Dear students, I hope all of you are in good health and doing well with your studies. I have provided you suffficient study materials on Blake. It will be enough for you to prepare notes or to prepare for the final exam. Now, I will move on to other texts. With 2nd semester I will be doing Congreve's The way of the world (Paper - 201) and with the 2nd year English Hons. I will be doing Goldsmith's She stoops to conquer. As both are plays, I thought to provide you documents on Drama and Comedy. Please study these before you begin your study of the plays. Thank you.

Drama : Drama is the form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of characters, perform the indicated actions and utter the written dialogues. The common alternative name for a dramatic composition is **'Play'**. Although mainly written for performing on stage, there is an exception of it. A **Closet Drama** is written in dramatic form, with dialogue, indicated settings, and stage directions, but is intended by the author to be read rather than to be performed. Examples of this kind of drama are – Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671), Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), Byron's *Manfred*(1817).

There are important components of drama. Those are –

1. **Act :**An act is a major division in the action of a play. In England, this division was introduced by Elizabethan dramatists, who imitated ancient Roman plays by structuring the action into five acts. Late in the 19th century, a number of writers followed the examples of Chekhov and Ibsen by constructing plays in four acts. In the 20th century, the most common form for traditional non – musical dramas has been threeacts.

2. **Scene :**Scene is a division of the act. Acts are often subdivided into scenes. Scenes usually consist of units of action in which there is no change of place or break in the continuity oftime.

3. **Characters :**Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work. It is the characters who utter dialogues in a dramatic composition, perform the indicated actions and move forward the plot. Characters as a whole in a drama is called 'Dramatis Personae'. A character may remain essentially stable or unchanged in outlook and disposition from beginning to end of a work, or may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual process of development or as the result of acrisis.

4. **Setting :**The overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time and social circumstances in which its action occurs. The setting of a single episode or scene within the work is the particular physical location in which it takes place. The overall setting of *Macbeth*, for example, is medieval Scotland, and the setting for the particular scene in which *Macbeth* comes upon the witches is a blastedhealth.

5. **Plot :**The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, arranged in a way to achieve particular artistic and emotional effects. Plot and characters are interdependent concepts. Plot has to be distinguished from 'story'. A story is a bare synopsis of the temporal order of what happens- a mere sequence of events in time. When we specify how one thing is related to another thing by causes and motivations and in what ways all these matters are rendered, ordered and organised so as to

achieve their particular effects, it is only then a synopsis begins to be adequate to theplot.

There are a great variety of plot forms. For example, some plots are designed to achieve tragic effects, and others to achieve the effects of comedy, romance, satire, or of some other genre.

6. **Protagonist :**The chief character in a plot, on whom our interest centres, is called the Protagonist(or alternatively, the hero orheroine).

7. **Antagonist**: The chief opponent of the protagonist in the plot is called the Antagonist (or alternativelyvillain).

8. **Conflict :**A drama has to have '**Conflict'** in it. The relation between the protagonist and the antagonist is one of conflict. In addition to the conflict between individuals, there may be the conflict of a protagonist against fate, or against the circumstances that stand between him and a goal he has set himself.

9. **Intrigue :**If a character initiates a scheme which depends for its success on the ignorance or gullibility of the person or persons against whom it is directed, it is called an'**Intrigue'**.

10. **Freytag's Pyramid :**The German critic Gustav Freytag, in his *Technique of the Drama* (1863) introduced an analysis of plot that is known as **Freytag's Pyramid.** He described the typical plot of a five-act play as a pyramidal shape, consisting of a **Rising Action, Climax,** and **Falling Action.** The opening scene is said to be as the **Exposition**. The final scene is called the **Catastrophe** or **Denouement**. There is a little difference between catastrophe and denouement. Catastrophe is usually applied to tragedy only, whereas denouement refers the ending of both tragedy and comedy. A frequently used alternative term for the outcome of a plot is the**Resolution**.

comedy: In the most common literary application, a comedy is a fictional work in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us: the characters and their discomfitures engage our pleasurable attention rather than our profound concern, we are made to feel confident that no great disaster will occur, and usually the action turns out happily for the chief characters. The term "comedy" is customarily applied only to plays for the stage or to motion pictures; it should be noted, however, that the comic form, as just defined, also occurs in prose fiction and narrative poetry.

