Life and Works of Henrik Ibsen

Ibsen, born Henrik Johan Ibsen in 1828 in Skien, Norway, was the eldest of five children after the early death of an older brother. His father, Knud Ibsen, a product of a long line of sea captains, had been born in 1797 in Skein and married Marichen Cornelia Martie Altenburg, a German daughter of a merchant, in 1825. Though Ibsen later reported that Skein was a pleasant place during his youth, his own childhood was not particularly happy. Described as an unsociable child, his sense of isolation was increased at the age of sixteen when his father’s business was found to be in such disrepair that everything had to be sold to meet his creditors. On top of this, a rumour, to which young Ibsen was privy, began to be circulated that Henrik was the illegitimate son of another man. This fear (never proved) manifested itself in a theme of illegitimate offspring in Ibsen’s later work. After Knud’s business was possessed, all that remained of the family’s former wealth was a dilapidated farmhouse at the outskirts of Skein.

At the farmhouse, Ibsen began to attend a small middle-class school where he cultivated a talent for painting, if nothing else. In 1843, at the age of fifteen, Ibsen was confirmed and taken from school. Though he had declared his interest in becoming a painter, Ibsen was apprenticed to an apothecary shortly before his sixteenth birthday.

Leaving his family, Ibsen travelled to Grimstad, a small, isolated town, to begin his apprenticeship where he studied with the hopes of gaining admissions to the University to study medicine. (He also fathered an illegitimate son by the servant of the apothecary.) Despite his unhappy lot, Grimstad is where Ibsen began to write in earnest. Inspired by the revolution of 1848 that was being felt throughout Europe, Ibsen wrote satire and elegant poetry. At the age of twenty-one, Ibsen left Grimstad for the capitol. While in Christiania (now Oslo), Ibsen passed his exams but opted not to pursue his education, instead turning to playwriting and journalism. It was here that he penned his first play, Cataline. Ibsen also spent time analysing and criticizing modern Norwegian literature.

Still poor, Ibsen gladly accepted a contract to write for and help manage the newly constituted National Theatre in Bergen in 1851. Untrained and largely uneducated, Ibsen learned much from his time at the theatre, producing such works as St. John’s Night. The majority of his writings of this period were based on folksongs, folklore, and history. In 1858, Ibsen moved back to Christiania to become the creative director of the city’s Norwegian Theatre.

That same year, Ibsen married Suzannah Thoresen, with whom he fathered a child named Sigurd Ibsen. Though his plays suggest otherwise, Ibsen revered the state of marriage, believing that it was possible for two people to travel through life as perfect, happy equals. During this period, Ibsen also developed a daily routine from which he would not deviate until his first stroke in 1901: he would rise, consume a small breakfast, take a long walk, write for five hours, eat dinner, and finish the night off with entertainment or in bed. Despite this routine, Ibsen found his life in Bergen difficult. Luckily, in 1864, his frien
him money that they had collected, allowing him to move to Italy. He was to spend the next twenty-seven years living in Italy and Germany. During this time abroad, he authored a number of successful works, including Brand (1866) and Peer Gynt (1867).

Ibsen moved to Dresden in 1868 and then Munich in 1875. It was in Munich, in 1879 that Ibsen wrote his ground-breaking play, A Doll's House. He pursued his interest in realistic drama for the next decade, earning international acclaim; many of his works were published in translation and performed throughout Europe. Ibsen eventually turned to a new style of writing, abandoning his interest in realism for a series of so-called symbolic dramas. He completed his last work in exile, Hedda Gabbler, in 1890.

After being away from Norway for twenty-seven years, Ibsen and Suzanna returned in 1891. Shortly afterwards, he finished writing The Master Builder and then took a short break. In late 1893, in need of moist air to help cure her recurring gout, Suzannah left for southern Italy. While his wife was away, Ibsen found a companion in a young female pianist, Hildur Andersen, with whom he spent a great deal of time and corresponded with even after Suzannah's return. Ibsen's relationship with Andersen was characteristic of his larger interest in the younger generation; he was famous for seeking out their ideas and encouraging their writing. After suffering a series of strokes, Ibsen died in 1906 at the age of seventy-eight after having been unable to write for the last few years of his life.

The Rebel: - In a letter to George Brandes, shortly after the Paris Commune, Henrik Ibsen wrote concerning the State and political liberty:

"The State is the curse of the individual. How has the national strength of Prussia been purchased? By the sinking of the individual in a political and geographical formula..... The State must go! That will be a revolution that will find me on its side. Undermine the idea of the State, set up in its place spontaneous action, and the idea that spiritual relationship is the only thing that makes for unity, and you will start the elements of a liberty which will be something worth possessing."

The State was not the only bête noire of Henrik Ibsen. Every other institution that, like the State, rests upon a lie was an iniquity to him. Uncompromising demolisher of all false idols and dynamiter of all social shams and hypocrisy, Ibsen consistently strove to uproot every stone of our social structure. Above all did he thunder his fiery indictment against the four cardinal sins of modern society: the Lie inherent in our social arrangements; Sacrifice and Duty, the twin curses that fetter the spirit of man; the narrow-mindedness and pettiness of Provincialism, that stifles all growth; and the Lack of Joy and Purpose in Work which turns life into a vale of misery and tears.

Father of Modern Drama: - Henrik Ibsen, Norwegian playwright from the 19th Century, has been called the "Father of Modern Drama." This title, exclusively given to him is arguably not an understatement; the playwright's personal and public life significantly influenced his dramatic plays containing various political, religious, and historical messages. Like Shakespeare, Ibsen tried to incorporate as much prose writing into his plays as possible without losing the story's focal point. Shakespeare's work convinced Ibsen that serious drama must strive towards a psychological truth and form its foundation on the characters and conflicts of mankind. Ibsen tried to incorporate social and psychological problems in realistic contemporary settings in his plays; each play dealing with t
called a "problem play." (Henrik Ibsen Essay) While living in Norway for much of his youth, Ibsen experienced the horrors of poverty, loneliness, and disgrace of himself, his family, and his country. Aside from the negative aspects of his childhood, he was fortunate to experience the joys of literature, transition from boy to man, and the importance of friendship. Every main detail surrounding Ibsen’s life is somehow intertwined within his literary works.

In A Doll’s House (1879), a family experiences severe financial problems after Norah Helmer, a young wife, secretly borrows an inordinate amount of money to send her husband to a warmer climate, and improve his health after becoming seriously ill. She keeps this expenditure a secret from her husband knowing he would be furious. To pay back the person she borrowed the money from, she saves as much money as possible by purchasing the poorest quality items for herself. (Ibsen, 1-96)

Not only did Ibsen write about various families’ financial problems, he also wrote about illegitimate children. An example of this can be found in one of Ibsen’s most successful and well-known plays, The Wild Duck (1884). In this play, Gregers Werle, a young man returns to the house of his wealthy and cynical father, Hakon Werle. The two have not seen or spoken to each other in seventeen years. The reason Gregers visits his father is because Hakon is getting married, and Gregers rightfully opposes the marriage. While on his visit, Gregers meets up with an old friend, Hialmar Ekdal. He [Gregers] learns his father arranged for his former mistress, Gina, to marry Hialmar. Hialmer does not know that his wife was the former mistress of Hakon Werle. Hialmar and Gina have a daughter together, Hedvig, and later in the play, Hialmer discovers the truth behind the former love affair between Gina and Hakon. He questions if Hedvig is his legitimate daughter. Hialmer shuts himself up from his family, and distraught Hedvig shoots herself with an old hunting pistol. (Ibsen, 1-384)

Ibsen’s superior plays have distinguished him as one of the greatest playwrights of all time next to other notable playwrights like Aristophanes, Voltaire, and even Shakespeare. Ibsen’s “problem plays” have helped people reexamine the world around them, and fix the problems that menace society.
Hedda Gabler (One of the most notorious anti-heroes of the theatre, was born into a legacy of aristocracy, her obsession with freedom and free leads her to manipulate those around her, ultimately to her own death)

Aunt Rina (Never seen in the play, in poor health and close to death's door)

Berta (Servant of Tesmaas, Hedda is quite rude to Berta, who exacerbates her feelings of being out-of-place in this new household)

Judge Brack (A friend of Tesmaas, Hedda's, often the purveyor of new information in the play, is a manipulator on a par with Hedda herself)

Aunt Julia (She was happy that Tesmaas married Hedda but was concerned that he could not support her, and mortgaged her annuities to help his finances)

Eilert Lövborg (An inspired and wild scholar, vanished from the town two years ago and fell into drunkenness and disrepute, now returned hoping to publish his new book)

Judge Brack
Reveals his love for

Aunt Julia
Raised

Aunts of

General Gabler
Daughter of

Hedda Gabler
(Frosty relationship)

Thea Elvsted
(Meek and acquiescent, comes to Hedda for help even though she is suspicious of the new Mrs. Tesmaan when they were in school together, it seems, Hedda was cruel to her.)

George Tesman
(A rote and dull scholar, spends most of his honeymoon with his books, content to regurgitate old research rather than follow his own ideas, always looking for approval of those around him)

Loves

Eilert Lövborg
Goes to seek help from

Character Map of Hedda Gabler
Summary and Analysis of Act I

Summary

After a six-months wedding trip, the bride and groom have returned home. Aunt Julia, George's aunt, arrives to welcome them the following morning. As the curtain rises, the motherly old lady enters the well-furnished living room. She hands a bouquet of flowers to Bertha, the servant, who places them among the others which decorate the room at every corner. The aunt and the maid converse about the newlyweds, remarking with wonder and pride that the orphan nephew Miss Tesman raised is now a professor married to General Gabler's daughter.

At this point George enters, greeting his aunt with warmth and affection. She inquires about the honeymoon, expecting to hear details of the romantic journey the young couple took touring southern Europe. Instead, George delightedly recalls his tours through the archives and the collections of various libraries in order to gather research materials for his intended book, "The Domestic Industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages." His aunt, still curious, asks if George has "anything special" to tell her, if he has "any expectations," but George merely answers that he expects to be appointed a professor. Aunt Julia mentions George's former colleague Eilert Lövborg. Despite publishing a recent book, she says, Lövborg has fallen a victim to his own misguided excesses. She is glad that her nephew's abilities will no longer be eclipsed by Lövborg's.

