

CSCW7009: APPROACHES TO CREATIVE WRITING

WEEK 3: CHARACTERISATION IN FICTION

A) Characterisation in Fiction: development and precursors

Literature as reflection or illumination of life.

1. Greek drama – masks¹ and the problems of the human

It is important to understand that drama began in the Greek world as a form of religious ritual; and although drama in classical Athens became a great day out and ripping good entertainment, especially if there was a lot of blood and gore, its religious character was never really lost on the audience. Hence, the drama works out many of the characteristics all religious ritual works out: explaining the relation of the human to the divine, of the human to the material world, of explaining violence and its origins, and attempting to control the irrational and the material worlds.
<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GREECE/DRAMA.HTM>

2. Everyman in the medieval miracle play – very simple characters played by local people all illustrating religious questions, stories from the Bible etc. (Think of today's popular cinema – whether Hollywood or Bollywood - not *how or why* but *what*)

3. Renaissance drama

See progression from the morality play. Temptation seen as external in *Faustus*

Enter the Angell and Spirit.

Good A. O Faustus, lay that damned booke aside,
And gaze not on it least it tempt thy soule,
And heape Gods heauy wrath vpon thy head.
Reade, reade the Scriptures: that is blasphemy.

Bad A. Go forward Faustus in that famous Art
Wherein all natures treasure is contain'd:
Be thou on earth as Ioue is in the skye,
Lord and Commander of these elements:

Exeunt An.

Faust. How am I glutt with conceipt of this?
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?
Resolue me of all ambiguities?

¹ The Greek term for mask is persona and was a significant element in the worship of Dionysus at Athens, likely used in ceremonial rites and celebrations. ... No physical evidence remains available to us, as the masks were made of organic materials and not considered permanent objects, ultimately being dedicated to the altar of Dionysus after performances. Nevertheless, the mask is known to have been used since the time of Aeschylus and considered to be one of the iconic conventions of classical Greek theatre

Mask functions: In a large open-air theatre, like the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens, the classical masks were able to bring the characters' face closer to the audience, especially since they had intensely over-exaggerated facial features and expressions They enabled an actor to appear and reappear in several different roles, thus preventing the audience from identifying the actor to one specific character. Their variations help the audience to distinguish sex, age, and social status, in addition to revealing a change in a particular character's appearance, ie. Oedipus after blinding himself

4. Internalisation of conflict in *Hamlet*

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 arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's
contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

5. Introduction to social world: blurring of good and bad – the conflict shifts to the difference between the way a character presents him/herself to the world (as mask) and the internal reality: *Richard III*

ACT I SCENE I. London. A street.

Enter GLOUCESTER, solus

GLOUCESTER

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious
wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
And now, instead of mounting barded steeds
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's
majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity:
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determin'd to prove a villain

And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other:
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
About a prophecy, which says that 'G'
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here
Clarence comes.

Enter CLARENCE, guarded & BRAKENBURY

Brother, good day; what means this armed guard
That waits upon your grace?

CLARENCE

His majesty
Tendering my person's safety, hath appointed
This conduct to convey me to the Tower.

GLOUCESTER

Upon what cause?

CLARENCE

Because my name is George.

GLOUCESTER

Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours;
He should, for that, commit your godfathers:
O, belike his majesty hath some intent
That you shall be new-christen'd in the Tower.
But what's the matter, Clarence? may I know?

CLARENCE

Yea, Richard, when I know; for I protest
As yet I do not: but, as I can learn,
He hearkens after prophecies and dreams;

And from the cross-row plucks the letter G.
And says a wizard told him that by G
His issue disinherited should be;
And, for my name of George begins with G,
It follows in his thought that I am he.
These, as I learn, and such like toys as these
Have moved his highness to commit me now.

GLOUCESTER

Why, this it is, when men are ruled by women:
'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower:
My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
That tempers him to this extremity.
Was it not she and that good man of worship,
Anthony Woodville, her brother there,
That made him send Lord Hastings to the
Tower,
From whence this present day he is deliver'd?
We are not safe, Clarence; we are not safe.

CLARENCE

By heaven, I think there's no man is secure
But the queen's kindred and night-walking
heralds
That trudge betwixt the king and Mistress Shore.
Heard ye not what an humble suppliant
Lord Hastings was to her for his delivery?

GLOUCESTER

Humbly complaining to her deity
Got my lord chamberlain his liberty.
I'll tell you what; I think it is our way,
If we will keep in favour with the king,
To be her men and wear her livery:
The jealous o'erworn widow and herself,
Since that our brother dubb'd them
gentlewomen.
Are mighty gossips in this monarchy.

