from what is not literature. Journalistic writing is not literature, for example. Literature was considered an activity specially carried out by those who are

competent to do so. The existence of an author was always taken for granted. When we did not know for sure who had created a particular work, a large body of scholarship developed to figure out the identity of the author. Also, scholarship, literary criticism and other related activities were subordinate to literature. An act of critical appreciation was secondary to, next to, even inferior to an act of creativity. Interpreting a work of art constituted the effort of lesser mortals.

Also, there was something ineffable--inexpressible, unutterable, transcendent—about the act of creation. Even Aristotle who gave us the view that art is an imitation of life ended up suggesting a great deal more about the creative faculty than his concept of literature as mimetic activity would otherwise suggest. In section iv of Poetics, Aristotle distinguishes between the world of poetry produced through mimetic activity and points out that ". . . the reason of delight . . . is that one is at the same time . . . gathering the meaning of things." Aristotle returns to this gathering the meaning of things through mimesis which produces poetry in section IX: "The poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened but the kind of thing that might happen . . . The distinction between the historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other writing verse . . . it consists really in that one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is more philosophical and graver in import than history, since its statements are of the nature universals whereas those of history are singulars." Poetic imitation thus becomes creative imitation because it is something more than the actual. In section XVII Aristotle gives yet another dimension to the concept of mimesis by defining the nature of the faculty involved in the art: "Hence it is that poetry demands a man with a special gift for it or else with a touch of madness in him."

Again, the concept of mimesis has to be appreciated also in terms of what is said about the structural aspect of a work of art. To Aristotle unity is what gives a poem or a drama its wholeness. And this question is also a question of beauty. In Section

VII he says: ". . . to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts but also be of certain definite magnitude." So, mimetic activity involves an act of ordering, an act of producing a new organism. Equally

significant, in this context, is Aristotle's view that characters should be described as they ought to be, and his insistence that poets need not use language "such as men do use." No wonder the Greeks used the same word for poet [creator=make writer] as they used for God. Creativity was special for sure, and depended on the creative abilities of very special, divinely gifted individuals.

"Language such as men do use7'-Ben Jonson used the phrase for his choice of diction for his highly mimetic poetic activity-right in the tradition of Aristotle.

Also established, as another major concept of Anglo-American tradition of literary critical thought, was the fact that language is a transparent medium-a medium that remains non-interfering, totally objective, a kind of container, a paper-bag which receives from the giver what is given and remains available to yields its contents, totally untouched, unimpaired, or modified.

6.3 MODERN LITERARY THEORY STRUCTLISM

In the sixties **a new view of literary critical practice** emerged ant1 almost all these literary orthodoxies were subjected to intense scrutiny. The traditional view of the significance of literature, the role of criticism, the value of language, the very notion of an "author," the moral and aesthetic values of literature, and its cultural and political context, literary history, literary biography: all these notions underwent a sea-change. Modern literary theory changed the way we look at literature in more ways than one through, as Rice and Waugh put it, "its unprecedented attack on the grounding assumption of the Anglo-American critical tradition." Lets us look at these major departures from the tradition one by one.

Structuralism

One of the most trenchant attach on the literary orthodoxies came from the **structuralisms** that chose as their primary concern "language" in its most general sense. Literature, the followers of structuralism believed, does not reflect reality or life through the medium of language: it is the

product of language. In other words, literature is born out of language, not out of the rigours of life or living. The site for literary works to be born out of is not life but words. As I have remarked earlier, the view that that language is a transparent medium-a medium that remains non-interfering, totally objective, a kind of container, a paper-bag which receives from the giver what is given and remains available to yield its contents, totally untouched, unimpaired, or modified-this view of language took a heavy beating.

Ferdinand de Saussure [1857- 19 131 revolutionised thinking by rnaintaining that words signify objects-the word 'table' refers to an object called 'table' only arbitrarily and such denotation of any external reality has no conviction with any inevitably absolute logic. All signs [=words] signify objects [=signifiers] which are arbitrarily so equated.

Saussure observed: Psychologically our thought-apart from its expression in words-is only a shapeless and indistinct mass. Philosophers and linguist3 have always agreed in recognizing that without the help of signs we would be unable to

Current Critical Approaches to *Hamlet*

Hamlets make a clear-cut, consistent distinction between two ideas. Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language. And: . . . the absolutely final law of language is . . . that there is nothing which can ever reside in one term, as a direct consequence of the fact that linguistic symbols are unrelated to what they should designate. Also: The arbitrary nature of sign explains in turn why the social fact alone can create a linguistic system. The community is necessary if values that owe their existence solely to usage and general acceptance are to be set up. . . .

Saussure also drew a distinction between a specific language (English, Hindi) and a particular sentence, text or speech in a particular language as individually employed by a user, as also between the language as a phenomenon to be identified (or studied) through its growth and development, historically speaking, and a body or system of language existing at any given point in time. Thinkers such as Claude LCvi-Strauss, Noam Chomsky and Ronald Barthes contributed to structuralism by adding new dimensions to it. LCvi-Strauss, for instance believed that

the way human beings interacted in society (the pattern of interaction or behaviour and other social structures (=institutions) depended on the modes of communication that they employed.