This brilliant but undisciplined young man was in love with Hedda some years ago, and they were close comrades. Confessing to her all his extravagant dissipations, his ambitions, the young man exposed his soul to this sheltered girl who was fascinated by a knowledge of life forbidden to her. When the friendship became serious, Hedda threatened Lövborg with her pistol, and he disappeared from her life from that moment on. George has no knowledge of his wife's former relationship with his friend.

The brief mention of Lövborg prefaces Hedda Gabler's entrance. She is tall and lovely, about twenty-eight years old, and responds coldly to the warmth of Miss Tesman's greeting. She is obviously bored by George's relatives and shows no interest when her husband exclaims with pleasure over the pair of his old slippers Aunt Julia has brought him. Embroidered by Rina, the invalid sister of Miss Tesman, the slippers recall for George cherished memories of his childhood.

Hedda abruptly changes the subject, complaining that the servant has thrown her old bonnet on one of the chairs. The hat, however, belongs to Aunt Julia, who has just purchased it in honor of George's bride. To overcome the embarrassment, George hastily admires the bonnet, then bids his aunt admire Hedda's splendid appearance and to note how she has filled out from the journey. Angry, Hedda insists she looks the same as always, but Miss Tesman is enraptured at the implied pregnancy. Emotionally, she blesses Hedda Tesman "for George's sake." Promising to call each day, she takes her leave.

The maid announces an unexpected caller, a younger schoolmate of Hedda and a former acquaintance of George. Nervous and shy, Thea Elvsted explains the purpose of her visit. For the past year, Eilert Lövborg has lived in her house as tutor to her husband's children. The
writer's conduct this past year has been irreproachable, Thea says, and he has managed to complete his successful new book while at the Elvsted's without once succumbing to temptation. Now that Lövborg has left their village, she is worried, for he has already remained a week "in this terrible town" without sending news of his whereabouts. Thea begs the Tesmans to receive him kindly if Eilert should visit them. Eager to extend hospitality to his former friend, George goes to write a letter of invitation.

Left alone with Thea, Hedda aggressively questions the reluctant younger woman, promising that they shall be close friends and address one another as "du." Thea admits that her marriage is not a happy one. She has nothing in common with her elderly husband, who married her because it is cheaper to keep a wife rather than a housekeeper to look after the children.

Gaining confidence, Thea tells Hedda how a great friendship grew between Lövborg and herself until she gained an influence over him. "He never wrote anything without my assistance," she proudly declares; sharing Lövborg's work was the happiest time she has known all her life. The relationship means so much to her that Thea has run away from home in order to live where Eilert Lövborg lives.

Yet her happiness is insecure, she tells Hedda. Although Lövborg had mentioned it only once, a woman's shadow stands between them. Hedda intently leans forward, eager to hear more. All that Lövborg said, Thea replies, is that this woman threatened to shoot him with a pistol when they parted. Mrs. Elvsted has heard about a red-haired singer whom Eilert used to visit, and she is especially worried now that this woman is in town again.

The maid announces Judge Brack, a family friend who has arranged George's affairs so that he could borrow money for his wedding trip and the villa that Hedda had set her heart on. A handsome moustached gentleman, carefully groomed and youthfully dressed, enters. About forty-five years old, Brack is very smooth in manner and bows gracefully when he and Thea are introduced.

Judge talks with George about his debts while Hedda sees her guest to the door. When she returns, Brack announces his bad news: because Lövborg's book has been received so well, the writer might favourably compete for George's promised professorship. George is thunderstruck, but Hedda shrugs indifferently. "There will be a sort of sporting interest in that," she says, and her husband apologizes for being unable to provide the necessities she expected: a livened footman, a saddle horse, means for "going out into society." After Brack leaves, Hedda concludes wearily, "I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile — my pistols, George." She crosses to the next room, smiling coldly at her startled husband. "General Gabler's pistols!" she adds mockingly, and the curtain rings down.

**Analysis**

This first act, besides introducing characters, acquaints the audience with Hedda Gabler's surroundings in her new life as Mrs. Tesman. Brought up as a general's daughter accustomed to travel in aristocratic social circles, Hedda must confront her future as a housewife in a middle-class household. The fact that she is pregnant reinforces her potential role as homemaker. The nature of her doom is underscored by the character of Miss Juliana Tesman,
who represents the older generation of domestic womanhood who has devoted her life to the care of others.

George Tesman, good natured and sentimental, assumes that the duty of a husband is merely to satisfy the domestic requirements of his wife so that she can be happy in the confines of her home. With this in mind, he agrees that they shall keep an open house — in Hedda's chosen home — and maintain the luxuries important to proper entertaining. Believing that a woman naturally falls into household routines once she is married, George has no further insight into Hedda's temperament. George's research into the "domestic industries of medieval Brabant" is an ironic symbol of his conservative, simple-minded views of married life, as well as a symbol that indicates his inability to encompass other than material details.

As to his heroine, Ibsen establishes her main symptoms of disaffection with life: a profound emotional coldness, an incapacity to interest herself in anything besides social pleasures, and a destructive desire to control the lives of others. Hedda cannot respond to the warmth of Aunt Julia, she cannot abide the idea of expecting a child, and was totally bored during her wedding trip.

To further express her emotional sterility, Ibsen shows how Hedda is unable to reciprocate in a relationship. Like a young child, she can only receive without knowing how to give in return. Without reciprocating, she accepts George's love and support; by pretending friendship, she learns all about Thea's personal life yet reveals no confidences of her own. Later on, when Lövborg recalls his previous relationship with Hedda, he describes how she extracted detailed confessions from him yet withheld her own self-revelations. This intense, almost morbid interest in the lives of others is another aspect of her empty emotional life. At the same time that investigating and analysing other people's lives is one way for Hedda to gain some understanding of her own unsatisfied nature, she reveals her personal frigidity and adolescent self-centeredness.

This first act also demonstrates a pathological quality in Hedda's personality. Cruelly insulting Aunt Julia by complaining that it is the servant's bonnet lying in the chair, Hedda tries to undermine Miss Tesman's sense of worth. Compelling Thea to reveal her innermost feelings, she seems to search for Mrs. Elvsted's weaknesses so she can later use this knowledge for her own selfish purposes. Having established that his heroine is emotionally empty yet eager to learn how other people face life's experiences, Ibsen shows how the imperious and unsubmitive Hedda tries to destroy the personal values of those whose satisfactions she cannot attain.

**Summary and Analysis of Act II**

**Summary**

As the curtain rises, Hedda is busy loading one of her pistols. There is nothing else to do besides shoot, she tells Judge Brack, who has come to see George. As they chat, Hedda tells him how bored she was during her wedding trip. She complains that her husband, with his everlasting talk about medieval civilization, is also boring. She is glad that Brack is a lively conversationalist who is "not at all a specialist." Her visitor wonders why Hedda accepted George in the first place. "My day was done," she sighs. "I had positively danced myself tired..."
my dear judge." Besides, among all her suitors, George, "who is correctness itself," was the one who offered marriage and a promising economic future; she saw no reason to refuse his proposal.

Brack, having himself been one of Hedda's admirers, admits that he never considered marriage. He enjoys being their family friend, he says, adding, "especially a friend of the mistress of the house." Very smoothly, he suggests that Hedda accept him as a third party in her domestic circle, for a "triangular friendship" will be convenient to all concerned. Hedda would then be able to enjoy the companionship of one who is not "a specialist," and Brack's relation with George would continue as before. Hedda agrees without committing herself.

At this moment, George enters. He has just visited his invalid Aunt Rina, who is very sick, and he has brought some books, including the recent publication by Eilert Lövborg. Although George expects to attend Brack's bachelor party this evening, he says he is eager to begin reading Lövborg's book and will come downstairs when it is time to leave. Hedda and the judge are free to continue their conversation.

Brack cannot understand why she is constantly bored; isn't she mistress of the very house she had set her heart on? She never liked this villa, replies Hedda. The matter came up when George escorted her home from a party one evening. As a pretext for conversation with the shy historian, Hedda relates, she pretended great interest in the villa they were just passing. This sham enthusiasm provided the first bond of sympathy between herself and George; from this followed the courtship, engagement, and eventual marriage.

Brack observes that she requires a vocation as a relief from boredom. Hedda confesses she would like to try and push George into politics, but now that they have such meagre finances this is impossible. Having the responsibility of a child would give her life an objective, Brack ventures. "No responsibilities for me," Hedda retorts angrily, and the judge remarks that her instincts are very unlike those of ordinary women. She despairs her purposeless life. "I often think there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for," Hedda observes darkly, "— boring myself to death."

George, dressed for the dinner, comes to ask if Lövborg left any message. Don't expect him to join the party, Hedda says; he shall spend the evening with herself and Thea. At this moment, Lövborg enters. When they discuss his latest book, the writer denies its virtues, saying it is just a sop he threw to the critics. "This is the real book," he says drawing a packet from his coat, "the book I have put my true self into." Dealing with the "civilizing forces of the future," the manuscript excites George's curiosity and he is eager for Lövborg to read aloud from it. George is further delighted when his friend promises not to compete with him for the professorship. The only interest Lövborg has in making his scheduled lecture tour, he tells George, is to accomplish a "moral victory." Refusing to drink a glass of punch with Brack and George, Lövborg joins Hedda, and she shows him the photograph album of their wedding journey. While she impersonally points out dull landscapes, Lövborg reminds her of the time when they were close comrades and he exposed all his secret thoughts to her. Her interest was not motivated by love, she admits, but by curiosity to learn about the outside world. "Comradeship in the thirst of life" could have continued even when they became serious lovers, Lövborg pursues. He regrets that she did not shoot him down as she threatened, for he still finds her lovely and fascinating. I was afraid of a scandal, replies Hedda, and adds, "The fact that I dared not shoot you down — that was not my most arr
evening." Lövborg is filled with emotion. "Ah, Hedda! Hedda Gabler!" he murmurs. "Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You and I! After all, then, it was your craving for life — " and he understands that she was afraid to give herself in love.

Mrs. Elvsted appears, and as they sit down together, Lövborg exclaims how courageous and lovely and inspiring Thea has been for him. When Lövborg refuses her offer of punch, Hedda subtly taunts him for feeling insecure about his temperance vow. She says that George and Brack also noticed his lack of self-confidence. Again Lövborg refuses to drink, and Hedda turns smilingly to Thea. "You see," she says, "he is as firm as a rock." Thea needn't have run to her house, distracted with fear and worry about her friend's will power. Deeply injured at this lack of trust, Lövborg downs two cocktails in vengeance. Then he announces that he will, after all, join George and Brack at this evening's dinner party.

Hedda assures them she will entertain Mrs. Elvsted until the writer returns to escort her home. When the men go out, Hedda comforts the agitated Thea. He will return at ten o'clock, she tells her friend. "I can see him already — flushed and fearless — with vine leaves in his hair." As the curtain falls, the victorious Hedda draws Thea, limp with exhaustion and anxiety, into the dining room for tea.

Analysis

In this act, Hedda fully expresses her desire to have power over someone. Frustrated at being unable to push her husband into a political career, incapable of maternal feelings, Hedda strives to compete with Thea for her influence over Lövborg. Having restored his liberty, she now looks forward to Eilert's fulfilling her romantic image of him as the incarnation of "the joy of life": he shall return "flushed and fearless with vine leaves in his hair!" That she has at once destroyed Thea's life work and Lövborg's morale is unimportant to Hedda; she merely wishes to have proof of her own worth by having power over someone.

At the same time that her craving for life distinguishes Hedda from "ordinary women," she shows, in this act, her deep commitment to the same bourgeois ethics which chain a woman to her domestic duties. Expressing to the judge that she accepted George Tesman because he "is correctness itself," Hedda implicitly rejects Brack's proposition of a domestic triangle: such a scandalous relationship would be repugnant to her. The judge, not recognizing that Hedda maintains such strict conventions, believes she has accepted his frank proposal.

Eilert Lövborg, however, shows more insight into Hedda's nature. When he accuses her of cowardice, he recognizes that she was too much a conformist to love an erratic and unconventional personality. Nevertheless, at the time of their youthful friendship, Hedda expressed her "craving for life" by being fascinated by Eilert's intensity and brilliance; extracting detailed confessions from him was her way of vicariously experiencing a liberated and excessive way of life she was too afraid to live for herself.

Summary and Analysis of Act III

Summary
It is 7:00 the next morning. The ladies have been fitfully dozing during their night watch, and Hedda now sends Thea off for a good nap, promising to wake her when Lövborg arrives. When George appears, Hedda is wide awake and listens eagerly as he tells her of Lövborg's extravagant behaviour at the party. He was so drunk that he even dropped his manuscript without noticing, and George picked it up. George praises his friend's book, admitting he feels envious for being himself unable to accomplish such brilliant work. Hedda demands the packet of papers, saying she would like to keep it awhile and read the manuscript.

At this moment, George receives a telegram that his Aunt Rina is close to death. He rushes out, barely greeting Brack, who has just arrived. The judge describes the rest of Eilert's activities. After the party, Lövborg landed at another soiree given by the red-haired singer, Diana. Accusing her of robbing him, he caused such a disturbance that the police were called; to make matters worse, Lövborg resisted arrest by assaulting one of the officers. Expecting Lövborg to seek Hedda's home as a refuge where he can meet with Mrs. Elvsted, Brack warns Hedda that he will resist any intrusion into the triangle; he wants nothing to threaten his free passage in and out of the Tesman residence. Hedda smiles mockingly at the implied threat. In other words, she calls to him as he goes, "you want to be the one cock in the basket."

When left alone, she takes the manuscript from the desk but replaces it hastily at Lövborg's approach. Thea Elvsted emerges to greet the dishevelled writer. He has come, he sorrowfully says, to say their ways must part; from now on she must live her life without him. Thea implores him to allow her to experience her crowning satisfaction: to be with him when the book appears. There will be no book, he answers, for he destroyed the manuscript. It is as if he "killed a little child," she says in despair, and because the "child" belonged to her too, he had no right to destroy it. Thea can do nothing but return home, facing a life without any future, without any further meaning.

Alone with Hedda, Lövborg declares he is unable to try to rebuild his life. Worse than destroying the manuscript, which he had in his keeping like his own child, he just lost it during this night of "debauchery and riotness," he tells Hedda. Having so deeply failed Mrs. Elvsted, he has no future and will "only try and make an end of it all — the sooner the better." "Eilert Lövborg — listen to me," Hedda commands. She takes one of her pistols from its case and hands it to him. "Will you not try to — to do it beautifully," she whispers. Thrusting the gun into his breast pocket, Lövborg leaves her.

Hedda, once more alone, takes the packet of papers from her desk. Sitting by the stove, she thrusts some pages into the fire. "Now I am burning your child, Thea!" she breathes. Peeling off papers, she hands them, one by one, into the flames until the entire manuscript is consumed. "Your child and Eilert Lövborg's," says Hedda with satisfaction. "I am burning — I am burning your child!"

**Analysis**

In this act, Hedda has confronted another frustration. Instead of seeing the awaited Lövborg rise to his full stature as a liberated artist victoriously imbued with life's joy, she views a demoralized reveller who ruined the evening in a drunken orgy, facing, in addition, a possible jail sentence for assaulting a police officer.
Now that Thea has left the scene, however, she has one further chance of retaining her influence over Lövborg so that he will provide her with an act of "courage and freedom." Offering him the pistol, Hedda imagines that he will end his life bravely and romantically to accord with her favourite images of beauty enhanced by violence and death. Furthermore, the packet of papers she possesses represents a material hold she still has on Lövborg's destiny. By destroying the manuscript she had no share in creating or realizing, Hedda also kills the child she was unable to bear for Lövborg. By destroying that work of others which she should have accomplished herself, Hedda also destroys those constant reminders of her own inadequacies. Symbolically denying the life works of others, Hedda affirms her own unsatisfied sense of worth.

**Summary and Analysis of Act IV**

**Summary**

It is later in the evening. Miss Tesman enters, dressed in mourning. Hedda greets her, expressing regret for Rina's death. Aunt Julia plans to fill the gap in her life by finding someone to care for. Because it is necessary to live for someone, she says, she will seek an occupant for Rina's little room — some invalid in want of nursing.

After Julia leaves, George comes back, asking Hedda for the manuscript; he fears Lövborg might do himself injury before he can return it. Coolly, Hedda tells him she burned the papers. She wanted no one to put her husband "in the shade," she tells the delighted George, who never heard Hedda express her love for him.

Thea suddenly appears, apologizing for the intrusion. Having heard that Lövborg is in the hospital, she asks if they have further news of his condition. Brack, newly arrived, tells them that Lövborg wounded himself in the breast. "Not in the temple?" Hedda quickly inquires. While Thea makes an effort to control herself, Hedda breaks the silence, declaring that there is beauty in this suicide, for Eilert has made up his account with life. "He has had the courage to do the one right thing," she affirms.

George expresses regret that Lövborg has left the world without bequeathing it "the book that would have immortalized his name." Mrs. Elvsted fumbles in her dress pocket. Producing many scraps of paper — "all the loose notes he used to dictate from" — she suggests that they might reconstruct the book. George is delighted. Having spent his career organizing other people's manuscripts, he is eager to dedicate himself to putting together Lövborg's notes. Forgetful of everything but the papers spread on the table before them, Thea and George begin the task.

Hedda languidly reclines in the armchair, Judge Brack at her side. It gives her a new feeling of freedom, she tells her admirer, to know that a "deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world — a deed of spontaneous beauty." Brack dispels her illusions, informing her of the true circumstances of Lövborg's death, which he did not disclose to Thea. Lövborg did not die voluntarily, he tells the astonished Hedda. The police discovered the body in Diana's boudoir: Lövborg had forced his way into the singer's apartment, talking wildly about a "lost
child." While they struggled, the pistol in his breast pocket discharged itself, and he died from a bullet wound in his bowels.

Her shocked face is disfigured by an expression of loathing and despair. "Oh, what a curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ridiculous and mean?" she cries out. Brack remains unperturbed. One more disagreeable aspect remains, he says, for Lövborg must have stolen the pistol. Hedda passionately denies this, and Brack nods. He says that if someone were to identify the pistol, she herself would be drawn into the scandal. "So I am in your power, Judge Brack," says Hedda. "You have me at your beck and call from this time forward." Leaning closer, he assures her that he shall not "abuse his advantage."

Hedda stands behind Mrs. Elvsted, passing her hands affectionately through her friend's hair. "Here you are, Thea, sitting with George — just as you used to sit with Eilert Lövborg," and she asks whether she can inspire George as well as she used to inspire Eilert. Intently working, her husband exclaims that he begins to feel inspired by Thea and asks his wife to return to Judge Brack. "Is there nothing I can do to help you two?" asks Hedda. "No, nothing in the world," George answers without looking up.

He suggests to Thea that she rent the room in Aunt Julia's apartment; without disturbing Hedda, they can meet there every evening to work on the manuscript. "But how am I to get through the evenings out here?" Hedda calls from the back room. George assures her that the judge shall look in on her every now and then. Brack gaily adds that he shall visit "every blessed evening," and that "we shall get on capitally together, we two!" Loud and clear, Hedda answers, "Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack. Now that you are the one cock in the basket — " A shot rings out. George, Mrs. Elvsted, and Brack discover Hedda stretched lifeless on the sofa; she has shot herself in the temple.

**Analysis**

Going beyond the destruction that Hedda began in the previous acts, circumstances depicted in the final scene destroy the life's work of each other character. Julia's sister dies, leaving the old aunt with no one to care for; George relinquishes his work on medieval Brabant; Thea has definitely lost Lövborg; and Hedda confronts profound disillusion when she learns of Eilert's ignoble death.

