

EL4222 Stylistics and Drama

Session No.13

Organisation

- Presentation
- Discussion
- Overview and exam

Quick task

Look at the texts below. Try to label the kind of English spoken/written, and perhaps guess what the speakers are like (race? sex? age? social class? education level?) and relate this to features of the language.

Text A

Right. Pots and pans are usually made of metals. Pots and pans are usually made of metals, example, stainless steel or aluminium, because metals will conduct heat from the fire quickly to the food. This is making use of conduction. All right? However, the handles of these utensils are usually – however, the handles of these utensils are usually made of wood or plastic. What is the purpose of this?

Text B

G: Where are you going?

L: See a show.

G: Oh – with – ah, what is her name ah?

L: Veronica.

G: Oi? This isn't the one. Is it? There was another one.

L: Mei Ling.

G: Ah! Yah, Mei Ling? Eh? So? What happened? Why are you not taking Mei Ling? I thought you were going together what.

L: Yah.

G: So? You don't like her anymore ah?

L: Aiyah. I do lah. I just wanted a change for tonight.

G: Choy! How can you simply change here and change there? How can you play around like that? When you find a girl, you must stick to her. Cannot have monkey business, you know. A person must always be faithful to one person.

L: Grans! Are you done with the pants?

Text C

K: My life is fixed now, Lung. But you have your future ahead. You cannot afford not to save up. Tell me, how much do you earn?

L: I made a thousand eight last month.

K: All right, now listen to me, Lung. Every month, you must set aside. Whatever you do, you must not touch this sum. It'll be for emergency use only. And your marriage.

L: I don't intend to marry, Auntie. I've told you before. I'm not a masochist.

K: You're going to keep drifting all your life?

L: I'm not drifting. I'm doing okay. Look. Just don't worry about me, okay? I can take care of myself.

K: Sometimes, I fear for you, Lung.

L: (*Laugh*) What? You're worried for me? What is it? You're afraid the family name will die out or some'um?

K: Look. After NS you've drifted from this to that, from here to there – squandering your talents. We all have to grow up some time.

L: I *am* grown up.

K: Grown-ups have obligations, Lung.

L: So? What? I should get married just so that I will be thought of as an obliging adult?

Text D

You can get a genuine nonya set lunch for \$6.50 at a little-known café on Waterloo Street. The Monte Cristo Café on the seventh floor of the Catholic Welfare Centre is run by two babas. I especially enjoyed the rojak istimewa. This cost \$2.50 for a medium serving that would have cost \$1.50 at a hawker centre.

Polyphony and heteroglossia

1. Bakhtin and polyphony

Russian linguist and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin used this word, literally meaning ‘**many voiced**’ to describe literary writing that managed to liberate the voice of its characters from under the domination of the authorial or narratorial voice. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), Bakhtin refers to polyphony as a new kind of artistic thinking because what he has in mind goes against the grain of the traditional privileging of harmony, which means many voices heard as one. The reader of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin suggests, cannot but have the impression that he or she isn't dealing with a single author, but is in fact faced with a multiplicity of authors (Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov, the Grand Inquisitor, and so on), each of whom has their own unique voice. (*A Dictionary of Critical Theory*)

2. Bakhtin and heteroglossia

The existence of conflicting discourses within any field of linguistic activity, such as a national language, a novel, or a specific conversation. The term appears in translations of the writings of the Russian linguistic and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), as an equivalent for his Russian term *raznorechie* (‘different speechness’). In Bakhtin's works, this term addresses linguistic variety as an aspect of social conflict, as in tensions between central and marginal uses of the same national language; these may be echoed in, for example, the differences between the narrative voice and the voices of the characters in a novel. *Adjectives*: heteroglot, heteroglossic. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

English in Singapore and drama

3. The context of the ‘New Englishes’ (‘New Varieties of English’, formerly Non-Mother-Tongue Varieties), as in Kachru's three circles of English (see next page). Another model distinguishes between ENL, ESL and EFL. There are other representations by Görlach and McArthur.