BRAKENBURY

I beseech your graces both to pardon me;
His majesty hath straitly given in charge
That no man shall have private conference,
Of what degree soever, with his brother.

GLOUCESTER

Even so; an't please your worship, Brakenbury,
You may partake of any thing we say:
We speak no treason, man: we say the king
Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous;

We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing
tongue;
And that the queen's kindred are made gentle-
folks:
How say you sir? Can you deny all this?

BRAKENBURY

With this, my lord, myself have nought to do.

GLOUCESTER

Naught to do with mistress Shore! I tell thee,
fellow,
He that doth naught with her, excepting one,
Were best he do it secretly, alone.

BRAKENBURY

What one, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

Her husband, knave: wouldst thou betray me?

BRAKENBURY

I beseech your grace to pardon me, and withal
Forbear your conference with the noble duke.

CLARENCE

We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.

GLOUCESTER

We are the queen's abjects, and must obey.
Brother, farewell: I will unto the king;
And whatsoever you will employ me in,
Were it to call King Edward's widow sister,
I will perform it to enfranchise you.
Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
Touches me deeper than you can imagine.

CLARENCE

I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

GLOUCESTER

Well, your imprisonment shall not be long;
Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE

I must perforce. Farewell.

Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and Guard

GLOUCESTER

Go, tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return.
Simple, plain Clarence! I do love thee so,
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
If heaven will take the present at our hands

6. Social interaction & social construction in *The Way of the World* (1700)

Act 2; Sc V: MRS. FAINALL, MIRABELL, MILLAMANT, WITWOUD, MINCING.

MRS. FAIN But, dear Millamant, why were you so long?

MILLA Long! Lord, have I not made violent haste? I have asked every living thing I met for you; I have enquired after you, as after a new fashion.

WIT Madam, truce with your similitudes.--No, you met her husband, and did not ask him for her.

MIRA By your leave, Witwoud, that were like enquiring after an old fashion to ask a husband for his wife.

WIT Hum, a hit, a hit, a palpable hit; I confess it.

MRS. FAIN You were dressed before I came abroad.

MILLA Ay, that's true. Oh, but then I had--Mincing, what had I? Why was I so long?

MINC O mem, your laship stayed to peruse a packet of letters.

MILLA Oh, ay, letters--I had letters--I am persecuted with letters--I hate letters. Nobody knows how to write letters; and yet one has 'em, one does not know why. They serve one to pin up one's hair.

WIT Is that the way? Pray, madam, do you pin up your hair with all your letters? I find I must keep copies.

MILLA Only with those in verse, Mr. Witwoud. I never pin up my hair with prose. I think I tried once, Mincing.

MINC O mem, I shall never forget it.

MILLA Ay, poor Mincing tift and tift all the morning.

MINC Till I had the cramp in my fingers, I'll vow, mem. And all to no purpose. But when your laship pins it up with poetry, it fits so pleasant the next day as anything, and is so pure and so crips.

WIT Indeed, so crips?

MINC You're such a critic, Mr. Witwoud.

MILLA Mirabell, did you take exceptions last night? Oh, ay, and went away. Now I think on't I'm angry--no, now I think on't I'm pleased:- for I believe I gave you some pain.

MIRA Does that please you?

MILLA Infinitely; I love to give pain

MIRA You would affect a cruelty which is not in your nature; your true vanity is in the power of pleasing.

MILLA Oh, I ask your pardon for that. One's cruelty is one's power, and when one parts with one's cruelty one parts with one's power, and when one has parted with that, I fancy one's old and ugly.

MIRA Ay, ay; suffer your cruelty to ruin the object of your power, to destroy your lover--and then how vain, how lost a thing you'll be! Nay, 'tis true; you are no longer handsome when you've lost your lover: your beauty dies upon the instant. For beauty is the lover's gift: 'tis he bestows your charms:- your glass is all a cheat. The ugly and the old, whom the looking-glass mortifies, yet after commendation can be flattered by it, and discover beauties in it: for that reflects our praises rather than your face.

MILLA Oh, the vanity of these men! Fainall, d'ye hear him? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome! Now you must know they could not commend one if one was not handsome. Beauty the lover's gift! Lord, what is a lover, that it can give? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases; and then, if one pleases, one makes more.

WIT Very pretty. Why, you make no more of making of lovers, madam, than of making so many card-matches.

MILLA One no more owes one's beauty to a lover than one's wit to an echo. They can but reflect what we look and say: vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

MIRA Yet, to those two vain empty things, you owe two the greatest pleasures of your life.

MILLA How so?

MIRA To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves praised, and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk.