

The Malcontent

GENRE: SATIRE AND TRAGICOMEDY

CONTEXT: THE CHILDREN OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL (late 17th-century)

Boys' Companies: Children of the Chapel Royal (Children of the Queen's Revels), Paul's Boys (i.e. St. Paul);

PRIVATE, Indoor theatres: The Chapel Royal, Blackfriars (i.e. not Southbank, associated with upper classes and social climbers);

MUSIC: highly trained choristers and musicians; featured lots of music and dancing;

PARODIC and SATIRICAL: burlesque, children "aping" adult behaviours:
 • New research suggests capacity for "straight" playing;

COMPETITION with adult companies; rash of stolen "books" (as mentioned in the "Induction").

GENERIC HYBRID: TRAGEDY: Division and Displacement



Conflict between

- ◊ Honour and Duty
- ◊ Surface and Substance
- ◊ Social world and individual desire
- ◊ Nature and nature
- ◊ Providence and will

TIME IS OUT OF JOINT



5

COMEDY: DELIGHT

"...for delight we scarcely do, but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves, or to the general nature; laughter almost ever comes of things most **disproportioned** to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present."

(Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*)

6

COMEDY: Decorum: Celestial Spheres



7

COMEDY: RECONCILIATION



8

GENERIC TRANSITION

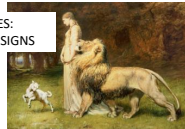
TRAGEDY: DIVISION AND
DISPLACEMENT

- CONFLICT of VALUES:
- OPACITY of SIGNS



COMEDY: RECONCILIATION

- BALANCE of VALUES:
- TRANSPARENCY of SIGNS



ROMANCE: CORRECTIVE FORCES

- ALLEGORICAL RESOLUTION
- MUNDANE problems addressed via SUPERNATURAL means

9

TRAGICOMEDY

Some characteristics:

Improbable plot; unnatural situations; characters of high social class, usually of the nobility; love as the central interest, pure love and gross love often being contrasted; highly complicated plot; rapid action; contrasts of deep villainy and exalted virtue; saving of hero and heroine in the nick of time; penitent villain; disguises; surprises; jealousy; treachery; intrigue; enveloping action of war or rebellion.

• Steve Evans, Kansas University

SATIRE

Use of exaggeration, ridicule to expose foibles and follies of social classes and practices for the purposes of social reform;

“scalpel”: wit used to heal the social body;

Negotiation of DISTANCE and IDENTIFICATION;

- Must recognize the self BUT
- Must not “lose” the self in identification with characters;
- I.e. we are meant to *think about* but not *feel as*.

Satire in *The Malcontent*

Negotiation of DISTANCE and IDENTIFICATION:

- “Induction”;
- The Boys of the Chapel Royal;
- Malevole/Altofronto