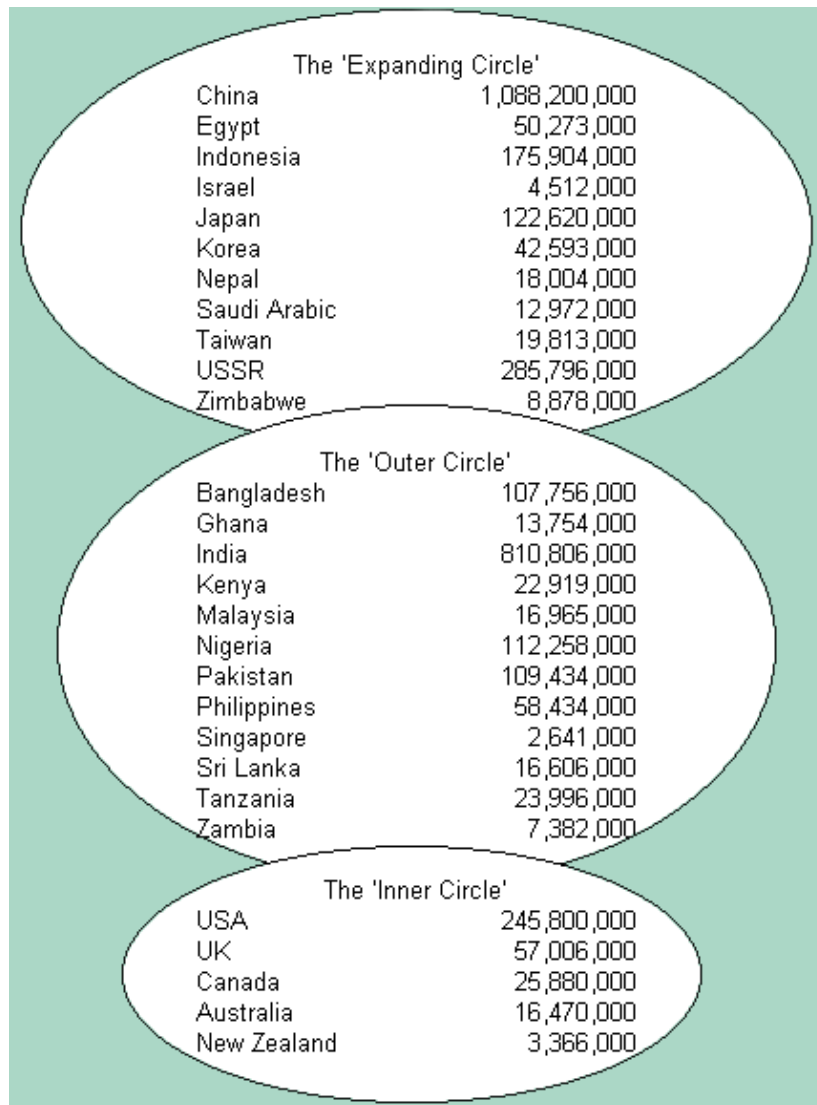
4. Some linguists use the model of pidgins to view Singaporean English, where there are **basilectal**, **mesolectal** and **acrolectal** varieties. The acrolectal variety is closest to the Standard.

5. Yet others see the Singapore situation as a **diglossic** one, where there is a **High** or H variety (Standard Singaporean English, SSE) and a **Low** or L variety (Colloquial Singaporean English, CSE, or ‘Singlish’), where individuals competent in English might switch from one to another depending on the context.

6. Yet others provide further adjustments. Alsagoff (2009), for instance, suggests a continuum between **globalism** and **localism** for the English used in Singapore. In her ‘Cultural Orientation Model’ (COM) she suggests a continuum, rather than a binary choice between CSE (now named **Local SE**) and SSE (**International SE**)

- ✘ I wish that the Government Ministers do not become infected with the same **kiasu** syndrome that they themselves have advised other people against. (Parliamentary debate, see Lee 1990: vol. 55, col. 181)
- ✘ SG is NOT Beijing or Shanghai or Fujian or Canton, or UK or USA we're uniquely Singapore **lah!** And as a born and bred Singaporean I really think locals should be proud of their unique regional quirks, including Singlish. So what if we can't enunciate [sic] perfect Queen's English, so be it. Ditto Beijing-perfect Mandarin. (Online forum post by user ‘SG Chinese’)

Globalism	Localism
Economic capital	Socio-cultural capital
Authority	Camaraderie
Formality	Informality
Distance	Closeness
Educational attainment	Community membership



7. Anthea Fraser Gupta ('A Framework for the Analysis of Singapore English', in Gopinathan *et al.*, *Language, Society and Education in Singapore*) identifies two categories of speakers of Singaporean English:

- (a) Adults who use English in a wide range of circumstances and who show evidence of a substantial shift between SSE and CSE as the occasion demands. Some of these people are also members of category (b).
- (b) Persons (including children above the age of five) who have learnt CSE as a native language but who many not (or not yet) have developed competence in SSE. (p. 124)

She provides four diagnostic features of CSE and SSE each.

