

# KIBABII UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

## FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

### DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE

#### LIT 316: EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN DRAMA

#### 2013/14 Third year first semester exam. Marking guidelines

##### Question one: (a)

From the onset, it should be recognized that *Antigone*, set in the city of Thebes, is a representation of society based on **the conflict** between the divine dictates (**Sacred society**) and the will of man (**secular society**). Antigone, as a character, is a representation of the divine society, one who seeks the protection and upholding of the divine decrees. On the other hand, Creon, her maternal uncle who doubles as the king of the people of Thebes is a representation of a man made society. This is courtesy of the messenger's declaration that; "***He had saved Thebes, we*** (The people) ***had accorded him the sovereign power...***" (p.40). similarly, Oedipus, though an aristocrat who is not aware of it, his installation to power is **secular** in nature. "***O Wealth! Royalty! ...that the city gave freely to me, unmasked...***" (p.61). in Electra, Aegisthus comes to power through a coup. He, alongside his girlfriend Clytemnestra murder Agamemnon hence his ascendance to power. This makes his reign a secular one since he is not from the line of aristocrats. "***Aegisthus sitting upon my father's throne.***" (p.111). In the times of classical Athens, it was believed that authority comes from gods, was passed on to leaders in a monarchical style. Creon is not a child of a former king. The assertion of the messenger's declaration therefore gives credence to conclusion that his authority was man-given, representing a man-made society, hence prone to human error and therefore, a travesty.

Apart from the fact that the sacred/divine society bestowed its authority in the hands of a monarchical and hereditary system of governance, the kings were to rule in observance of the gods decrees which were in the form of taboos. These taboos dictated that ***murder within the family was proscribed***, there was to be ***no breaking of oaths***, the sacred society ***prohibited incest*** and lastly, ***disrespect towards the dead*** was proscribed. It is therefore in the representation of this conflict between the **sacred society** and the **man-made/secular society** that it should be construed that a man made society, through Creon, is farcical.

According to classical dramatists, leadership anchored on secular/human understanding and foundations is bound to be ***tyrannical***. Tyranny cannot construct a meaningful society. ...Haemon submits to his father that "***The city with a single voice denies***" that Antigone is a criminal who should be put to death. (p.26) Haemon's pleas to the king fall on deaf ears with Creon's declaration that "***The king is lord and master of his city***" to which Haemon says that that is not a government, but a tyranny. Teiresias, the prophet adds to this voice. He says: "***And***

*tyrants, of the shameful use of power.” (p.36)* Tyrannies never last long; rather, they turn against and annihilate their mentors. This is the fate of Creon’s tyrannical government. From this vantage point, it is clear that Sophoclean drama is an indictment of man-made societies which are bound to collapse as soon as they are brought into existence.

Human societies are represented as those with *full of injustice*. Haemon, though a boy, puts it succinctly that *wisdom is given to people by gods*. (p.24) he further is of the view that the man who thinks he alone is wise, best in speeches and counsel is just but an empty man. (p25).

A secular society, according to Sophoclean drama, *is bound to be scornful to divinity*. According to the Ancient Greece, it was the decree of gods that all the living must exercise respect for the dead. Contrary to this, a secular society, as epitomized by Creon, dismisses this divine edict with a declaration that *“It is wanton folly to respect the dead”* (p.27).

Creon’s rejection of Teiresias wise counsel heralds a curse: *“Therefore, the gods arouse against you ... (P.37)* which ultimately brings down the reign of Creon in the most humiliating form. Similarly, Oedipus refusal to heed wise counsel from the same Teiresias leads to a curse: *“...Listen, since you have taunted me with blindness!, you have your sight and you cannot see...Your parents, do you know them?, ... for no man living will meet a doom more terrible than yours. (p.62)*. This, in Sophocles lenses, is a manifestation that secular societies are full of follies and disrespectful to divine authority. Sophocles thus passes a harsh indictment on secular societies by projecting them as untenable and prone to self-destructive arrangements.

Bearing in mind that Creon is not of the noble/aristocratic lineage, therefore not in the divine order of kingship, his declaration that *“Take me away, far from the sight of men ...”* (P.44) sums up the classical thinking during the Athenian democratic revolution. Theirs was the position that the secular order which was being created by man was full of follies and prone to too many inconsistencies thus a circus.

### **Question 1(b)**

#### **Theatrical devices**

- 👤 Chorus
- 👤 Suspense – tutor’s mission (p.104, 7=& 124-5)
- 👤 Situational irony
- 👤 Foreshadow
- 👤 Dramatic irony- tutor p. (123) is on a spying mission, the audience is aware of yet Clytemnestra is not aware. (p.104). he is a Trojan horse.