Based on his theory of language Saussure sought to develop a "general science of signs" (Semiology). While structuralism grew out of Saussure's attempts to develop semiotics, it spread its wings far and sought to examine a wide variety of cultural phenomena. More than the "meaning" that Saussure sought to investigate through the opposites in his "general science of signs," the structuralisms were more interested in understanding the conventions that make it possible to arrive at “meaning," the conditions that make it possible for a language-and therefore meaning-to arise in the first place, the communicative function of language. They sought to define, describe and understand the system rather the individual manifestations. The desire to achieve this led To drove to propose a general grammar or poetics of literature. What the structuralisms, then, aimed at was the general principles as embodied in individual works. Form rather content was given pride of place in this system. And a science of literature was sought to be developed. While a unified system was sought to be developed, texts were treated as manifestation of the system in operation. Works of literature were, thus, divorced from their socio historical contexts. Structuralism, on the one hand sought to analyse a literary text, and on the other, developed itself as method of understanding the conditions of existence of literature (as a system) and a text (as manifestation of the system in operation.

Structuralism more or less put an end to the notion that literary studies had to exist in some kind of isolated vacuum even within the humanities. Literary studies were now for sure interdisciplinary in nature. Now there was a larger context to put a literary text in. But its supposed ant humanistic, overtly "scientific" attitude to the study of literature and an attempt to create a "science" of literary studies drew great hostility.

While structuralisms looked for conditions that created meaning, and moved towards an understanding of phenomena to which they sought to impart coherence and order, (what Michel Foucault calls a "principle of unity"), the **deconstructive discourse** wished to point to, not the source of completer, comprehensive meaningful pictures, **Currant Critical** but to the limits of the ability of discourse and understanding to impose such

Approaches to coherent patterns upon what apparently appeared as chaotic and formless. ***Hamlet*** Deconstruction aims at examining and questioning self-evident and registers its distrust of appropriating all new inexplicable models of meaningful order.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short note on Feminism

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Q2. Write short analysis on Modern Theory

Answer

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6.4 FEMINISM

There were, in fact, other pockets of dissatisfaction which led the questioning of the long accepted principles on which the citadel of literature and literary studies rested.

Feminism was in the forefront of the demolition squad that sought to change the very texture of literature and literary studies. Endless expressions of the repressed and agonised clarion call for arms included Simone de Beauvoir's who wrote in her highly influential ***The Second Sex (1949):***

. . . humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as autonomous being. . . . She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with

reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute-she is the Other. . . . Woman lack concrete means for organising themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no solidarity of work and the proletariat. . . . The proletariat can propose to massacre the ruling class, and a sufficiently fanatic Jew or Negro might dream of getting sole possession of the atomic bomb and making humanity wholly Jewish or black; but women cannot even dream of exterminating the males. The bond that unites her to her oppressor is not comparable to any other. The division of the sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history. . . . Simone de Beauvoir sought to analyse the social construction of the gender and drew attention to the distinction between gender and sex. Kate Millet's!***; sexual Politics*** focused on the oppression of women under the patriarchal social system and the sought to analyse the image of women in cultural representations such as literature. While the development of the feminist view-point developed in many directions, some of its manifestations were the result of uncritical hostility to the rising domination of women in various walks of society. Let us look at the two widely familiar Indian novels and see how the principles of feminist discourse have been understood by their authors and what kind of application and treatment these principle receive in these two books Feminism finds itself treated in them rather overtly and deliberately and in many ways rather simplicity. In Kamala Markandaya's ***Nectar in a Sieve,*** the protagonist young Rukmani's reactions to the world around her are motivated by a recognition that life is for living and when the going gets tough the human mind rnust draw its ; strength from an unambiguous acceptance of the inescapable, and that the desire to escape is anathema. Not to break-up or destroy, but to persist and. rebuild is what life is about. Not self-pity but self-esteem is what human existence must derive its sustenance from. Rukmani is endowed with an awareness of the possibilities of life. She sees value in living. For her the act of living is important; life is important.

And therefore the question of woman's search for identity, meaning, alienation, or fulfilment in marriage within and without, must be part of

the larger question of ***Hamlet*** Markandaya's. strength lies in the fact that the female protagonist of her novel emerges as a character whose engagement with the inevitable conflicts of life and living do not take the form of vulgar dog-bite-dog situations so familiar from some of the more recent feminist fiction. One can illustrate this point from the other novels.

Shashi Deshpande's feminist heroine in her otherwise admirable and delightful novel, That Long Silence, experiences, as the blurb goes, "[differences with her husband, frustrations in their seventeen year old marriage, disappointment in her two teenage children, claustrophia [sic] of her childhood." One of the episodes in which the female protagonist seeks to correct the imbalance of her marital life is as follows:

"The keys," he says, holding out his hand. But the woman, ignoring that importunate hand-it becomes that as he continues to hold it out--takes some keys out of her bag and unlocks the door. Still ignoring him she enters the flat. He continues to stand therefore moment, the hand held out, it now looks like a duplicator gesture, and then he abruptly follows her in, closing the door firmly behind him.

She goes on to justify her action: We all do it is part of family life. Rahul refuses to have his bath before meals, Rati refusing to tell us who it was she was talking to on the phone, Appa crushing a raw onion and eating it with relish. Deshpande's female--therefore discontented, suffering, and oppressed-- protagonist does not appear to struggle to find meaning, identity, or even escape from a context that she finds antagonistic. She only has contempt for human relationship. Her contempt for her husband who had pre reconciled to failure" in life is motivated by her lack of understanding that to cushion an individual's failure is what a family is all about. She is too narcissistically self-centred to appreciate her contribution to a deteriorating relationship. Thus even though the universe of Nectar in a Sieve is dominated by a protagonist who is a woman and in which the authorial focus is on a woman's interaction—even confrontation--with the world around her, that universe is not artificially narrow, not sequestered, nor an insular world inhabited by insular characters. In their anger to destroy the wrong that the world has done to woman, some of the feminists have tended to ignore the fact that

women are and have to be, and inescapably so, part of the same universe. I have quoted Simone de Beauvoir's allusion to this point earlier.