CSE features	SSE features
(1) CSE particles (<i>lah, ah, hor, what</i>)	(5) Auxiliary + Subject in Interrogatives ('Would you like one?')
(2) Subjectless verb groups ('Still got fever?')	(6) Verbal inflexions ('The colour has sort of changed'; 'She loves going there')
(3) Conditional clauses without subordinating conjunction ('Disturb him again I call Daddy to come down')	(7) Noun inflexions ('Where's Por-por's house?')
(4) Verbless complements; use of <i>-ing</i> forms without an auxiliary ('Where pain?'; 'Robot coming')	(8) Complex verb groups ('You've got the wrong age group', 'She's been going there for three years now')

8. These distinctions have also been used as a resource by Singaporean playwrights. We have assumed that choices are **indexical**, and presumably these linguistic choices are fairly conscious choices.

(a) Michael Chiang, *Beauty World*

ACT I, SCENE 2

IVY: Number 78A, High Street ... This must be the place. [SD omitted]
ROSEMARY: Yes, can I help you? School uniform or party dress?
IVY: Uh, no ... Actually, I'm looking for a friend. I think she lives here. This is number 78A, High Street, right?
ROSEMARY: Yes, that's right. Who are you looking for? Elizabeth Taylor? (*Giggles and covers her mouth.*)
IVY: Are you Rosemary Joseph?
ROSEMARY: Yes, that's right ... Do I know you?
IVY: It's me, Ivy Chan! Your pen-pal!
ROSEMARY: Goodness gracious me!! Ivy Chan Poh Choo!! Number 117, Jalan Chempedak, Batu Pahat, Johore!!
Oh my God!! What are you doing here!
IVY: Oh, Rosemary! I didn't have time to write to you to explain, but I've decided to leave the beauty parlour and come to Singapore to look for my father. ...

ACT I, SCENE 3

WAN CHOO: Handsome lah! Day also comb, night also comb. Also the same what!
AH HOCK: Eh! My hair or your hair?
There is a knock on the door. Both look at each other. Ah Hock motions to Wan Choo to see who it is.
WAN CHOO: You cannot see I am doing work is it?
She throws down the mop and moves towards the door, grumbling to herself as she opens the door. Standing there is Ivy, looking uncomfortable. She is wearing Rosemary's polka-dotted dress, and carrying her suitcase.
WAN CHOO: Yes, what you want? Selling Tupperware is it?
IVY: No, not Er ... can I see the manager please? I am looking for a job.
WAN CHOO: A job? Hello miss, Sunrise Kindergarten is further down. This is a cabaret, you know or not?
IVY: Yes, I came here to look for a job.
WAN CHOO: You don't come here and make me laugh. How old are you, girl?
AH HOCK: Ah Choo! Since when you become boss? (*To Ivy*) Good afternoon miss. Please come inside. Let me take your bag.
IVY: Oh, thank you. (*Walks into the cabaret, a little awed by the stale air and the gaudy surroundings*) Are you the manager? My name is Ivy Chan —
AH HOCK: No, I am not the manager. I help to take care of the place. See there's no trouble or things like that. My name is Ah Hock.
IVY: Pleased to meet you, Mr Hock. Do you know if I might be able to get a job? Are you looking for someone?
AH HOCK: Miss, you know this is a cabaret, right? It means you have to keep men company, you know. Drink with them, dance ... you know? (*Looks at her questioningly.*)
IVY: Yes? I think so.

(b) Michael Chiang, *Mixed Signals*

ACT I, SCENE 2

HUSBAND: (*Holding a bottle of ABC Extra Stout*) Kenapa you always watching TV? Jepun punya show, lu also understand is it?
WIFE: Japanese show, but ada subtitles. You don't come and kacau, okay?
HUSBAND: Japanese show, Chinese show, Indian show, every bladdy show also you watch. The house so dirty, all the clothes belum wash, belum iron.
WIFE: Eh, you don't come and make me fed-up, okay! Ruman bukan lu punya pasah. So you don't come and sibok-sibok. Selalu complain, complain! Morning wake up and complain gwa listen to radio. Nighttime come back and complain gwa watch TV. Whole Saturday and Sunday you pergi watch football, pergi race course, gwa also never say anything. But when gwa watch TV, you must come and kacau.
HUSBAND: Bladdy house macham rojak!! I see also malu!!
WIFE: You malu you clean lah!! You don't come and bising-bising only, okay!
...