Within the very broad spectrum of dramatic comedy, the following types are frequently distinguished:

1. **Romantic comedy** was developed by Elizabethan dramatists on the model of contemporary *prose romances* such as Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), the source of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599). Such comedy represents a love affair that involves a beautiful and engaging heroine (sometimes disguised as a man); the course of this love does not run smooth, yet overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union. Many of the boy-meets-girl plots of later writers are instances of romantic comedy, as are many motion pictures, from *The Philadelphia Story* to *Sleepless in Seattle*. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye points out that some of Shakespeare's romantic comedies manifest a movement from the normal world of conflict and trouble into "the green world" —the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, or the fairy-haunted wood of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—in which the problems and injustices of the ordinary world are dissolved, enemies reconciled, and true lovers united. Frye regards that phenomenon (together with other aspects of these comedies, such as their conclusion in the social ritual of a wedding, a feast, or a dance) as evidence that comic plots derive from primitive myths and rituals that celebrated the victory of spring over winter. (See *archetypal criticism*.) Linda Bamber's *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in*

Shakespeare (1982) undertakes to account for the fact that in Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the women are often superior to the men, while in his tragedies he "creates such nightmare female figures as Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, and Volumnia." (See *gender criticism*.)

2. **Satiric comedy** ridicules political policies or philosophical doctrines, or else attacks deviations from the accepted social order by making ridiculous the violators of its standards of morals or manners. (See *satire*.) The early master of satiric comedy was the Greek Aristophanes, c. 450–c. 385 BC, whose plays mocked political, philosophical, and literary matters of his age. Shakespeare's contemporary, Ben Jonson, wrote satiric or (as it is sometimes called) "corrective comedy." In his *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, for example, the greed and ingenuity of one or more intelligent but rascally swindlers, and the equal greed but stupid gullibility of their victims, are made grotesquely or repulsively ludicrous rather than lightly amusing.

3. The **comedy of manners** originated in the **New Comedy** of the Greek Menander, c. 342–292 BC (as distinguished from the **Old Comedy** represented by Aristophanes, c. 450–c. 385 BC) and was developed by the Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence in the third and second centuries BC. Their plays dealt with the vicissitudes of young lovers and included what became the *stock characters* of much later comedy, such as the clever servant, old and stodgy parents, and the wealthy rival. The English comedy of manners was early exemplified by Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, and was given a high polish in **Restoration comedy (1660–1700).** The Restoration form owes much to the brilliant dramas of the French writer Molière, 1622–73. It deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in a sophisticated upper-class society, and relies for comic effect in large part on the wit and sparkle of the dialogue—often in the form of *repartee*, a witty conversational give-and-take which constitutes a kind of verbal fencing match—as well as on the violations of social standards and decorum by wouldbe wits, jealous husbands, conniving rivals, and foppish dandies. Excellent examples are William Congreve's *The Way of the World* and William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. (See *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. Deborah Payne Fisk, 2000.) A middle-class reaction against what had come to be considered the immorality of situation and indecency of dialogue in the courtly Restoration comedy resulted in the *sentimental comedy* of the eighteenth century. In the latter part of the century, however, Oliver Goldsmith (*She Stoops to Conquer*) and his contemporary Richard Brinsley Sheridan (*The Rivals* and *A School for Scandal*) revived the wit and gaiety, while deleting the indecency, of Restoration comedy. The comedy of manners lapsed in the early nineteenth century, but was revived by many skillful dramatists, from A. W. Pinero and Oscar Wilde (*The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895), through George Bernard Shaw and Noel Coward, to Neil Simon, Alan Ayckbourn, Wendy Wasserstein, and other recent and contemporary writers. Many of these comedies have also been adapted for the cinema. See David L. Hirst, *Comedy of Manners* (1979).