The secondary characters, however, all find vocational rebirth as they confront their ruined life purposes. Thea, having saved Lövborg's notes, begins, with George Tesman, to conceive a new "child"; the professor so expert at assembling other people's manuscripts can dedicate his abilities to reconstruct his dead friend's brilliant ideas; and Julia can again care for her beloved nephew now that Hedda is gone.

Hedda alone faces a life without a future. Deprived of her satisfaction at the beauty of Eilert's suicide, she learns that she was in fact responsible for the abhorrent manner of Lövborg's death. Her ideal of freedom, courage, and beauty turns into a loathsome reality. Judge Brack applies the final vulgar touch to a situation that Hedda already finds repulsive; he alone can inform the police of the facts that would implicate her in a shocking scandal. The conventional Hedda must either succumb to Brack's power or face a public inquiry. Now that even her husband has no further need of her, no one depends upon Hedda at this point. On the other
hand, she is unwillingly enthralled by the ruthless Brack. Deprived of freedom, Hedda faces either "boring herself to death" or committing a valiant suicide.

**Hedda Gabler: The Historical, Social and Cultural Context**

Hedda Gabler is not an easy character to get to know. At first reading she seems a bitter personality portrayed in an old-fashioned script set in an out-of-date and foreign society. How could a woman in 102-year-old play possibly be understandable or relevant to the late-twentieth-century student? However, upon further examination, Hedda Gabler's fictional reality not only offers us the opportunity to observe the art and social concerns of Ibsen's day, but extends to us a paradigm by which we may compare and evaluate the principles of our day.

In approaching this play, it is important to recall that Hedda was written as a theatrical work in the realm of contemporary realism, not as a historical curio. While the differences of culture and period now put a certain distance between ourselves and the subject, Ibsen was most emphatic that his characters were representative of actual human beings. Hedda marked a return to the theatrical style which we term "realism," a method of playwriting in which the internal motivations of the personalities in the play are explored within a specific social context.

Norway was not so remote that it was unaffected by the feminist debate of the Victorian age. While in 1871 Denmark led the Scandinavian countries in initiating an organization for improving women's status, by the 1880s Norway had established a woman's rights movement of its own. Growing economic pressures made it increasingly difficult for the middle-class family to provide for unmarried daughters in the home, but both prejudice and legislation barred women from either meaningful education or dignified employment. Some change was soon forthcoming; women were admitted to the University of Christiania (Oslo) in 1882, and 1884 saw the founding of Norsk Kvinneraksforening (Norwegian Women's Movement Association), a pioneering liberation coalition that remains active to this day. That same year Ibsen himself presented a petition to the government demanding that married women be granted the right to earnings and property.

Victorian attitudes were slower to change. While the lower class woman had for some time been allowed to work in the factories, concessions had never been made in the home. Men did not assist with domestic responsibilities, leaving the women their "natural" duties in keeping the house and raising the children. This order of affairs had support in the nineteenth century Darwinian sciences, medical and social experts alike taught that cultural, physiological, and psychological differences between genders were caused by evolutionary forces. The belief was that "women's individual evolution was arrested earlier than men's to permit the conservation of their energies for reproduction". Women were considered biologically more intuitive, self-sacrificing, and tender than men, and thus naturally disposed to choose marriage and motherhood, any other choice was considered tragic. Even the arts of the day perpetuated this "ideology of domesticity":

The “angel in the house,” sexually passive and refined, whose responsibility it was to oversee the provision of a sanctuary of well-ordered comfort and peace, became the literary ideal for
middle-class women. In all classes of society, hearth and home acquired the significance of religious symbolism.

Steven Mintz explains in A Prison of Expectations that a woman was expected to maintain a "walled garden" of a home, a place where her husband could find refuge and be purified from his encounters with the harsh realities of his ruthless business world, and a place where the innocence of her children could be protected. A wife was thought able to maintain this refuge because of her special virtues of femininity..."Women, by their very natures, were intended to purify the sphere of family and home" (Boswell 33).

The realm of womanly affairs, both literary and social, included motherhood. A mother was accountable for the health, manners and morals of her children. She was to be conscientious in training her daughters to assume future angelic duties. In addition to passing along the complex body taboos designed to defend purity from earthly animal passions, the middle-to-upper-class mother was to drill her girls in the niceties of the intricate feminine social duties that marked her place in the pecking order of bourgeois society. An unfortunate error in either discipline could destroy the young woman’s reputation, and bar her from the polite circles that were her only outlets. Mothers were not as responsible for the daughters’ intellectual education:

Schooling was often seen as of secondary importance to the influence of the home in the education of middle-class girls....The more prosperous families might send their daughters to expensive and select boarding schools for a while; the less wealthy were more likely to patronize small homely “academies” which aimed to foster those same ideals of bourgeois that were nurtured in the middle-class home. An examination of the curriculum (both formal and informal) of the majority of girls’ boarding schools of the period will show that social values and objectives took precedence over academic goals: girls were educated with their marriage prospects and the ideal of the “cultivated homemaker” in mind.

Keeping in mind the ultimate goal of a “good marriage,” both parents and schools tended to strongly discourage bookishness, vocational aspirations, and other unfeminine behavior. Instead, young women of all classes “expected to look after their families and hoped above all for a ‘good’ husband; that is, a good provider” (Lewis 11). Such would be the education that Hedda and Thea received both in society and at the school where they were classmates.

Viewed in the context of Ibsen’s era, Hedda becomes the embodiment of the identity crisis facing the middle-class woman during that transitional time. Raised by a privileged father in the unlanded Norwegian upper-class, Hedda is seasoned in freedoms more typical of males of the period, including experience with rough horsemanship and guns. Her guns, however, are not tools but mementos and dangerous toys. She has been granted masculine leisure and tastes, but not corresponding responsibilities or a useful education. She can never be the son that the Victorian General would have wanted.

Neither can she be her mother’s daughter. Significantly, Hedda’s mother is completely absent from the narrative, whether destroyed by the loss of the old values, the coming of the new, or merely by childbirth, the reason is unknown. The system designed to transmit traditional values has broken down. There is no one to teach Hedda the specifics of the feminine codes in behavior or etiquette. The only inheritance which may have come from her mother is a
shabby old piano, a possession she both values and disdains. She will not discard it, but neither will she put it on public display as she will the pistols and the portrait of her father.

Hedda seems reluctant to face either the passing of the old ways or the changes she faces in marrying Tesman. She dislikes the smell of the decaying potpourri, and spends her time reminiscing and re-enacting portions of her past relationship with Lövborg. Having out of necessity achieved her destiny of a respectable marriage, she sees no hope for the future of that union. Sighing over September, she seems to have somehow missed her own summer: “Hedda is not unripe, but rather is like an all-too-early decayed Autumn, as she returns to the narrow perspectives of a child and its playful self-seeking”.

Certainly she does not look forward to the birth of the child whose presence in her womb propels her inevitably towards a future of either death in childbirth, or life as a mother (which, in her childhood situation, also meant absence or death). She has no alternative. By temperament and upbringing she is as unsuited for Thea’s work as she is for Diana’s. As a female, she can only covet parasite Judge Brack’s male prerogatives. While she professes a desire to control destiny and make some real difference in a life, she sees no value in wife and motherhood, so vicariously participates in the romance of Lövborg’s dissipations. Endowed with a taste for the trappings of wealth (such as servants and expensive clothes), and ambitious to make her mark in social circles, she lacks both the social training and the inherited money to advance beyond her bourgeois desires. She clings to the fading glories of her fame as the dashing Miss Gabler and seethes in impotent jealousy.

Discontented as she is, Hedda’s suicide is still unexpected. One explanation of the violent act can be discovered in the Ibsen’s own pattern of playwriting, shaped in part by the world that shaped the playwright. As Charles Lyons explains in Hedda Gabler: Gender, Role, and World,

The dramatic character, Hedda, is not determined merely by the social restrictions imposed upon the female at the end of the nineteenth century as that world is represented by the social dynamics of the play; the character is also configured by the social dynamics of Ibsen’s basic sexual paradigm, a sexual paradigm that voices the male-dominated sexual ideology of Ibsen’s moment in history mediated through the idiosyncrasies of his own psyche.

Conscious as he was of the changing world around him, Ibsen could not help be influenced by the literary constructs that in part framed his developing intellect. Hedda, as well as Thea, may be seen as children of those literary constructions. According to the prevailing literature, if a woman was unable to succeed as an angel, she must be dealt with as a monster. And Ibsen not only attacked such a notion, in some ways, he can be seen as perpetuating it.

In Hedda Gabler, wife Hedda becomes just such a death-giving fiend. Masculinized out of her angelhood, she turns her powers to malevolent manipulation, pitching family members against each other, dominating her friends, burning the fruits of Lövborg’s labours before driving him to emasculate himself, and finally murdering her own child. Unlike most of Ibsen’s heroines, she makes no real self-discovery and achieves no growth. Her suicide accomplishes nothing. Is Thea, therefore, the real heroine of the play? She is the one with the courage to ignore respectability, to change her life and leave her passionless marriage in pursuit of the man she loves. It would seem that Thea is as deserving the death sentence as surely as Hedda. Thea’s abandonment of her role as step-mother can be construed as a drive to actually fulfil her destiny as the snow-white angel. It is her purity that h
it is her presence that has so inspired him to write his masterpiece; the book is acknowledged as Lövborg’s and Thea’s sexless “Brain child.” Thea, of course, did none of the actual writing, as the ingrained belief of the Medieval, Romantic, and Victorian eras was in the actual “sonship” of the written text. According to that belief, an author literally fathered, with his female muse, a posterity of “brain children.” The power to create was thus exclusively male, and women attempting to write were considered presumptuous, freakish, unnatural, and subject to various health problems.

Thea accomplished her angelic potential while actually in the Elvsted home, surviving in a dual marriage as she kept house and raised one man’s children while supporting another man with her love and inspiration. When that double-husband divided, and Thea was forced to divide her devotions and chose to leave the home, disaster ensued. She could neither keep Lövborg from falling back into evil ways, nor protect their literary child. In fact, Lövborg blamed her distrust of him for driving him back to drink. Thea could only redeem herself by offering to sacrifice herself in resurrecting Lövborg’s book. The play seems to suggest that she will additionally serve Tesman as a far superior replacement for Hedda. Once Hedda is destroyed, and Thea suitably paired Tesman, literary moral order will once again be restored. Hedda Gabler is not only a fascinating play in itself, but it also serves as a reminder of a blind spot in our own day.