ACT 2, SCENE 4

VIMILA: Let me go, you two-bit Chinatown willains! What do you want with me? What is the meaning of this? Why have you brought me here? Go on, answer me! Don't you understand English, you slant-eyed criminals? I said, LET ME GO!! NOW!!

Male Kidnapper keeps quiet, then turns to his accomplice for a cue. She merely inhales deliberately, then exhales slowly through her dark ruby red lips.

VIMILA: Yoo-hoo!! Did you hear what I said? I said LET ME GO!!

The Male Kidnapper moves towards Vimila menacingly, but the Female Kidnapper holds out her hand to stop him.

FEMALE KIDNAPPER: *(In Mandarin)* Rang wo lai. *(She inhales again and moves up to Vimila, blowing smoke in her face)* Wo men zhi tau ni shi sui! Ni pu pi juang jia!!

MALE KIDNAPPER: *(Translates)* We knows whose you are. No necessary for you to pretend.

VIMILA: *(Suddenly looking terrified yet trying to act arrogant)* You know? What do you know, you cancer-imbibing harlot!! Who says I am pretending? I am only an innocent tourist from New Delhi here on holiday.

FEMALE KIDNAPPER: ZHU KO!!

MALE KIDNAPPER: *(Translating again)* SHADDUP!!

FEMALE KIDNAPPER: *(To Male Kidnapper)* Xie xie. *(To Vimila)* Rang wo lai jia shao. Jiu xia shi San Shui, jhe wei shi pen ren te ke ke, San Sing.

MALE KIDNAPPER: *(Translating)* Allow us to introduce our humble selves. She name is Sam Sui, and I is her brother Sam Seng

(c) Ovidia Yu, *Flying High*

MUNYEE: Roland. Would you like a drink?

ROLAND: No, no.

MUNYEE: Come and help me in here ...

ROLAND: Sure, of course ... *(Roland exits in direction of the kitchen.)*

MADAM NEO *(Mun Yee's mum)*: Who that man, ah?

PAULINE *(Eurasian neighbour)*: Must be Mun Yee's boyfriend?

MADAM NEO: No lah. Where Ah Mun got boyfriend?

PAULINE: Don't know. *(Pause)*

MADAM NEO: You think is Ah Mun's boyfriend ah?

PAULINE: Looks like it. Rich know, this one.

MADAM NEO: You know him ah?

PAULINE: No. But I can tell. See his shoes only know already.

...

MADAM NEO: *(Cantonese)* You two have eaten dinner yet?

MUNYEE: *(Cantonese)* No. *(English)* Oh, no. I have to get her dinner.

ROLAND: Let's take her out to dinner, then. Just round the corner. Come on.

MUNYEE: *(Snappily)* Roland, can you seriously see my mum eating in Burger King or McDonalds? I'll have to do her mee or something before we go out. *(Mun Yee moves indecisively in the direction of the kitchen.)*

ROLAND: *(Snapping back)* We could go to a hawker stall or something. *(Mun Yee does not answer.)*
(Confidently ... what working class mother would disapprove of a catch like him?) Come on, it's not because you think your mother would disapprove of me?

MUNYEE: No, no ...

ROLAND: Just tell her we want to get engaged, that's all.

MADAM NEO: *(Cantonese)* Ah Mun ah, ask your friend has he eaten dinner yet?

(Mun Yee ignores Madam Neo.)

MUNYEE: I can't

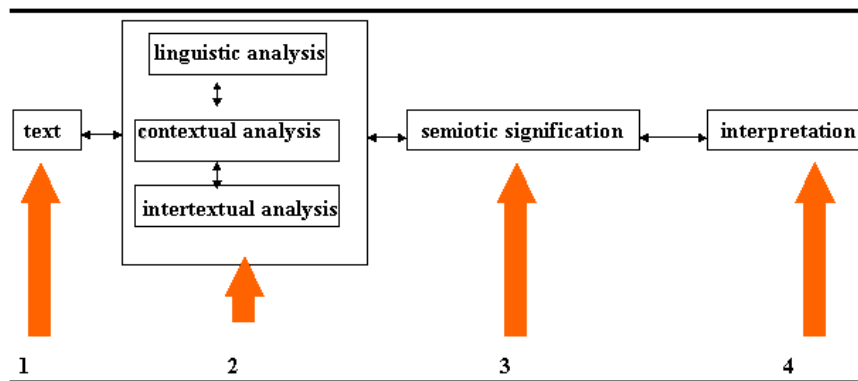
ROLAND: Why not?