A world-view conditioned by the necessity of its having to be a feminist world view distorts the nature of its objective. Rukmani, in Markandaya's novel, looks at the world around her through the eyes of a human being: for her--and for her creator--her being a woman remains incidental to her being a human being.

In That Long Silence woman's search for self, identity, and meaning so easily takes the form of low comedy that genuine, finer issues of life and living and are soon forgotten. What distinguishes Rukmani's character in her encounters with the facts of life is that Markandaya proposes to project not the crude encounters of a life of which one gets inkling from Deshpande's award winning novel. Markandaya's heroine responds to the drama of life in its entirety. She treats life as one, as a whole in which man-woman relationship is only one aspect. Failure to appreciate that life is larger than love, even sex, even man-woman relationship, leads to an inadequate appreciation of the very nature and significance of human predicament. Shashi Deshpande misjudges the import and significance of the Feminist movement and thought. Elaine Show later, one of the most influential feminist writer, thinker and intellectual, even as she drew attention to the heavy sexist bias in the male dominated liberal tradition, believed that ultimately there is one human nature; human nature encompassing both male and female human nature. There is, thus, a universal human nature. She treated literary tradition as a continuous, unbroken chain despite the feminist interruption of this tradition that the radical feminists sought to achieve. It is interesting that despite Showalter's attempt to chart the course of an alternative female literary tradition, and her belief that the female experience of life had something unique to offer; she was treated by more radical feminists as affirming the orthodox beliefs. Showalter pointed out how feminist criticism can be divided into two categories: first type is concerned with women as reader: "consumer of male produced literature

. . . . It probes the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena. Its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history." The second kind of feminist

criticism is concerned with women as writer: "Its subjects include psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problem of female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history and, of course, studies of particular writers or works.

Along with Simone de Beauvoir another influential name was that of Virginia Woolf who in A Room of One's ***Own*** focused on the problems of the woman writer? She concluded that lack of "a room of one's own'-implying a 1ac.k of a certain kind of economic and social independence--meant that a woman's ambition in the area of literature remained constrained. The literary forms had developed-"hardened—in such a manner that they were not suitable for women to deal with or work through.

What feminism does not do, therefore, is to hit back-do unto men what women have been done to: feminism as a movement is not an extended historical revenge play that Shashi Deshpande makes this ideology out to be.

Like the Marxists, the feminists were concerned with the wider social and cultural issues before turning to imaginative literature, and found much to be dissatisfied about. As we can thus see, feminism developed not merely as a movement in literature but developed in many directions. And one thing that they all had, and have, in common for sure was, and is, intensity.

Briefly, feminist literary critics were concerned with women's experience as presented in literature. They questioned the age-old dominant male phallocentric ideologies and male evaluation of literature to the latter's advantage to perpetuate the status quo. They questioned male notions of how women feel and think and act - and by implication are supposed to feel and think and act. In short male prejudice about women and the later stereotyping were attacked and questioned. Women had been politically exploited and suppressed and the balance could be righted by examining the socio-political issues and the political machinations behind these issues.

6.5 MARXISM

It is common knowledge that Marx and Engels chiefly concerned themselves with an appreciation of capitalist theory and mode of production and their primary interests ***Hamlet*** were political, economical and philosophical. **An** aesthetic of **art,** literature or culture was far from their minds, even though Marx always managed to say just the right thing about classical, traditional literatures. But the followers of Marxist thought who were concerned with literature, for instance, adapted "socialist" thought to put together a theory of literature. The Marxist critic therefore responds to a work of literature from the stand-point of Marx's political, economic and philosophical ideas.

Class-struggle is uppermost in his mind and socio-historical and socio-economical factors shape the thought that is applied to a work of literature. As J. A. Cuddon ' points out: ". . . Socialist realism required a writer . . . to be committed to the working class cause of the Party. And it required that literature should be 'progressive' and should display a progressive outlook on society. This necessitated forms of optimism and realism. Moreover, literature should bedciiessible to masses. . . ." And: "Modernism in Western literature was deemed to be decadent. Because it was, among other things, subjective, introverted and introspective and displayed a fragmented vision of the world." The focus of a Marxist critic, therefore, was on the content, rather than form and literary ingenuity was not valued.

6.6 PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

Ever since the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud has, so to say, dominated the minds of literary critics in more ways than one. The gains from the study and development of psychology as discipline were readily applied to literature.

Literature was psychoanalysed for a variety of reasons. It allows for disconnected, syncopated structures and disparate apparently unconnected details in a narrative to be appreciated as part of pattern. Psychological criticism also allows us to read multiple interpretations of

a work of art simultaneously. Recent reinvigorated interest in Psychological criticism emerges from its appropriation by feminists and deconstructionists, for example, to reach, and connect literary texts, with political power, female sexuality and the current complex attitudes to language.

6.7 NEW LITERARY THEORY AND HAMLET

How have these developments changed our response to Shakespeare? Let us start with how the use of feminist political ideology and the resultant literary critical apparatus has influenced our reading of Shakespeare.

We must realize that when a literary ideology is the result of its having been borne out of a political or socio-political ferment, literary-critical responses are naturally conditioned by our appreciation of that ideology. The political agenda and the goal of the feminist ideology was - one has to unfortunately simplify such matters to be able to go any further at all - to fore-ground, to lay bare, what always lay hidden, the ' suppression of the female self. If the repression, the silence, and the denial of identity to a living human being by virtue of her gender have been the fate of women, the political ideology of the feminist movement was and is to expose, question and then compensate for the wrongs done to women. The literary splinter group of this -- movement seeks to examine literary texts with a view to performing a similar task: the exposition bf the repression, the silence, and the denial of the identity to a living human being by virtue of her gender, as found in literary texts. Women want be redefined and given true identities, not the identities men have chosen for them.

Men make women their points of reference. Women should have the freedom to define themselves as individuals rather than as symbols to suit men's preconceived notions of what women should stand for, become and contribute to society that is determined thus, by the needs and desires defined by men. Literary texts in this context were treated as instruments of perpetuating the patriarchal ideologies.

Notes

We have had a brief look at how the feminist ideology as part of the literary critical movement as it developed and where it drew its sustenance from. Now we can **turn** to see how a text like *Hamlet* gains or suffers at the hands of a feminist ideologically committed critic.

One would not think Shakespeare would earn high marks at the hands of feminist ideologues considering how totally conventional - patriarchal - his depiction of, and the resultant inherent attitude to women are. A number of major feminist scholar critics have sought to examine women characters in *Hamlet* and have insisted on drawing inferences that have frequently been at variance with what can be called commonly accepted readings of those characters. There are a number of questions that the feminist critics have focussed on to create a variant, politically correct reading of Gertrude, for example. Rebecca Smith points out that the two major accusations against Gertrude, that she is involved in the murder of her husband, and that she had an adulterous relationship with her present husband even as her first husband was alive can be easily examine in her favour. And yet, Gertrude has always suffered at the hands of a tradition in which men wielded I he pen that wrote their fate. Smith points out how the old kind *Hamlet's* Ghost makes no mention of

Gertrude's involvement in his murder. He accuses Claudius of taking his life but not Gertrude. One could argue that the ~he and his son to avenge his murder but at the same time leave his one-time beloved wife to her conscience and her ill conceived actions to the judgement of the fate. Again, Gertrude never admits to her guilt on account of her involvement in her husband's murder. When she reacts to *Hamlet's* aggression-

Such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of innocent love
And sets the blister there, make marriage vows
As false as dicers' oath - 0 such a deed . . . .
(III.IV.40-45)

--her reaction-

Ay me, what act
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

--Underscores her innocence rather than anything else - certainly not any admission

' Rebecca Smith goes on to examine the second question, the one regarding Gertrude's adulterous behaviour. The Old King Hamlet's ghost describes her as "...so lust.. ./will save itself in a celestial bed/And prey on garbage" (I. V.55-7) it would seem to imply that at least the Ghost considers her guilty of an extra-marital relationship. Even Bradley agrees with the ghost: "She did not merely marry a second time with indecent haste: she was false to her husband while he lived."

Bradley also goes on to argue: "This is surely the most natural interpretation of the words of the ghost ... coming as they do before his account of the murder."

(Shakespearean Tragedy)

Yet Smith would consider Gertrue totally innocent. All such reference to Gertrude's behaviour could refer to her over-hasty marriage rather to her having had an adulterous relationship with her present husband. All the biting innuendoes could be taken to mean that all those morally culpable actions took place after her second marriage. There is a sharp and pointed comparison made between her first and second marriage by the ghost. Also, seen through the eyes of Hamlet, whose father it is who is wronged, at least in the eyes of the son, she would be considered guilty even if she merely rejected her first husband by not mourning long enough for him ..

Hamlet has numerous references to inadequate mourning: Not enough tears are shed for Ophelia, for Polonius, certainly not for old king Hamlet: ". . .a beast that wants discourse of reason/Would have mourned much longer," (1.11.150-1) Hamlet regrets.

Smith insists that Hamlet's pain is at the speed with which she married his uncle, disowning his father's name and memory and rejecting the life and time that she spent as his wife and queen.

Lisa Jardine in her analysis of Gertrude's character maintains that Hamlet 's anger stems from not the immoral haste with which she marries, but the fact that the haste implies lust and it is this that led Gertrude to hastily embrace a man who then became an obstacle between Hamlet and his ambition. After Hamlet--if he were to remain childless it is now the first-born of Claudius and Gertrude who will inherit the crown. Gertrude then should be viewed in the light of a theme of the play-- certainly not one of the central themes of the play but rather on the relative periphery--

in which she is portrayed as the target of much anger and aggression, much of which is made to sound moral, self-righteous, and 'well-deserved." As you would notice, an attempt to view Gertude as a victim rather than a guilt ridden, lustful, murderous women can present itself as an alternative reading of the play in fully convincing and cogent terms.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give short note on Marxism.

Answer

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Q2. Write short analysis on Psychological Criticism.

Answer

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6.8 LET'S SUM UP

Similarly one can apply other critical approaches that we have briefly discussed above to the play to arrive at conclusions that are totally different from the ones we have studied so far. The post-colonial discourse, for instance, views Hamlet as a symbol of the colonial-imperial hegemony and how in a climate marked by new awareness, different cultures such as South Africa, for example, interpret Hamlet to suit their new aspirations, as we have discussed in Unit V. The Marxists, the structuralisms, the deconstruction devotees, admirers of Freud and Lacan and many more in-between, have give myriad ways of looking at Hamlet. And there is other approaches that open up new vistas of thought

and emotions leading to versions of Hamlet that are so different from each other as Hamlet is from Waiting for Go dot.

But does that matter, indeed? After all there is a sense in which Hamlet is no different from Waiting for Godot.

6.9 KEYWORDS

- **dirge** : a song or hymn of mourning as a memorial to a dead person
  With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
  With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
  In equal scale weighing delight and dole,--
- **Mirth:** great merriment
  With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
  With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
  In equal scale weighing delight and dole,--
- **Mottle**: mark with spots or blotches of different color
- **suspicious** : openly distrustful and unwilling to confide
- **Frailty:** the state of being weak in health or body Frailty, thy name is woman!
- **mourn** : feel sadness : To give these mourning duties to your father

6.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Why is Hamlet a renaissance man?
2. What sad events turned Hamlet into very unhappy young man?
3. What are adjectives that describe Hamlet's childhood friends?
4. How does Shakespeare use literary devices to portray Gertrude's relationship with Hamlet in Act 1 Scene 2?