Major Themes

Individual vs. Group: -  Hedda is preoccupied with self-determination - the idea that she can dictate the course of her own life, no matter how much societal pressure may try to move her along a different course. And yet, as the play moves on, we see just how much a victim Hedda is of the "group": she married a man she didn't love simply because her "time ran out"; will have children simply because she is supposed to; and ultimately destroys herself because she fears being thrust into the spotlight of a public scandal. What Hedda discovers is that an individual has no power in the face of a group unless they can manipulate that group - something that she continually fails to do.

Self-Liberation vs. Self-Renunciation: -  Hedda believes that the power to determine when and how one dies is the ultimate freedom, and is perhaps the only real control that an individual has in life. At first, she attempts to prove this vicariously by encouraging Lovborg to have a "beautiful death" - she gives him one of her pistols, essentially pulling all the strings that might make him veer towards suicide. However, when Lovborg dies from an unintended shot to the groin, Hedda realizes that the beautiful death is still a fantasy - and she can only bring it to life for herself. When she does, Brack exclaims, in the last, highly charged line of the play, "No one does that!"

Anti-tragedy vs. Tragedy: -  While *Hedda Gabler* has the structure of a classical tragedy, and perhaps the trappings of it, there is also the argument that Hedda is the anti-tragedy. As Caroline W. Mayerson writes, "Hedda is incapable of making the distinction between an exhibitionistic gesture which inflates the ego, and the tragic death, in which the ego is sublimated in order that the values of life may be extended and reborn. Her inability to perceive the difference between melodrama and tragedy accounts for the disparity between Hedda’s presumptive view of her own suicide and our evaluation of its significance." In other words, while Hedda declares that it is a beautiful death that she seeks, and a beautiful death
that offers the individual liberation from the mundane trivialities of society, upon her own
death, we see only the futility of it, the smallness of it. Ultimately, Hedda's death seems to
have served no purpose except as a selfish proclamation of principles pushed too far.

**Sex vs. Sterility:** - The "notorious" female character in dramatic works of literature is
frequently a firebrand, fully in control of her sexuality and conscious of her power over men.
Hedda, however, seems terribly afraid of her own sexuality - she nearly kills Lovborg when he
gets too close to her, rebuffs Brack's suggestion that she would jump out of her marriage to
Tesman, even though she seems to have little interest in her new husband, and ultimately
shows little concern for her own soon-to-be-born child. Indeed, as the play goes on, we
wonder how Hedda ever got pregnant at all - she's as mystified by her condition as the
audience, and refuses to even discuss or acknowledge it. This one possibility of fecundity - of
proving her worth as a "woman" - is decisively ignored and thus implicitly refused.

**Wild Nature vs. Tamed Assimilation:** - One of the more compelling themes in *Hedda
Gabler* involves how an individual is groomed to cope with the stifling pressures of society,
and whether they maintain the trappings of their "wild" self or succumb completely to a
community's norms. Hedda is obviously torn between the two (see "Individual vs. Group"),
but right before shooting herself, she plays a "wild piano piece", as if to claim her soul before
burying it. Meanwhile, Tesman is at odds with Lovborg: the former can only regurgitate other
people's tried-and-tested ideas, while the latter is an untamed genius who simply writes down
his thoughts and theories and finds them met with acclaim. Tesman, however, is too afraid to
ever indulge his own original thoughts, and so dedicates his life to reconstructing Lovborg's
ideas and taking credit for them.

"Old Woman" vs. "New Woman": - At the time Ibsen wrote *Hedda Gabler*, the
term "New Woman" had emerged to describe "women who were pushing against the limits
which society imposed on women." While the New Woman sought self-determination and
freedom, as well as equality with males and a true understanding of female sexuality, the Old
Woman believed in self-sacrifice, a woman's duty to her husband, and sexuality only in terms
of childbearing. Hedda is a model case of a "New Woman" who ultimately finds no satisfaction
in liberation. This is not to say that Ibsen by any stretch of the imagination intends *Hedda
Gabler* as a critique of the New Woman; to the contrary, he is offering a critique of the
resistance against it.

**Motivation vs. Boredom:** - One of the great questions of *Hedda Gabler* is whether
Hedda's actions are inspired by genuine principles, or whether she is motivated entirely by
boredom. If we examine the above theme of Old Woman vs. New Woman, it is possible to
interpret her character as a New Woman shoved into Old Woman trappings, and who thus
naturally gravitates towards pushing limits, pulling strings, and manipulating others in the
hopes of freeing herself. She is a New Woman, then, looking for her place in life. However,
Hedda continuously finds that her efforts only leave her even more bored. At one point, she
even tells Tesman that her only talent in life is "boring herself to death" - an eerie prophecy
of the events to come.

**Women in Hedda Gabler**
Modern criticism of *Hedda Gabler* rests on the idea that a male dominated society repressed and limited Hedda's brilliance. Ibsen studied the repressed conditions of women in many of his plays; however his own view of women was limited by his “celebration of their primary role as the nurturing mothers whose mission is to educate the young.” No wonder there is no solution for Hedda but suicide. She clearly would never make a good mother, and there was nothing else for such a woman to do unless she could nurture a man’s genius, as Thea did. Nurturing genius, however, was clearly not Hedda’s gift. General Gabler’s pistols were, finally, the only option for his daughter. *Hedda Gabler* is set about thirty years earlier than when it was written. Clurman writes that:

> It was a period, Ibsen once remarked, when women were not allowed to play any role apart from marriage and motherhood. The “protection” they enjoyed separated them from the realities of life. Hedda shuns everything painful and ugly; she cannot tolerate the sight of sickness or death. She is already pregnant when the play opens, but mention of it is abhorrent to her….Small wonder then that she admits that all she is good for is boring herself to death.

And yet Thea breaks out of this sheltered life. Hedda is a victim, but she is also a coward. Both George Tesman and Eilert Lövborg develop their identities through their professions. They compete for fame and position through training, effort and intellect. Hedda, however, has no profession, nor does she care about anything. She has no interest in what Eilert writes, only in his potential fame and glamour, and in his rivalry with her husband. She can only compete with Thea for control of a man, not to develop a personal identity. Worse, Hedda’s control is destructive, while Thea’s is healing and creative. Hedda married George Tesman to establish a social life as the wife of a professor; she wanted to control Eilert Lövborg destructively to rival Thea’s constructive control as the inspiring force behind his genius.

Hedda’s only stable identity is as General Gabler’s daughter. She has no life of her own, no projects of her own. Although she envies Eilert Lövborg’s freedom and wildness, she shows no interest at all in the content of his writing, nor is she willing to risk scandal personally. She cooperates, in short, with the extremely limited role offered by her social condition. Both the play and Hedda herself are limited to what can be said and done around a lady.

The respectable Judge Brack is obviously familiar with Mademoiselle Danielle, the prostitute in whose rooms Eilert died. Further, Brack tries to use his knowledge that Eilert used Hedda’s revolver to blackmail Hedda into having an adulterous affair with him. Brack has evidently enjoyed a series of such adulterous relationships with other respectable women. Even the respectable, scandal-fearing Hedda, is clearly fascinated by hearing about the disreputable goings-on at Mademoiselle Danielle’s.

Hedda’s fascination with the forbidden male world of freedom and excess draws her to both Lövborg and Brack, and finally leads to her destruction. Her gender, class, and loathing of everything ugly limit what she is able or willing to hear about the outside world. Events are reported to the house, but only in terms acceptable to Hedda. Such restraint is imposed by society, as well as by Hedda’s wishes.

Her lack of knowledge of the outside world probably is a major factor in her romantic idealization of Lövborg’s wildness and lack of self-control. She has never
sordid surroundings; she only heard his stories about his escapades and imagines him carousing as a Dionysian god with vine-leaves in his hair instead of as a stumbling drunk frequenting brothels. Hedda does not even understand the concept of Dionysius correctly. She just is aware of the carousing and freedom of the god, not of his creative inspiration and potential for creating social cohesion.

Her questioning of Lövborg years earlier showed her desire for information about this forbidden male world. But, ultimately, Hedda is determined not to break the taboos of her society and when she felt she had to choose between Lövborg and following the rules, she chose the rules and a loveless marriage to Tesman.

Ultimately, Hedda never does understand the creative genius which Thea is able to nurture in Eilert Lövborg. Hedda romanticizes his weaknesses, confusing his lack of self-control with god-like courage. She idealizes his death as noble instead of a sordid accident, and when she is trapped by Brack’s blackmail, she chooses the coward’s way out—suicide—to escape from a situation largely of her own making.

To conclude, we can say that Hedda is a creature of the nineteenth century, and that her romantic ignorance of what matters and what is real would not occur today. However, it would be foolish to deny that there are plenty of people, now and always, who dislike the petty limitations of real life and take refuge in their fantasies, confusing rebellion with creativity, self-indulgence with freedom and destruction with fulfilment.

**Symbolism in Hedda Gabler**

**Introduction:** Repeated images and symbols are frequently used in dramas to contribute to the development of the themes. The repetition of a certain image in the context of the play attaches metaphorical significance to a physical object. "Hedda Gabler," a play written by Henrik Ibsen contains many such elements, all of which further the critical analysis of the constraint exerted by a patriarchal, bourgeois society of nineteenth century Norway on a woman who "thirsts for life." The resulting struggle between her inner desires for freedom and her own conformist attitudes has corrupted her perception of the meaning of life.

**Symbolic importance of Setting:** The setting of "Hedda Gabler," which remains unchanged through the play, is significant symbolically as it demonstrates the domestic cage into which Hedda, as a woman and wife, had been cast. The dark, sombre colours of the drawing room presents the "monotonous landscape" that constitutes her prison, relieved by a glass door that looks out onto "autumn foliage." Through the entire play, the audience is visually reminded of the symbolic representation of the spiritual barrenness of the house, which opens out to deteriorating life - "all yellow and withered," nearing the season of death. This casts ominous overtones on the actions of the characters in this setting.