MUNYEE: There's no Cantonese word for engaged.

ROLAND: Come on, I don't believe you.

MUNYEE: It's true. You can say in Cantonese that you've fixed a date for the wedding, but that's it. And we haven't fixed a date, what.

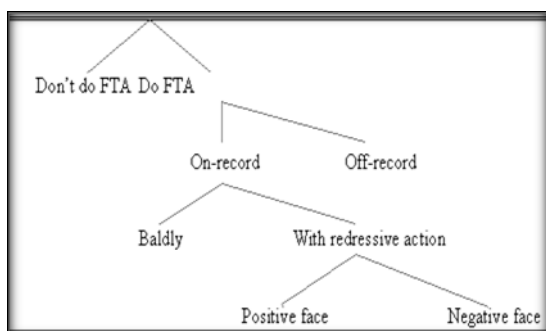
9. Back yet again to our model for stylistic analysis from Session No. 1.



In most of the sessions, we concentrated on the second box, and looked at frameworks that would enable us to analyse texts.

- ♦ The basic distinction made was the minimum *two-level communication* in dramatic discourse – the author-reader/audience communication as opposed to the character-character communication. Many of the frameworks can be applied to both levels.
- ♦ The speech-act approach emphasised that *communication* involved *doing things to each other*, not just *saying things*:
 - * The speech act performed may or may not be closely tied to the actual meanings of the words used – we distinguished between *sentence meaning* and *utterance meaning*.
 - * More than one speech act might be being performed simultaneously; Austin suggests that there are *locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts*.
 - * Speech acts can be categorised into five categories, according to Searle — *representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations* (Leech uses *assertives* for representatives, and *impositives* for directives).
 - * Speech acts have *felicity conditions*, and these conditions determine whether they are *felicitous or infelicitous*. For Searle, there are *propositional content, preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions* for each speech act being performed.
- ♦ The co-operative principle by Grice emphasised that *for communication to be effective*, there have to be certain assumptions that can be made about interlocutors: they are, amongst other things, assumed to be *co-operative*, which implies that they generally follow the four categories of maxims: *quality, quantity, relation and manner*.

Maxims can also be broken: where they are *violated*, the aim is to deceive; where they are *flouted* (*exploited*), the aim is *not* to deceive, and *implicatures* are generated; they can also *clash*; or a person can *opt out* of the CP; in particular situations, some of the maxims might also be *suspended*.
- ♦ In facilitating communication and in general making sure that the machinery is well oiled, Leech suggests that we need also to consider the *politeness principle* (together with the *irony and banter principle*) at work.
 - * He suggests six maxims of the PP: *tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy*.
 - * He suggests that the level of politeness is predictable according to the situation: *the authority of the speaker, the horizontal distance between speaker and hearer, and the 'cost' to the hearer*.



- ♦ Brown and Levinson suggest that the same phenomenon might be better discussed under the notion of *face* and *face wants*.
 - * All adult speakers have rational facilities and *positive face wants* (the need to be admired) and *negative face wants* (the need not to be imposed on).
 - * There is a range of different strategies to boost positive or negative face.