6.11 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

The following critical works may be consulted in addition to the books and articles referred to in the body of the units.

- Bloom, Harold. Ed. Major Literary Characters: Hamlet, 1990.
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- *Prosser, Eleanor. Hamlet and Revenge,* 1967
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- *Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television,* 1994.
- *Thompson, Ann and John 0. Thompson. Shakespeare, Meaning and Metaphor,*

6.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check in Progress I

Answer 1. Check 6.4

Answer 2. Check 6.3

Check in Progress II

Answer 1. Check 6.5

Answer 2. Check 6.6

UNIT 7 INTERPRETATIONS

STRUCTURE

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After a careful reading of this unit you will be able to understand

- what ***Hamlet*** is about
- what it seeks to talk to us about
- how it is a revenge play and
- how it can be variously interpreted.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Once the text of a literary work has been established to our satisfaction--or we have, at least, decided to accept a certain version, pending final judgement--on the basis of the principles of authenticating a text, the more complex part of the critical endeavour begins to seize out mind and thought.

A work of art is an organic whole. It is one work. It has one voice and that voice must speak for the whole work. It must speak collectively for every part that makes up the whole that the work of `art` before us is. It is not the same thing as suggesting that a work of `art` must or can have only one meaning. Great books have a tendency to speak to each reader

in a different mood and meaning and impart a different significance. In fact, each reader finds himself responding to a different significance each time he reads a great work of art. But that one meaning must answer every question that that text must raise, and justify all that happens, for instance, in a play, in its every word, gesture and action. In other words, all interpretations proffered as meaning of a play must derive validity from the text of the play itself.

What we are ***not*** looking for is the most authentic meaning -how are we to arrive at its authenticity?--or the meaning that the author may have had in mind when he wrote-we have no access to the mind of William Shakespeare. One way of looking at this issue is to remember that once a work of art is written the author is merely a reader of this work; one more reader of this work. Maybe a principal, even ***the*** principal reader of this work, but merely a reader nonetheless. Once a text sees the light of the day-or the darkness of the print, if you like-it becomes an angle in the triangle with the author and a common reader or a professional scholar as the other two angles. The interaction between these three angles offers endless possibilities of intellectual pleasure and profit. But our ultimate focus is the work of art that is before us. The meaning that we are looking for is the one that satisfies a reader the most and explains in every way the complex entity that the work of art in question is.

There is thus a great deal of freedom for the professional student of literature to apply his mind and look at the text of the play in any way his personal predilection, sensitivity to life and letters and professional training lead him to. A work such as ***Hamlet*** with its endless diversity and richness is likely to provoke myriad responses compared to, say, an average play by minor playwright. Yet, one must contend that certain interpretations of the play might appear to do greater justice to the readers' expectations from the playwright; or even respond to the expectation of the times in which the play is being read, the mood, the pressures and knowledge that is brought to bear upon the play by a reader.

After such a heavily qualified caveat, how does one look at ***Hamlet?*** What is ***Hamlet*** about; what does it seek to talk to us about; what does it

mean-the meaning, the voice that will acquaint us most meaningfully and profitably with the heart and soul of the play?

7.2 HAMLET AS A REVENGE PLAY

Revenge is an important part of the plot structure of a large number of Renaissances tragedies. Thomas Kyd's (1 558-15-94) ***The Spanish Tragedy*** (published perhaps in 1589) was perhaps the first Elizabethan play in which revenge is the primary motivating force both for the protagonist as well as the plot. The tragic denouement of the play shows the murderers as well as the avengers alike being killed. Kyd introduced many elements in his play which became standard conventions for the revenge plays that followed: the ghost, intrigue, betrayal, a hesitant, unsure hero, and his inaction chiefly based on moral scruple, madness, and melancholia, the black dress, the reading of a book and philosophical musings and a gradual deterioration of the hero's moral stature which alienates the audience's sympathy for the hero. Many more plays followed Kyd's ***The Spanish Tragedy:*** John Marston's ***Antonio's Revenge,*** Tourner's ***The Revenger's Tragedy,*** Chapmarl's ***The Revenge of Bussy D 'Ambois*** and John Fletcher's ***Valentinian*** are some of the plays that belong to the literary tradition that Kyd appears to have initiated. Marlowe's ***Jew of Malta*** and Shakespeare's ***Titus Andronicus*** were great crowd pullers. A major influence on the development of the Elizabethan revenge play was that of Seneca, the Roman dramatist and essayist who died in A.D. 65. He was translated in the sixteenth century and was much admired for his revenge tragedies that had many of the features that Kyd made popul? through his play, ***The Spanish Tragedy.*** Other sources of influence include Italian ***nouvelle*** and the works of writers such as Interpretations

Hamlet Even though revenge-focused literature during the Renaissance was very popular, the general attitude to revenge was one of disapproval, even revulsion. Christian ethics disapproved vengeance as personal principle --

Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Thou God, to whom vengeanth belongeth, show thyself.

Be ye angry and sin not: let no the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. ***St Paul***

Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.

-- and the law of the land made personal revenge anti-social and punishable. The moral preachers and church fathers characterise it as immoral and constantly spoke against it from the pulpit. Much debate was carried out in public to condemn revenge as morally and legally totally indefensible. Revenge fostered anti-social behaviour, made men self-centred as they set themselves up as judges of their own cause, leading to an exaggerated rather than a fair view of the injuries suffered, and discourages forgiveness and a charitable temper. Yet it is clear that there was understanding shown-if full approval was not accorded--for certain kinds of acts of revenge. The Elizabethans believed, despite legal and religious disapproval, that personal honour had to be defended. Murder had to be avenged. A son had a sacred duty to avenge the murder of his father. The sixteenth century civil law could deny the heir of a murdered father his inheritance unless he avenged the unnatural death of the victim. For the Elizabethans, there existed a well known work which defined the properties for honourable revenge: The ***Courtiers Academie*** by Count Remei which became available in an English translation around 1598. Francis Bacon wrote in 1625:

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature run to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of the wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior. . . .

The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs for which there is no law to remedy, but then let a man take heed the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; or else a man's enemy is still beforehand, and it is two for one. Some when they take revenge, are desirous the party should know whence it cometh. This is the most generous. For the delight seemeth to be not so much in doing the hurt as in making the party repent. . . .

This is certain, that a man that studies the revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well. Public revenges for the most part are fortunate, as that for the death of Caesar. But in private

revenges it is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches, who, as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate.

The public sentiment thus acknowledged the official and religious disapproval of the acts of revenge but showed understanding for the avenger's passion. It is against this background that we should attempt to appreciate Shakespeare's

Hamlet.

Revenge as an aspect of the plot structure of the plays appears in many plays of Shakespeare. It appears in varying degrees of importance in ***Richard*** 11 as well as in ***Tempest.*** As a minor motif it appears several other plays such as ***Othello, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar*** and ***Richard III. Hamlet*** it is which embodies Shakespeare's most significant handling of the revenge theme.

Interpretations

Hamlet has not one but four revenge plots. Hamlet commits himself to avenge his father's death at the hands of Claudius, his uncle, who also marries his mother and usurps the throne of Denmark. Another son, Laertes, vows to take revenge for the killing of his father by Hamlet. Fortinbras invades the kingdom of Ilenrnark to avenge his father's death at the hands of old King Hamlet. And there is yet another son who wows "revenge" in ***Hamlet:*** Pyrrhus slaughters Priam, whose son had killed Pyrrhus's father.

A typical structure of a revenge play can be viewed in five parts. The first part of the structure of a revenge play was an "expositiony' usually by a ghost but in some plays exposition is carried out by other characters, even victims in the moments of their death. The exposition is followed by "anticipation" in which an elaborate plan for carrying out the revenge is prepared. A central and most dramatic part of the structure of the revenge play used to be the "confrontation" in which the avenger and the intended victim come face to face, so to say, though some time the confrontation takes a different form as it does in ***Hamlet*** in the prayer scene. "Delay" is a major

structural device which allows the revenge to deliberately keep postponing taking action on account of moral scruples, a feeling of inadequacy to the intended task that lies ahead of him, or for other reasons. The "fulfilment" or "completion" of revenge takes the form

normally in which both the victim and the avenger me destroyed along many other innocent bystanders.

Hamlet opens with the royal palace that are terrified by the appearance of the ghost who would not speak to them. Nor will the ghost confide the reason for his appearance in Horatio who joins the guards on the third night. But he speaks to Hamlet:

List, list, 0 list!

If thou didst ever thy dear father love-- . . .

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. . . .

1 Murder most foul, as in the best it is,

1 But this most foul, strange and unnatural. . . .

'I *0,*h horrible! 0, horrible! Most horrible! If thou hast nature in thee bears it not,

I Let not the royal bed of ~enmkbke ll.

Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me.

[Act 1, SC.V1,1 . 24, 26,27-8, 80-83 and **911**

Hamlet is horrified to learn that the murderer is Claudius who had seduced his wife and poured poison in his ears as he slept. Hamlet promises to carry out his obligation as a son and avenge his father's death. But many weeks pass and no action is taken. Hamlet suspects that the ghost may have been an evil spirit. But chiefly he does not relish the role of an avenger. He needs to make sure that the ghost did give him facts. To ascertain the truth he feigns madness which confounds his enemies but brings him no closer to the certainty of truth.

A group of actors comes to castle and Hamlet decides to have them act out a tragedy which contains an incident much like the murder of Old King Hamlet: Hamlet hopes to determine Claudius's guilt by the latter's reaction to the play. If he reacts guiltily, the ghost was not an evil spirit. Claudius suspects the truth is out and plans to send Hamlet to England. When the players present the enactment of the murder of the Old King aml let,' Claudius leaves the royal court in terror of retribution at the hands of

He orders Rosencrantz and Guilderstern to take ***Hamlet*** to England and plans to have him killed.

Alone, Claudius tries to pray:

0, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven,
It had the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder! Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will.
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. . . .
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash [this cursed hand] white as snow? . . .
0 bosom black as death!
0 limed soul, that struggling to be free,
Art more engaged; . . .
My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without never to heaven go.
[Act 111, sc. iii, 11. 36-43; 45-46; 67-69; 97-98.]
Hamlet finds Claudius "a-praying"-
And now I'll don't. . . .
. . . and am I then revenged
To take him in the purging of his soul
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
[Act 111, sc. iii, 11. 74; 84-86]
--and decides not to avenge his father's murder.

On the one hand Hamlet vacillates between his belief that the ghost was actually his father's spirit and had just cause to approach his son, and his apprehension that it was an evil spirit and meant to cause trouble. Hamlet's ambivalent thinking reflects the confused thinking of his times. Unlike the other pagan heroes of the Icelandic sagas Hamlet is burdened with the value-system of his faith-the Protestants had no faith in ghosts which came to haunt the earth on account of their unfulfilled desires.