**Origin of the House:** In addition to this effect is the origins of the house itself, revealed through dialogue that it had once belonged to the late Mr Falk, a cabinet minister. This draws the concept of class stratification into the society of the time and the class-consciousness that is ingrained into every member. That the house "reminds one of the departed" symbolises the decline of the power of the aristocracy in the 1890's, taken over by the stoical bourgeoisie. Hedda, once a former member of the higher classes, has been forced to marry down into a lower class, which she speaks contemptibly of. She finds her life to be...
one without purpose besides "boring herself to death" and that middle class morality has effectively eliminated whatever social power she once had as General Gabler's daughter - in effect, a "lady."

**The Glass Door:** Hedda’s frustration at her powerlessness and dependence on an obtuse scholar is best represented by the repeated image of her "looking out the glass door." The glass door, in itself, presents only a tenuous, easily breakable barrier between her entrapment and the outside world. She longs for freedom, to catch a "glimpse of a world that one wasn't allowed to know about" but this transparent barrier confines Hedda. The image of her "walking nervously" across the enclosed, claustrophobic space of the drawing room to look out or "tap nervously" on the glass door stresses that the society in general has imprisoned her due to its restrictive definition of femininity.

**General Gabler’s Role:** Hedda struggles against the role of subservient wife and loving mother. She received masculine upbringing and the strong father figure that dominates her sub-conscious. Both these are symbolized by the portrait of General Gabler which peers imposingly from the inner room, representative of Hedda's sub-conscious, to dominate the entire stage setting. Though she never once mentions her father, it is obvious that her craving for power and alignment with male desires are stemmed from him. Hence, Hedda's character and life seem to be wholly determined through this strong connection with a military past, which emphasizes conformity and discipline. There lies the chief reason as to her mortal fear of scandal - "I never jump out." She, then, is also a woman trapped by her past.

**Pistols:** The pistols, giver to her by her father, are symbols of masculine power and aggression. They give Hedda the power of life and death, one she uses to the detriment of others around her in the selfish desire to give meaning to her life. They inspired momentary fear in Judge Brack in his first visit to Hedda, his unsavoury intentions indicated by his using the back way. More importantly, they are the instruments through which Hedda can exert her control over another "human being's fate," Lovborg's - not to life but to death, which has to "shimmer with spontaneous beauty." The idea of beauty in suicide reveals the distorted ideals that Hedda holds. Ironically, the pistol also brings about her downfall as it was used as the medium through which Brack could bring her under his control.

**Committing Suicide:** Towards the end, as the illusion of her power over another is shattered, shown by her disgust in response to Lovborg's accidental death, she reaches out to the final illusion wherein she commits an act, which she deems courageous. In her distorted ideals, shooting herself through the temple with the pistol was necessary for her to gain freedom but it in itself is also an act derived from her past. Committing suicide by shooting oneself through the temple is glorified and deemed the highest form of honour in the military code when all is lost. The act could also be romantically beautified - an idea again taken from her father's influence. Hedda has finally retreated deep into her inner sanctum, where, in the presence of the General, allowed the past to ultimately reclaim her life.

**Easy Chair:** Objects in the room presents a host of repeated images, most important of which are the easy chair and the stove. The easy chair connotes a throne, that is, the seat of power. The power play in the interactions of the characters is conveyed through possession of this seat. Originally, Hedda is the one who sits in it, connoting the fact that she holds the power although it is restricted to the domestic sphere. She is the stronger figure in her relationship with Tesman as he serves her like a loyal, admiring subject - "It's so jolly waiting on you, Hedda." Further, when Brack first comes to call in Act 1, her act
reaching out her hand] seem to indicate her regal aura she held his audience from the throne.

Shifts in power as the play progresses can be demonstrated through the easy chair. On Brack's later visit, Hedda is again sitting on the chair but Brack grasps the back of it, leaning over her to claim proprietorship and hence, control of her. At the end, the stage direction - "[in the easy chair, calling out gaily]" shows that Brack, through manipulative methods, has seized the throne and now holds power over Hedda. Deposed and powerless, Hedda is driven to suicide. The dramatic shift in power leads to her inevitable demise.

**Stove:** The other object, the stove, holds fire and is symbolic of destructiveness, a character trait most associated with Hedda. She is most often seen to be incessantly moving and standing by it besides the glass door. Thea's negative to Berte's offer to raise the fire is contrasted with Hedda's desire to refuel it, contrasting creation and destruction which both characters are respective embodiments of. The scene where Hedda maniacally burns the manuscript in the stove shows the true extent of her malice and selfishness. The development of Hedda's somewhat twisted psychology is near completion through the stove as a symbolic device.

**Manuscript:** The manuscript is referred to symbolically as a child, the product of creation, love and inspiration between Thea and Lovborg. With the personification of an inanimate object to an innocent child, the last straw of condemnation against Hedda's malignant act is thrown. The deliberate, cold-blooded murder of a child is inexcusable despite the social repression of her independence and sterility of her spirit, which have led her to such a crime.

**Burning of Manuscript:** What utterly appals the reader in the burning of the manuscript is that Hedda has destroyed Lovborg's "vision of the future," his hope of spiritual redemption and realization of his Bohemian ideals. Eilert Lövborg, through his words to Hedda, is frantic - "devil knows what hands it's fallen into" as he sees his loss of the manuscript to be worse than killing a child. This is because, with the act of killing, one knows for certain that a child is dead. But with its loss, its fate is uncertain, the future is precarious and all hopes are lost.

**Women's Hair:** Description of the characters' physical appearances present continuous images through the play; notably, the description of the women's hair. The fact that Hedda's hair is "not noticeably abundant" signifies her lack of spiritual substance, her incapability to experience depth of emotion and her fear of commitment and responsibility, especially such pertaining to motherhood. In this instance, she is revealed to be an unconventional woman who despises her own femaleness. On the other hand, Thea is a woman very much in touch with her feminine side, her hair being "remarkably fair... exceptionally thick and wavy." Her hair highlights her femininity and she is capable of love, serving to inspire Lovborg and to contribute to the creation of their spiritual child.

Basically, these explicit descriptions show that Hedda and Thea are the antithesis of each other. Both characters are composed of contradictions. Though Hedda is obviously the stronger of the two, as she forcefully pushes, pulls and corners Thea into difficult situations, she paradoxically admits that she is a "coward at heart." This indicates that it is because of the fear of scandal that dictates her life, that she has sought to control someone else's life to satiate her need for revenge against society.
Thea on the other hand, though shown to be weaker than Hedda and compliant to the progress of events, has demonstrated great bravery in defying society by leaving a loveless, miserable marriage. In this aspect, she is unconventional in the context of the time. It is in the quality that she is willing to sacrifice a stable and respectable position in society to pursue what Lovborg offers, that the audience is positioned to admire her.

"Vine leaves in the hair": - It is a repeated image made by Hedda in relation to her former lover. It is a symbol of victory, heroism and conquest. Hedda wants this of Lovborg because she desires to vicariously witness his success and empowerment. Her self-centred nature is highlighted as whatever emotion she feels for him is ruthlessly pushed aside in the view that he promises her personal power. The image is also reminiscent of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, fertility and pleasure. Excessive behaviour is freedom to Hedda's corrupted view, just as beauty exists in death only through suicide.

Conclusion: - Hedda's "passion for life" and "hunger for freedom" have been stunted by conformity to a patriarchal society that marginalises women. Her response to this disempowerment is to seek her sense of power through destructive means. Such a portrait of a woman, her fiendish desires and her somewhat convoluted psychological state cannot be adequately developed without these symbols and repeated images. Each has a set part to play in this tragedy to draw the strings of the protagonist’s inevitable death close.

**Significance of the Title of the Play**

*Trace the influences of General Gabler on the life and psychology of Hedda/ the play "Hedda Gabler" is also called "General Gabler's daughter", for what it stands for?/ why Hedda likes to be called Hedda Gabler, while she is Hedda Tesman on the stage?/ 'Hedda perishes in the clash between repressive masculine society of the era and freewill'. Give a satisfying answer./Hedda is the cold, emotionless product of a disapproving and domineering society and father, comment.*

Henrik Ibsen’s Hedda Gabler is not truly indicative of his vast body of work: the protagonist is female and the play is a character study. Oddly enough, though, Hedda does not evolve or progress throughout the entirety of the work. Rather, she remains a cold and manipulative woman. When this fact is realised, the only task is discovering why Hedda continues as a flat character that is restrained from gaining the status of a hero. Truthfully, there are many variables that shape Hedda’s life. Nonetheless, two factors in particular stand out—her father, General Gabler, and the repressive, masculine society of the era.

It is fitting that the title of the play is Hedda's maiden name, Hedda Gabler, for the play is to a large extent about the formerly aristocratic Hedda's inability to adjust to the bourgeois life into which she has married. Her tragedy lies not only in her own suicide but in her desire that Eilert should have a "beautiful" suicide: she hopes that life can be beautiful, can measure up to a certain standard, regardless of practicalities like professional success or failure. She is amused by how much Tesman worries about making a living.

This aristocratic privileging of "aesthetic" matters causes Hedda to feel very unsympathetic to Tesman. She doesn't allow him to use the word "we" to describe the two of them. It also allows her to feel little guilt when "cheating on" him, if only on an emotional level, with Eilert and Judge. Her values, based on an aesthetic standard rather than the moral standard, etc.
which her husband conforms, are beyond Tasman’s control or even his understanding; as a result, he cannot predict her actions. At the same time, however, Hedda’s apparent pregnancy draws attention to the tragic nature of her quest. She continually denies the inevitable.

The rest of the male characters are more or less in love with Hedda, perhaps because of her almost decadent sense of beauty. Brack wants to establish a private relationship with her, parallel to her relationship with Tesman, and Eilert dearly hopes that she shares his “passion for life.” She finds both of these ideas silly, openly rejecting Eilert’s notion and teasing Brack by saying that he wants to be “the cock of the walk.” Even Mrs. Elvsted feels intimidated by Hedda. Because of this popularity, she is the most powerful character. She toys with others because she can find no solace or entertainment in life. Indeed, Hedda’s power is so far-reaching that her own self-destruction leads almost inevitably to the destruction of the other characters’ lives.