- * There is a choice of different strategies, depending on *the seriousness of the imposition, the power differential between interlocutors and the social distance between interlocutors*.
 - * The choice is between (a) not doing the FTA, and (b) doing it. If the FTA is to be done, it can be done (a) on-record, or (b) off-record. If it is on-record, it can be performed (a) baldly or (b) with redressive action. If there is redressive action, it can address (a) positive face, or (b) negative face.
- There are alternative frameworks, and in disputes and quarrels, the aim might not be to be polite or show face concerns.
 - ♦ The exchange-structure framework suggests that conversation is something that can be analysed *hierarchically* and *structurally*. Most exchanges take the structure $IR(F^n)$. Stretches of dialogue that are *overly regular* or *overly complicated* suggest something interesting going on.
 - * Burton suggests that moves can be labelled as *Opening, Supporting, Challenging, Re-Opening or Bound-Opening Moves*. Supporting moves ‘support’ the framework introduced in Opening Moves, whereas Challenging Moves provide unexpected utterances.
10. In Session 11, we suggested that the choice of which elements to give semiotic signification to (Box No. 2 in the diagram) depends on our assessment of what is ‘normal’ or ‘unmarked’.
11. Session 12 introduced *critical discourse analysis*, which throws a spanner in the works, by questioning some of the assumptions made. This can be seen as liberating or disintegrative. We also considered priority given to the reader/audience rather than to the author.
12. Take-home examination format: answer 2 questions.
- **Question 1** invites you to analyse an unseen passage stylistically; you might be invited to employ a particular framework. Like the two class tests, you will **not** be expected to be comprehensive in your treatment: answer the question **directly**. This question will also be worth **40 marks**, and the word limit is **800 words**.
 - **Question 2** invites you to analyse an extract from **one** of *Equus, Pygmalion, Romeo and Juliet, The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Glass Menagerie*. (There will be five extracts; you should deal with only one of them. You will be asked to deal with any features of the extract that is/are significant from a linguistic and/or literary point of view. You will also be invited to discuss how *representative* or *typical* the extract is of the play as a whole. (You will therefore need to establish for yourself how the ‘style’ of each play can be characterised.) This question will be worth **60 marks**, and the word limit is **1,200 words**. You are expected to show familiarity with the play as a whole.
 - The question will be available from 9.00am. Submit your answers to the submission folder (same as the one for the class tests).
13. Some general pointers.
- Please don’t try to ‘unload’ everything in the exam: this is a formula for a confusing and unfocused answer.
 - In order for the answer to be focused, *do* spend a little time organising your answer. Remember to **read the rubric** carefully. You don’t get any marks for writing about things not asked for!
 - Try to be as *explicit* as possible.
 - A good answer strikes a balance between very *localised* comments and more *generalised* ones.
 - The format does mean that it is ‘safe’ to focus on *one* of the five set texts. Do try to:
 - work out your own reading of the play, and be able to say what it ‘means’, what its point is, etc.
 - be clear in your mind the organisation or structure of the play
 - have a good sense of how you can characterise the ‘style’ of the play and of the main characters (in terms of lexical choice, speech act style, co-operation, politeness, etc.) that you will be able to summarise quickly as part of your answer in the exam.

14. The Stylistics Manifesto revisited.

1. Be theoretically aware
2. Be reception-oriented
3. Be sociolinguistic
4. Be eclectic
5. Be holistic
6. Be populist
7. Be difficult
8. Be precise
9. Be progressive
10. Be evangelical

15. We began by showing some scepticism about background and biography. It is now time to turn the tables around, and draw out some elements of background.



George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) was not born in England. He was born in Dublin to a Protestant family, and worked for a land agent after leaving school at 15. In 1876, his mother, a singer, left her husband and took George and his sisters to London. He read voraciously and cultivated an interest in socialism and music. He became a socialist in 1882 and was a founding member of the Fabian Society (a middle-class Socialist group that aimed at the transformation of English society not through revolution but through ‘permeation’ of the country’s intellectual and political life) in 1884. He turned to journalism and became a music critic and drama critic. He began writing prose works before turning to plays – *Widower’s Houses* (1892) which attacked slum landlordism. Many of the plays were censored and confined to private performances. *Arms and the Man* (1894) was the first presented publicly. Other plays followed: *Candida* (1897), *Devil’s Disciple* (1897), *The Man of Destiny* (1897), *You Never Can Tell* (1899) and *Captain Brassbound’s Conversion* (1900).

In 1898, he married Charlotte Payne-Townshend, an Irish heiress; she nursed him when he was recuperating from ill health. The apparently celibate marriage lasted all their lives, Shaw satisfying his emotional needs in paper-passion correspondences with Ellen Terry, Mrs Patrick Campbell, and others.

He formed an association with Harley Granville Barker, a man 21 years his junior, and the men wrote plays ‘in virtual dialogue with one another’ (Peters 1998: 20): *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *Pygmalion* (1913) among others.

His most serious plays were written in the 1920s: *Heartbreak House* (1920), *Back to Methuselah* (1922) and *Saint Joan* (1923).

He wrote till the end of his life, half of which he spent in the tiny village of Ayot St Lawrence (in Hertfordshire – about 30miles/50km north of London). He moved there permanently in 1943: he gave up his flat in London when his wife Charlotte died. On his death bed, he spoke of Barker, to whom he had written a tribute when he died four years earlier. He remained a vegetarian, an anti-vivisectionist, an anti-vaccinationist, a wool-wearer, a eugenicist, a Fabian, and a feminist till his death. ‘Always his vision of the stage was as the apex of human endeavour, a place of beauty and spirituality. Believing that the fates of artists, homosexuals, and women are intertwined, insisting that all great art is didactic, he valiantly worked for a society unblemished by the inequalities of class or gender’ (Peters 1998: 23).