What makes Shakespeare's ***Hamlet*** a different and superior work is not its faithful adherence to the conventions of revenge plays which dominated Elizabethan stage and drew admiring crowds for many decades in the Elizabethan age. Even though ***Hamlet*** is a revenge play, the focus of the play is on higher principles of life and living. Hamlet is shocked as much by his father's murder as by his mother's unfeeling

haste with which she marries another man. He finds Ophelia collaborating with her father against him totally repugnant. Polonius's lack of loyalty to the old

King Hamlet, his friends' attempt to allow themselves to be used by the King for his own nefarious purposes are acts which violate the social laws, moral order and religious sanctity. Shakespeare endows Hamlet with finer a characteristic which raises him above level of the stock protagonist of the revenge play. Hamlet's sensitivity to the values of personal relationships is another characteristic that enriches his character. The crudity of violence gives place to intellectual reflection that dominates a major part of the play.

The psychological emphasis placed upon plays characters makes it a finer work of art than any other revenge play produced during the Elizabethan chromatic tradition.

Hamlet procrastinates; but he thinks. He finds himself unable to stoop to revenge; but he knows and ruminates upon myriad issues that are issues of pivotal significance to man's life. Above all the great poetic richness of the play raises it to a higher plane of enriched creativity and distances it away from the average revenge play and their insistent focus on blood, violence and amoral and villainous unthinking protagonists.

But there are other view-points. There are readers of the play who consider any attempt to read ***Hamlet*** as a tale of vengeance a great disservice to the memory of the great poet and a denigration of the play. In their recent book, ***Hamlet,*** Thompson and

Taylor maintain that the treatment of the play by scholars such as John Dover Wilson, Eleanor Prosser and Fredson Bowers, among others, who focus on the revenge theme their respective studies of the play. Such studies with their focus on the revenge theme, Thompson and Taylor remark:

. . . while illuminating many aspects of the play, set it **it1** a relatively remote historical and literary context by putting stress on such things as the ethics of revenge and the Elizabethan belief in ghosts. Thus ***Hamlet*** may have begun to seem in the mid-twentieth century primitive and quaint, an appropriate subject for academic and antiquarian investigation but not very relevant to the modem world. . . .

But the study of the revenge theme in a Shakespearean play has some justification:

The Elizabethan revenge play has a long generic tradition. Moreover, revenge had and continues to have; one might say a social and psychological reality. Own sense of legal subtleties,, Francis Bacon notwithstanding, recognises consolatory justice as a necessary part of a civilised society.

Despite the overwhelming support that the play extends to those who wish to read ***Hamlet*** as written in the Elizabethan tradition of revenge theatre, the play can be read in many more ways. There is a sense in which ***Hamlet*** is less of a revenge play than a play about revenge. Shakespeare subjects the human compulsion to seek revenge under a philosophical enquiry to show all facets of this human compulsion and its impact on man. As we have already seen, Francis Bacon maintains: This is certain, that a man that studies the revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well. Public revenges for the most part are fortunate, as that for the death of Caesar. But in private revenges it is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches, who, as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate.

The desire for revenge and its influence on an avenger find an elaborate analytic expression in the narrative of the play. But ***Hamlet*** can be studied many more vastly different ways.

7.3 THEATRE AS A THEME IN HAMLET

In no other play does Shakespeare subject to intense and detailed scrutiny the art of theatre itself. Shakespeare's belief in the importance of theatre led him to focus on theatre as one of the social institutions. He universalises the concept of character as

Interpretations

Hamlet role and stage as universe by showing all of life in Elsinore as play-acting. So much so that the submerged theatre within the play, as if, takes over and, we have in Hamlet, reality looking likes theatrical activity. Life in Elsinore becomes full of theatrical activity. Plays are staged, role-playing is resorted to, and false, metaphorical, as well as

real, masks are put on-as Claudius does--to deceive others. The power of art to change the world is put under a question mark. Shakespeare apparently makes enormous claims behalf of the craft that he practices. But in the end his scepticism regarding theatre as an infallible weapon to perceive and discover the truth prevails.

Characters are actors in the hands of forces which pull their strings and that are how the meaning of life is achieved.

Shakespeare is expansive with fulsome praise when he dwells upon actors: a magnanimous tongue it is that he puts into the mouth of Polonius when Shakespeare seeks to compliment them:

The best actors in the world, either of tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, historical-pastoral, tragically-historical, **tragically-comical-historical-pastoral,** scene undividable or poem unlimited. . . what a treasure hadst thou!

He gives them most generous praise when he wants pay them a tribute:

They are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live. A reference in Hamlet to a group of boy-players who had been enjoying a great deal of success in London provokes an outburst (not of anxiety about a threatened livelihood) but of professional jealousy:

Rosencrantz. but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, 11 that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyran-Ilnically clapped for't: these are now the fashion, and so It battled the common stages (so they call them) that **many** 11 wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither. [III. ii. 342-471

Hamlet. . . . What are they children? Who maintains 'ern?// . : . Will they pursue the quality no ***N*** longer than they can sing? DII. ii. 348-501 Bad acting is strongly castigated:

O there be plays that I have seen play-and heard others praise, and that highly-not to speak of profanely, that neither having thy accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor **,an,** have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had men. And not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably. [III. ii. 28-34]

Among any audience there are "the judicious" as well as "the unskilful" and "barren" theatre-goers: Hamlet would want actors to never play to the gallery but only to judicious, discriminating audience.

After Hamlet hears one of the actors deliver a speech, he reflects:

Is it not monstrous that this player here
But in fiction, in a dream of passion;
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working his entire visage waned
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,

Interpretations

A broken voice . . .
. . . and all for nothing! . . .
. . What he would do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears.
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears; . . .