Although Ibsen does not directly address certain influences of surroundings overhead, he succeeds in conveying their critical significance. A common underlying theme in Ibsen’s work is the linking of death and music. And, as one might have deduced, this premise is employed in Hedda Gabler. Moreover, the ever-present piano, belonging to the late General Gabler, symbolises Hedda’s past freedom, prior to marrying George Tesman, as the “General’s daughter.” A more obvious example of General Gabler’s influence over Hedda is the large portrait of him that dominates the “inner” room. In fact, as Ibsen initially describes the single set, he momentarily focuses on the presence of the portrait of the “handsome, elderly man in a General’s uniform”.

With this description, the reader is made aware of the General’s presence, even after his death. Arguably, the most significant influence the General has over Hedda is the fact that Hedda is unable to rid herself of her “Hedda Gabler” identity. It is extremely odd to be known by a name that is, in effect, a product of the past, as Hedda has recently become “Hedda Tesman.” Throughout the play, Hedda is referred to as “Hedda Gabler,” or, more simply, “General Gabler’s daughter.” This fact is also indicative of the kind of “facelessness” that women of the era were often subject to.

Yet another aspect of the General’s rearing of Hedda is her unusual fascination with his pistols. This fascination is one of the first given clues that Hedda was raised as a boy would have been. The mere possibility of Hedda being raised as a male is sufficient evidence to explain her underlying disdain at being a woman—unable to express herself as a man would. Instead, Hedda simply “contents herself with negative behaviour instead of constructive action”. Since she cannot express herself outright, she amuses herself by manipulating others. The most compelling episode of Hedda’s perfected brand of manipulation is the role she plays in the death of Eilert Lövborg, a former love. Despite the fact that Eilert is the only person who can evoke true passion in her, Hedda feels the need to destroy him, purely for the purpose of “having the power to mould a human destiny”. Since she is unable to directly control anyone or anything, Hedda chooses to rebel against the society that shapes her and obliterate one of its future leaders.

Needless to say, the Victorian era of literature and society did not offer a profusion of opportunities for young women. This fact is made abundantly clear in Hedda Gabler. Despite the fact that society stifles Hedda, it is not the only factor that restra
independence, as well as expressing herself. In reality, Hedda’s own cowardice generously contributes to her inescapable end. But, of course, the root of her cowardice is her former life involving her father, General Gabler.

Even though Hedda takes pleasure in creating scandal, however, she is deathly frightened of being associated with it. One such incidence involves Thea Elvsted, Hedda’s long-forgotten schoolmate, explaining to Hedda her current, scandalous situation concerning Eilert Lövborg, who is Thea’s stepchildren’s tutor. Specifically, Thea is rebelling against the conventions of society and pursuing Lövborg. Hedda, constantly aware of scandal, responds in a predictable manner: “But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?” This scene is the first of many that reveals Hedda’s inability to disregard society and scandal and live the life she has never dared to live. Indeed, the sole reason that Hedda marries George Tesman is due to the fact that he is the only one of her suitors that expresses an interest in marriage. Once again, Hedda’s fear of society’s ideals for women forces her to compromise her thoughts and desires, thereby causing her to feel jealous and trapped.

Ellis Fermor encompasses the real fact when he opines: “It (Hedda’s mind) has merely gone round and round the cage she has built for herself, looking for a way to escape”. In other words, Hedda has come to the realization that there is no way out of her “place” in society, as well as life. She will never be any man’s equal or a “real” person.

Also, much like the rest of society, Tesman views Hedda as an object, a collectible. Finally, due to the circumstances imposed upon her by Norwegian society, Hedda responds with the one act of courage she has managed to muster in her short, meaningless life—she kills herself with her father’s pistol. While Hedda is considerably responsible for her cowardice and her failure to sufficiently express herself, the way in which she was raised, as well as the society in which she lives, both play major roles in the shaping of her character. If it were not for her extenuating circumstances, as well as her solitary act of courage, one can only speculate what she might have come to represent in contemporary feminist literature. However, literature is not founded on speculation and guesswork; it is based on visible feelings, emotions, and actions. With this in mind, one is forced to recognize what Hedda truly represents: the cold, emotionless product of a disapproving and domineering society and father.

**Major Social Issues in “Hedda Gabler”**

"Hedda Gabler" as a social parable / The role and character of women in the play/"Hedda Gabler" exposes the shams and hypocrisy of Victorian age/ Hedda faces the tragedy because of her conceit in social class.

It has been suggested that Hedda Gabler is a drama about the individual psyche – a mere character study. It has even been written that Hedda Gabler "presents no social theme". On the contrary, we find social issues and themes abundant in this work. The character of Hedda Gabler centres on society and social issues. Her high social rank is indicated from the beginning, as Miss Tesman says of Hedda, "General Gabler's daughter. What a life she had in the general’s day!" Upon Hedda's first appearance, she makes many snobbish remarks. First, she turns up her nose at George's special handmade slippers. Later she insults Aunt Julie's new hat, pretending to mistake it for the maid's. Hedda seems to abhor everything about George Tesman and his bourgeoise existence. She demands much more class than he has.
been able to provide her, for she was the beautiful, charming daughter of General Gabler and deserved nothing but the finest.

As the character of Hedda Gabler develops, the reader learns that she has only married George Tesman because her father’s passing away left her no significant financial resources, nothing but a respectable heritage. She tells Brack of her decision to marry Tesman:

"I really had danced myself out, Judge. My time was up. ... And George Tesman-- he is after all a thoroughly acceptable choice. ... There's every chance that in time he could still make a name for himself. ...It was certainly more than my other admirers were willing to do for me, Judge".

Hedda needed someone to support her financially, and George Tesman was the only decent man to propose to her. She was forced to cross beneath her social class and marry this commoner in the hopes that he would make a name for himself as a professor. As for love everlasting, Hedda disgustedly comments to Judge Brack, "Ugh -- don't use that syrupy word!" Rather than having become a happy newlywed who has found truelove, according to Shipley "Hedda is trapped in a marriage of convenience".

Hedda was raised a lady of the upper class, and as such she regards her beauty with high esteem. This is, in part, the reason she vehemently denies the pregnancy for so long. A pregnancy will force her to gain weight and lose her lovely womanly figure. Hedda has grown accustomed to her many admirers; therefore, Hedda is perturbed and embarrassed when George says to Aunt Julie, "But have you noticed how plump and buxom she's grown? How much she's filled out on the trip?", "I'm exactly as I was when I left," insists an annoyed Hedda. To Hedda, pregnancy is a despicable curse. It will make her unattractive, and she will no longer be the talk of the town. For a lady who has been forced to depend on her beauty to attract a suitable husband after the general's death, this is a crushing threat.

In Act II, Judge Brack gently suggests to Hedda that a child might relieve her from the mundane existence she has been enduring with Tesman. Calling motherhood her "most solemn responsibility," Judge Brack delicately hints that she will be having a child within the year. "Be quiet! You'll never see me like that!" she exclaims. "I have no talent for such things, Judge. I won't have responsibilities!". Judge Brack has reminded Hedda of what she already knew -- the pregnancy. Her fear of becoming undesirable resurfaces, and she explodes in anger and denial.

Even in death, Hedda cherishes beauty. In discussing the planned suicide with Eilert, she instructs him, "Eilert Lovborg -- listen to me. Couldn't you arrange that -- that it's done beautifully?". She then reminds him twice more in the following lines to take his life beautifully. Still, upon his death he is shot in the stomach at a brothel, not at all as beautifully as Hedda had intended. In the final lines of the play, Hedda finally gets the beautiful ending she romanticizes. She takes her own life, shooting herself in the temple, as she lies stretched out on the sofa, beautifully.

Further evidence of Hedda's social class is found in her conversation with Mrs. Elvsted. After Mrs. Elvsted reluctantly admits that she has left her husband in search of Eilert Lovborg, the astonished Hedda replies, "But my dearest girl -- that you could dare to do such a thing!" Hedda continues, "But what do you think people will say about you, Thea?"
act is unimaginable. The entire town will be gossiping about Thea Elvsted, the sheriff's wife, and her affair with Eilert Lovborg. Mrs. Elvsted's reputation will be permanently tarnished. For Hedda, this would be a nightmare. She has been highly regarded by everyone and showered with attention from all the men. In fact, as General Gabler's lovely daughter, Hedda has been a major object of interest for the townspeople for quite some time. A renowned modern critic Setterquist opines "Hedda fears scandal above all". She cannot begin to fathom how Thea could risk losing her honour. "Brought up as a 'lady', she was required at all times to conduct herself correctly".

Thea, on the other hand, is of a lower social ranking and hasn't much of a name to lose. She is able to follow her heart, and she explains, "God knows they'll say what they please. I only did what I had to do."

Additional proof that Hedda fears scandal can be found in her private conversation with Judge Brack after Lovborg's suicide. He warns Hedda that if counsel were to discover that the pistol was hers, there would be a scandal. "A scandal, yes - the kind you're so deathly afraid of. Naturally, you'd appear in court... You'll have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lovborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?". Her heart sinks, as Hedda realizes that Judge Brack is right. She understands that she is helpless against his blackmailing and no longer free, and in desperation she takes her own life.

Despite the clear distinctions between the social classes of the three women of the play -- Hedda Gabler, Thea Elvsted, and Mademoiselle Diana -- their sexual situations are remarkably similar. As women, they must all flaunt their sexuality to survive in a male dominated society. Hedda is, of course, an upper class lady. She does not strive towards her individual morality for any reason other than to maintain an impeccable reputation. Scandals and rumours are her worst enemy. Rather than allow herself to fall from her high social standing, she accepts the proposal of her only prospect – George Tesman. She marries him and thus must sleep with him, not out of love, but merely out of necessity. Hedda uses her sexuality to attract Tesman who will provide an adequate means of support for her. She remains faithful to him only in order to maintain her reputation, for she feels no moral obligation to be loyal to him.