- Shaw’s style is supposed to be witty and thought-provoking. Presumably *Pygmalion* conforms to this?
- Shaw presents a feminist, socialist, anti-colonialist perspective on the whole. Again, *Pygmalion* seems to conform to this?



We do not know when exactly William Shakespeare was born, though his baptism was recorded on 26 April 1564, at the date usually assigned as his birthday is St George’s day 23 April. He went to school at the ‘King’s New School’ in Stratford-on-Avon and received a ‘grammar school’ education with Latin grammar, perhaps not a very exciting time of his life. He married Anne Hathaway when he was 18 (and she some seven or eight years older). After the birth of three children, he left Stratford; we know very little about this period. The plague forced the theatres shut in 1593/94. When theatres re-opened in 1594, Shakespeare was a ‘housekeeper’ (a profit sharer) in the Lord Chamberlain’s Company of actors. He remained with them until his retirement to Stratford in 1611, as a prominent citizen of that town. He died five years later.

As a ‘sharer’ in the management of the company, Shakespeare was expected to write two or three plays a year solely for the company. The manuscripts were owned by the company. These would not normally

be published for fear of another company performing them. After his death, Shakespeare's friends published a collection in 1623, called the First Folio. Less than half of the plays were published in his lifetime, and he probably had little to do with their appearance; they were often imperfect, unauthorised versions, and appeared as individual plays in a small book format (somewhat like a modern paperback), and these are known as the Quartos.

R&J was probably written in 1595, and the First Quarto (Q1) appeared in 1597 without Shakespeare's name, Q2 appeared in 1599, and Q3 appeared in 1609. The main themes of the play include

- civil disorder
- love and hate
- the generation gap
- fortune and fate

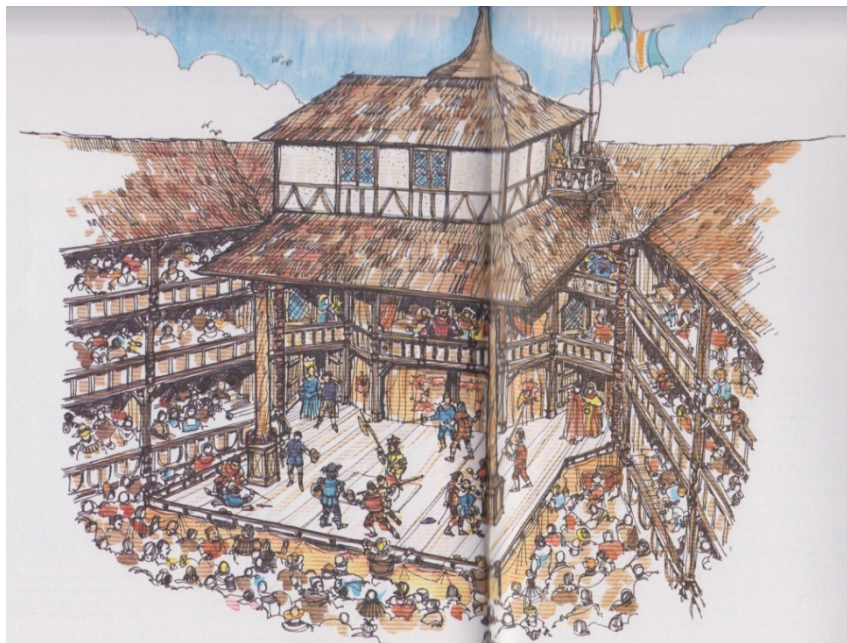
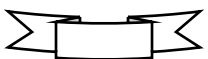


Figure 1

The opening of *Romeo and Juliet* at Burbage's The Curtain Theatre, c. 1594 or 1595. From the upper level of the pavilion Prince Escalus stops the fighting between members of the households of Montague and Capulet. Note the thrust stage with audiences on three sides. (Robert Cohen, *Theatre*)



Peter Shaffer was born in 1926 in Liverpool and educated in London and at Cambridge. He first published three novels with his twin brother Anthony. However, it was the play *Five Finger Exercise* (1958) that first brought him acclaim. Later plays have included clever comedies like *The Private Ear* (1962), *The Public Eye* (1962) and *Black Comedy* (1965), the spectacular *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1964) and two highly praised and effective psychological studies, *Equus* (1973) and *Amadeus* (1979). The latter has also been adapted into an Oscar-winning film. (Adapted from Ousby 1988: 893)