4. **Farce** is a type of comedy designed to provoke the audience to simple, hearty laughter—"belly laughs," in the parlance of the theater. To do so it commonly employs highly exaggerated or caricatured types of characters, puts them into improbable and ludicrous situations, and often makes free use of sexual mixups, broad verbal humor, and physical bustle and horseplay. Farce was a component in the comic episodes in medieval *miracle plays*, such as the Wakefield plays *Noah* and the *Second Shepherd's Play*, and constituted the matter of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* in the Renaissance. In the English drama that has best stood the test of time, farce is usually an episode in a more complex form of comedy—examples are the knockabout scenes in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The plays of the French playwright Georges Feydeau (1862–1921), relying in great part on sexual humor and innuendo, are true farce throughout, as is Brandon Thomas' *Charley's Aunt*, an American play

of 1892 which has often been revived, and also some of the current plays of Tom Stoppard. Many of the movies by such comedians as Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, W. C. Fields, the Marx brothers, and Woody Allen are excellent farce, as are the Monty Python films and television episodes. Farce is often employed in single scenes of musical revues, and is the standard fare of television "situation comedies." It should be noted that the term "farce," or sometimes "farce comedy," is applied also to plays—a supreme example is Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) —in which exaggerated character-types find themselves in ludicrous situations in the course of an improbable plot, but which achieve their comic effects not by broad humor and bustling action, but by the sustained brilliance and wit of the dialogue. Farce is also a frequent comic tactic in the theater of the *absurd*. Refer to Robert Metcalf Smith and H. G. Rhoads, eds., *Types of Farce Comedy* (1928); Leo Hughes, *A Century of English Farce* (1956); and for the history of farce and low comedy from the Greeks to the present, Anthony Caputi, *Buffo: The Genius of Vulgar Comedy* (1978), and Albert Bermel, *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen* (1990).

A distinction is often made between high and low comedy. **High comedy,** as described by George Meredith in the classic essay *The Idea of Comedy* (1877), evokes "intellectual laughter" —thoughtful laughter from spectators who remain emotionally detached from the action—at the spectacle of folly, pretentiousness, and incongruity in human behavior. Meredith finds its highest form within the comedy of manners, in the combats of wit (sometimes identified now as the "love duels") between such intelligent, highly verbal, and well-matched lovers as Benedick and Beatrice in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598–99) and Mirabell and Millamant in Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700). **Low comedy,** at the other extreme, has little or no intellectual appeal, but undertakes to arouse laughter by jokes, or "gags," and by slapstick humor and boisterous or clownish physical activity; it is, therefore, one of the common components of farce.

See also *comedy of humours, tragicomedy,* and *wit, humor, and the comic.* On comedy and its varieties: G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (1952); Elder Olson, *The Theory of Comedy* (1968); Allan Rodway, *English Comedy* (1975). On the relation of comedy to myth and ritual: Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), pp. 163–86; C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959). On comedy in cinema and television: Horace Newcomb, *Television: The Most Popular Art* (1974), chapter 2; Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (1990). There is a large collection of resources on the web: "Introduction to Greek and Roman Comedy," at http: //depthome. brooklyn. cuny. edu/classics/dunkle/comedy/index. htm.

comedy of humours: A type of comedy developed by Ben Jonson, the *Elizabethan* playwright, based on the ancient physiological theory of the "four humours" that was still current in Jonson's time. The **humours** were held to be the four primary fluids—blood, phlegm, choler (or yellow bile), and melancholy (or black bile)—whose "temperament" (mixture) was held to determine both a person's physical condition and type of character. An imbalance of one or another humour in a temperament was said to produce four kinds of disposition, whose names have survived the underlying theory: sanguine (from the Latin "sanguis," blood), phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic. In Jonson's comedy of humours each of the major characters has a preponderant humour that gives him a characteristic distortion or eccentricity of disposition. Jonson expounds his theory in the "Induction" to his play *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and exemplifies the mode in his later comedies; often he identifies the ruling disposition of a **humours character** by his or her name: "Zeal-of-the-land Busy," "Dame Purecraft," "Wellbred." The Jonsonian type of humours character appears in plays by other Elizabethans, and remained influential in the *comedies of manners* by William

Wycherley, Sir George Etheredge, William Congreve, and other dramatists of the English Restoration, 1660–1700.