### **QUESTION 2 (a) - Merchant of Venice**

- Love between Antonio and Bassanio – the love between these two disobeys the class boundary as Antonio is a rich merchant while Bassanio is a poor spendthrift. They are so close that Antonio can afford to stand in as surety to get three thousand ducats from Shylock even when Bassanio had not yet repaid the earlier loans.
- Love between Bassanio and Portia. Bassanio is a poor spendthrift while Portia is a rich heiress. Their love transcends the class boundary. No sooner have the two tied a knot than Portia goes out of her way to financially aid Bassanio to travel to Venice and rescue his friend from the eminent danger which is posed on Antonio's life. She also disguises herself as a lawyer and goes to Venice on a rescue mission.
- Love between Lorenzo and Jessica which goes beyond the racial boundaries. A Jew and a non-Jew.
- Love between Gratiano and Nerissa. Though Gratiano's attitude towards women can be described as being lackadaisical, he is a fortune hunter like his friend Bassanio with whom they go to hunt for fortune in Belmont and end up falling in love.
- The Prince of Arragon and the Prince of Morocco express their love towards Portia. Though they fail in their casket test, their coming to Belmont is signal enough that they are expressing love which transcends racial boundaries.

**Love is dramatic:** candidates should capture the dramatic aspects which foreground these love relations. Bassanio's trip to Belmont is full of **suspense** (Dramatic technique). Even the casket scene is quite suspense. This suspense is usually juice which spices up love relations. Other love relations in the play are decorated with situational ironies, dramatic ironies and other dramatic devices which should be elucidated by the candidate.

**QUESTION 2 (b)** Racial relations are controversial and that is what makes them dramatic. They are iced with anecdotes of hostilities and unwarranted aspects of hatred.

- The treatment Shylock receives from Antonio, Gratiano and Portia are to be elucidated by the candidate.
- The laws of Venice are out rightly xenophobic in composition towards residents who are not citizens of Venice by birth as explained by Portia in court.
- Portia's description of the Prince of Morocco in her speech to Nerissa tells it all about the existing racial relations.
- The court verdict as given by the duke of Venice is vindictive towards the Jews and possibly individuals who are not born residents of Venice.

**QUESTION 3(a)**

- Politicians have perfected the art of propaganda as a means of suppressing the consciousness of the masses.

- Politicians are experts in matters of corruption and through this; they have tamed alternative voices including that of the media.
- Politicians are masters of Machiavellian tricks of ruling through immoral means.
- Politicians are suave users of violent means if that is what it will cost them to manipulate masses and take control of them.
- Politicians are meticulous when it comes to the application of threats and means of intimidation as political weapons.

### **QUESTION 3(b)**

Modern European drama is a caustic indictment of the puritan ideologies of the Elizabethan Europe and passes a harsh judgment on those policies as they are the ones that have ailed the society even presently. They include:

- A corruptible press which has abrogated its cardinal duties.
- Dirty politics which are punctuated with propaganda, corruption, violence ...
- The political ideologies such as democracy and socialism which state that the voice of the majority is the voice of God.
- An ignorant majority whom Ibsen describes as mongrels.
- A cowardly population ... I would not dare do otherwise ...
- A reckless and idealist civil society.

### **QUESTION 4. Conflict being the obstacle in the way of a character getting what they want.**

These characters have defined wants which are incredibly important to them:

- Walter wants to be rich because that is an indication of success.
- Beneatha wants to be a doctor because she has a desire to heal.
- Mama and Ruth want to provide peace for their families.
- Mama wants Walter to stand up and be the man of the family.

Hansberry then provides rich obstacles for her characters, most of which are inner obstacles. Inner conflict is always so much harder to address as the character is in conflict with himself or herself...

- Walter is his own obstacle to his dreams – he wants to be rich and successful, but only tries get-rich-quick schemes, which fail time and time again.
- Beneatha feels entitled to become a doctor. When that may be taken away from her, she has no response other than to give up on helping others.
- Ruth constantly fights with Walter. Her family's peace is further upended when she finds out she's pregnant.
- Mama makes a rash decision to prompt Walter to stand up and be a man, which proves unwise.

Further, some of the characters willingly take some extraordinary measures to deal with the obstacles in their way to get what they want:

- Mama buys a house in an all-white neighbourhood to provide a home for her family.
- Walter takes his sister's school money in order to kickstart his business. He's also willing to grovel and act in a humiliating manner to get money from the Clybourne Park neighbourhood association.
- Ruth considers an abortion to maintain peace in the family she already has.