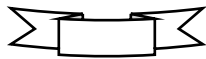
Oscar Wilde (Fingal O'Flahertie Wills) was born in Dublin in 1854 to Sir William Wilde and Lady Jane Francesca Wilde. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and later at Magdalen (pr. ["mO;dIIn]) College, Oxford. A brilliant classicist, he won the Newdigate Prize in 1878 for his poem 'Ravenna'. He made himself conspicuous by despising athleticism and espousing the Aesthetic Movement: he collected blue china and peacock's feathers. On a lecture tour to the United States, on being asked by the customs official whether he had anything to declare, he was said to have replied, 'Only my genius'.

In 1884 he married Constance Lloyd and in 1888 published *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, fairy stories written for his two sons Cyril and Vyvyan. *The picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) followed. He found success in his plays: *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). *Salome* was written in French and the English translation by Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie) was published in 1894. Wilde and Bosie had been lovers since 1892.

The Marquess of Queensberry, Lord Alfred's father, publicly insulted Wilde in a note which accused him of 'posing as a Somdomite' (sic). Wilde sued for libel but lost his case. As homosexuality was itself illegal, Queensberry was able to destroy Oscar's case at the trial by calling as witnesses rent boys who would describe Wilde's sexual encounters in open court. He was convicted and sentenced to two years' hard labour in 1895. Constance brought him the news of his loss of custody of his sons in 1896; this would be the last time he saw her before her death in 1898. Upon his release in 1897, he went to France to rejoin Bosie. He died in Paris in 1900 after, it is said, becoming a Roman Catholic.

Cyril died in the First World War. Vyvyan took on the name Holland. His son Merlin Holland recently published an uncensored version of his grandfather's trials, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (2003).

The Importance of Being Earnest was Wilde's last play and has proved his most enduringly popular. The slender but deftly worked plot concerns two fashionable young gentlemen John Worthing (Jack) and Algernon Moncrieff (Algy), and their eventually successful courtship of Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew. More important than the plot is the continual **flow of witty, uncompromisingly artificial dialogue and characterisation**, especially of Gwendolen's mother, Lady Bracknell, and also of Miss Prism and Canon Chasuble.



Tennessee Williams was born Thomas Lanier Williams in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi in the home of his maternal grandfather, the local Episcopal priest. He graduated from the University of Iowa in 1938. His first plays were one-act pieces given in amateur and student performances between 1936 and 1940. His reputation was established by *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and further enhanced by *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). Both plays show Williams's sympathy for the lost and self-punishing individual, a characteristic of many of his subsequent dramas, such as *Summer and Smoke* (1947, revised as *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* in 1964). He lived in New Orleans initially before moving to Key West in Florida. He met his partner Frank Merlo in New Orleans.

His gift for comedy, often an undercurrent of his more serious dramas, is evident in *The Rose Tattoo* (1951). After the experimental *Camino Real* (1953), which was poorly received by the critics, he returned to the more familiar themes of the intricacies of Southern families and Southern culture with *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). Williams died in 1983.

The Glass Menagerie was the play that established Williams in the American theatre. Described by Williams as a 'memory play', it is framed by the recollections of Tom Wingfield, whose impressionistic narratives, accompanied by images projected on a screen, introduce a number of the scenes. Tom recalls his life in St Louis with his mother Amanda, a faded Southern belle who clings persistently to glamorous illusions about her past, and with his sister Laura, a crippled and painfully shy young woman whose intensely private world is centred on a treasured collection of small glass animals. Amanda, whose husband has long since deserted the family, has transferred her romantic hopes to Laura, continually asking her about her non-existent gentlemen callers. She persuades Tom, who has become a compulsive movie-goer to escape this intolerable situation at home, to invite his friend Jim O'Connor to dinner. Jim turns out to be the same young man with whom Laura was infatuated at high school for a moment her sensitivity and reserve are eased by his warmth, but then, suddenly embarrassed, he tells her he is engaged to another girl, and leaves. Amanda is enraged with Tom for what she thinks was a deliberate practical joke. Finally pushed too far, Tom runs out of the house, never to return. The play ends with Amanda comforting Laura, and with Tom's final narration filled with pain for his sister.

And finally: *All the best for your finals!!!*

Reminder: the take-home exam is on

Tuesday, 4-v-2021 at 9.00am to 6.00pm