The play within the play is the central action of the play and is the key to the very mystery of the plot. "The play is the thing," says Hamlet, "wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king." And he succeeds. Simulation, dissimulation, acting, role-. Playing are the weapons that he resorts to throughout the play to achieve his Hamlet is full of references to the language of theatre. Words like "play," "perform," "applaud," "prologue," "part," etc. The ppyers are "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time," and the purpose of the theatrical art is at the first, and now, was and is, to hold as t'were, the *//* mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, *I1* scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the *//* time his form and pressure. . . . [III. ii. 21-24.]

The play contains numerous private jokes, as if, shared between the actors of the play, such as the comment in act I11 by the actor playing Polonius: "I did enact Julius Caesar"; or in act 11, " . . . thy face is valence since I saw thee last . . . Pray God your voice . . . be not cracked." 'All the characters in the play have an obsessive compulsion to act a role. Frequently, characters seek to "By indirections find directions

out," [II. i. 66:(and role-playing is the method used. In the play, no opportunity is missed to exploit the potential of a theatrical situation: eight deaths, high-pitched rhetorical speeches, the play-within play, the fencing match, the grave-yard scene, the duel between Laertes and Hamlet and numerous rhetorical speeches including Hamlet's own soliloquies: The humanity's histrionic predilection has never before or since and nowhere else beenput on show in such exciting terms.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short note on Hamlet as a Revenge Play.

Answer

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Q2. Write short analysis on Hamlet as Theater Play.

Answer

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7.4 HAMLET AS A TRAGEDY

As we have remarked earlier, Hamlet rises above the average revenge play and answers to subtler demands of a great tragedy. In the end Hamlet turns out to be a great tragedy rather a mere revenge play.

In his Poetics, Aristotle defines tragedy as: The imitation of action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a Hamlet narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.

Later he defines the tragic hero: There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose

misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, The perfect Plot, accordingly, must have a single, and not (as some tell us) a double issue; the change in the hero's fortune must be not from misery to happiness but on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part.

Hamlet responds to the definition of an Arhtotelian tragedy in more ways than one though there are elements which are typically Shakespearean. In a Shakespearean tragedy the accent is on human responsibility rather on supernatural intervention, chance, fate or any other extra-human factor. The fate, destiny, the "written," too, plays a role but in the ultimate analysis it is the protagonist's own actions that bring about his tragic fall. In Hamlet the extra-human agency takes the form of the Ghost but the tragic disaster occurs on account of Hamlet's acts of commission or omission. Hamlet 's tragic flaw that brings about the tragic end to the total human endeavour is his failure to act; or act fast enough; or act as a result of premeditation and reflection rather impulsive aggression. As Coleridge remarked:

Hamlet's character is the prevalence of the abstracting and generalizing habit over the practical, He does not want courage, skill, will or opportunity, but every incident sets him thinking, and it is curious and at the same time strictly natural that Hamlet, who all the play seems reason itself, should be impelled at last by mere accident to effect his object. I have a smack of Hamlet, if I may say so. . . . [from Table Talk, 18271

A thinking Hamlet with his compulsive reflective habit remained a skidded view of Hamlet for a long time in the history of Hamlet criticism. That his failure to act is not the result of any other factor is easy to establish. That he is not a coward the play gives us many opportunities to establish. He is a thinking man, given to retrospection and self-analysis. That he hesitates and is often irresolute is provable, too. But what he is not is a coward, incapable of decisive action. His tragic flaw, as Coleridge saw it, is that he thinks too much.

7.5 HAMILET AS A RELIGIOUS PLAY

The Christian element so pre dominates the play that Hamlet comes across as concerning itself with the theological questions of sin, damnation and salvation.

Elizabethans had an obsessive concern with after-life and believed in heaven, hell and purgatory. Hamlet is obsessed with the thoughts of after-life--

O, th at this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. . . . [I. ii.129-321

--and longs for the peace that the end of life alone can bring, regretting that suicide is forbidden. In his famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," he reflects upon then uncertainty of what follows death:

To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there is the rub.
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come '
When we have shuffled of this mortal coil.
Must give us pause. . .
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills that we have
Than fly to others we know not of?

The ghost describes his experience of the purgatory where he had to go as he died without an opportunity to confess his sins. Ophelia is denied a Christian burial as she was considered to have committed suicide. The question whether the ghost is "a spirit of health, or goblin damned" resounds through the whole play. Hamlet's refusal to take advantage of the opportunity to avenge his father's death when he comes upon Claudius in prayer, is the result of his belief in sin and salvation.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give short note on Hamlet as a Religious Play.

Answer

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Q2. Write short analysis on Hamlet as tragedy.

Answer

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7.6 LET'S SUM UP

There other themes and other foci with reference to which. too. ***Hamlet*** can be studied for a meaningfully enriched understanding of the text. ***Hamlet*** has been treated as a study in melancholia and madness. as a study in ambition and ~political manipulation, as a philosophical enquiry into a number of issues that feature in the ' writings of Montaigne, or even as a study in the art of characterisation.

7.7 KEYWORDS

1. **jocund :** full of or showing high-spirited merriment
2. **obsequious :** attempting to win favor from influential people by flattery
3. **commendable :** worthy of high praise
4. **obstinate :** marked by tenacious unwillingness to yield
5. **impious :**lacking piety or reverence for a god

7.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Do you think that the primary focus of the play's thematic burden lies on interpreting ***Hamlet*** as a revenge play?

2. Comment on the nature and significance of the ethics of revenge in ***Hamlet.***

3. How do various characters in the play respond to the issue of revenge?

4. How does the preponderance of the metaphors of theatre, acting, stage etc. in

Hamlet condition our response to the play?

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7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK IN PROGRESS

Check in Progress I

Answer 1. Check 7.2

Answer 2. Check 7.3

Check in Progress II

Answer 1. Check 7.5

Answer 2. Check 7.4