Similarly, Thea Elvsted was a middle class girl. She accepted a job as a governess to Mr. Elvsted, and when his wife died he married her. There was a large age difference, and she says of him, "I just can't stand him! We haven't a single thought in common. Nothing at all -- he and I". Thea did not love Mr. Elvsted any more than Hedda loved Tesman. She, too, married for financial support. Since Thea did not have such a great reputation to uphold around town, however, she had the freedom to have a sexual affair. That is just what she did with Eilert Lovborg. Eventually, she left Mr. Elvsted in hopes of using her sexuality to secure a loving marriage with a better prospect, Mr. Lovborg. Unfortunately, her plan was unsuccessful and the reader must wonder in what way she will manage to support herself now.

Finally, there is the character Diana, a singer and prostitute. Just as Thea and Hedda, Diana must offer her sexuality as a means of support in a male-dominated world. Rather than finding a husband to support her, Diana has found the most freedom. In becoming a prostitute, she sells her body to men without becoming trapped in a marriage full of regret. While Diana has her freedom, however, she has attained it in a socially unacceptable manner and is thus at the bottom of the social order.
Lastly, the title itself represents the social theme of the drama. In using the name Hedda Gabler, despite her marriage to George Tesman, Ibsen has conveyed to the reader the importance of social class. Hedda prefers to identify herself as the daughter of General Gabler, not the wife of George Tesman. Throughout the play she rejects Tesman and his middle class lifestyles, clinging to the honourable past with which her father provided her. This identity as the daughter of the noble General Gabler is strongly implied in the title, Hedda Gabler.

In considering the many implications of the social issues as explained above, it cannot be denied that the very theme of Hedda Gabler centres on social issues. "Hedda Gabler is ...indirectly a social parable".

Naturalism in Hedda Gabler

Naturalism is a term applied generally to literature which attempts accurately to imitate nature. Hence, it is often used as synonymous with realism. More commonly, it used to express a specific kind of realism, which is the slavish attempt to produce details from life without selection. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as photographic realism. In French literature, the term 'naturalism' is used for a school of nineteenth-century novelists including Flaubert, Zola, and the brothers Goncourt. They attempted to approach life in a scientific manner, recording external appearances only, but recording them with the all-seeing patience of the scientist. Therefore, they revealed the seamy aspects of life which Victorian England had been studiously ignoring. Henrik Ibsen was a great playwright of the 19th century, and played a large role in the evolution of modern day naturalism/realism. The setting, detailed stage direction and character description are parts of the naturalistic style. These elements are found greatly in Ibsen's works, especially Hedda Gabler.

Ibsen is Norwegian, so his play is a translated one. He is the father of naturalism. Realism is a close-movement to naturalism. In this play, we have a painting, the hero stands and a forest behind him and a living room, chairs and tables. Everything is common. All of this is the beginning of the naturalistic movement which comes, in the second half of the century. Naturalism takes its roots from earlier drama. It is taken from the Bourgeois drama. In naturalistic drama, there are no soliloquies. The audience should interpret everything in it.

The influence of Ibsen on drama makes him one of the main founders of Naturalism. That is, he changes the whole concept of drama from being escapist to expressing social and psychological problems. Ibsen's interest is in social problems from which thesis plays takes its ideas, but his plays were said to have been written to reinforce the feminine movement. Yet, he did not believe in institutions and any political parties or social campaigns. His main focus was on the individual and presenting real life characters and their psychological depth.. His focus was not on the social environment, but on the individual and its interaction with social life. He had faith in human beings like many naturalists; he was interested in the influence of the environment and heredity and how these two interact to shape the character of individual. He studied psychological motivation and their internal conflict as well as the conflict between what society expects them to do and their inclinations.

The Naturalistic Setting and Stage Direction

The first element of naturalism that the audience comes across is the setting. The description of the setting is typical of a middle-
class living room. Within this setting, there is the symbolic use of certain Stage props, stage images and metaphors. The stage props are the items which are used as parts of the decoration. They have symbolic significance. They also connote implied meaning which are related to the theme and characters. The stage props are considered to be as element of naturalistic drama which is employed to serve the dramatic idea. One of the stage props is the pistols which belong to her father. Hedda likes practicing shooting because it is related to her social upbringing. She has been brought up by her father who has been a military man. He has taught her to use pistols and ride horses. Thus, she has been brought up to have masculine qualities. She has tendency to rebel against the accepted traditional role of woman. Moreover, the pistols are considered to be as element of destruction. She has sadistic nature. Playing with pistols shows her inner desire to be in the world of men. They are symbol of her denied sexuality. The audience has to look at the pistol as a symbol of suicide. She gives a pistol to Lovborg to kill himself. This shows that it is a means of destruction. They symbolize violence as Hedda kills herself by using them in the encl. Another stage prop is her father’s portrait which is a symbol of his masculine and harsh qualities. The picture reminds the reader of the General’s strong influence on Hedda’s character. Hedda is always seen looking to this picture. He is a military man, so Hedda’s upbringing has been affected by his profession. Also, the piano is always associated with the upper classes. It is an item of luxury and not everyone can afford buying it. It belongs to Hedda who is an aristocratic lady. Hedda wants to buy a new one which suits the furniture instead of hers. This tells us about her spending habits; she is spendthrift. There is a reference to a glass-door because she always looks out of it. She looks at life from a directive transparent glass door and this tells us about her character. Hedda always stands beside that door. This reflects her desire to free herself from the chains of her marital life and social rules. She longs for freedom. She wants to get rid of the life of entrapment in Tesman house. The glass door is her only means to look at the outer world. She is not adventurous and she watches life, but she doesn’t take the initiative or a step in controlling her life. She is not happy when she looks out of the glass door. The stage figurative image of the autumn and the falling leaves express Hedda’s inner feelings. It is like a death wish; she is depressed to the extent that she wishes death. Furthermore, the manuscript has a symbolic significance. It stands for the product of the relationship and cooperation between Lovborg and Mrs Elvsted. Mrs Elvsted has external great effort to help Lovborg in writing this manuscript. Therefore, she considers the manuscript to be her baby. Hedda is jealous of Mrs Elvsted; therefore, she plans to destroy the product of the relationship between Mrs Elvsted and Lovborg. She burns the manuscript. The stove is another stage prop. It represents destruction and danger as it contains fire and heat. Fire is always related to Hedda who has destructive motives. She is going to burn manuscript of Lovborg in order to destroy the fruit of Lovborg and Thea collaboration. This reflects her jealousy and malice. She is motivated by her jealousy to burn the manuscript. Thus, both fire and Hedda has destructive effects.

Naturalistic Division of Acts: - this play does not follow the classical division of the play into five acts. According to Naturalism, this seems to be artificial because in life things happen naturally. What is important is the complication itself. The first act is the exposition and the complication at the same time. The audience gets hints of financial and psychological conflicts and problems from the very beginning. Here, there are two different life styles. There is a warm, intimate and affable relationship between Berta and Miss Tesman as if they are friends. There is not the servant-mistress relationship. Those who belong to the Bourgeois class can discuss the problems with their servants. There is not this pride and formality. Yet, the
Aristocrats do not even express their problems openly in front of their servants. There were barriers between the different social classes.

**Psychological Realism:** In Ibsen's plays, there are no moral lessons. His plays are open-ended and developed into psychological realism. This affects the dialogue and the use of language. His late plays, including Hedda Gabler, are characterized by dramatic shorthand. The language is deceptively simple; it hides more than it shows. Ibsen neither comments on the play nor on his characters. His only comment is that this play is not a thesis one, a part of a social propaganda or a study of the psychology of a criminal. There is not any soliloquy, and the audience is always kept in speculations. The audience has to understand the qualities of the character from the way in which he interacts with the others and from his gestures and facial expressions. The audience tries to get clues that can help analysing the psychology of the characters. The character towards the end analyses itself. Thus, readers should not take everything as face value.

**Naturalistic Characters:** Ibsen's characters are very real characters. He focuses on character depth, so he emphasizes characterization and motivity of characters. He is concerned about how they are revealed through their actions and contact with objects around them. You can think of naturalism as an extreme form of realism. They are different interpretation of characters. Characters are to hide something to understand. They are very difficult to understand. Characters avoid the topic they talk about. This is called dramatic shorthand. It is a dialogue with a lot of missing words and sentences. This is part of realistic speech. The reader has to guess the missing parts. Ibsen is very objective in portraying Hedda's character and this is part of Naturalism. This play is a very objective portrait of Hedda. Ibsen doesn't pass a specific judgment on her. The character of Hedda is a complex one, and there is more demand on the part of the audience to judge her and know her motivations behind the actions she does in the play. The social problems on the social background do not concern the audience, but what concerns them is the study of the character and her psychology and motivation. She seems to have many social problems regarding her identity and her role as a woman.

Tesman is an intellectual and academic person. This appears when he comes on stage carrying a suitcase full of books. He is carelessly dressed; he does not care very much about his appearance. This is not his concern; his major concern is studying, reading and collecting books. This is the only thing he is excited about. He is a book worm and even in his honey moon he used to collect books and read them. This quality has both a positive and a negative side. He is a boring and stuffy person. He is thirty-three years old and has a cheerful round face. He wears spectacles and has fair hair and beard. In literature, the fair haired person, whether a man or a woman, is not sexually or physically attractive and is not passionate as well. He is rather stout and not the stereotype of a sportive person. He kept visiting libraries and doing books even in his honeymoon. This means that he is not affectionate at all.

**Naturalistic Conflict:** Ibsen also shows the conflict between the individual inclinations and social obligations which is part of the naturalism ideology. Ibsen reveals social conformity imposes certain life style and confinement on people of different social classes, but Ibsen shows that the individuals are sometimes forced by the society to lead a kind of life that they hate in order to, keep the social appearance or prestige. Hedda has married Tesman because he is respectable a person. She is talking about the social role imposed upon her.
A Critique of Character of Hedda Gabler

Hedda enjoys both masculine and feminine traits in her being, which make her entire personality confusing and enigmatic. How can you explain the view?/Hedda Gabler is unique and rebellious, why does she behave so confusingly?/ In "Hedda Gabler" we have reversal of gender role, what purpose it serves in the plot of the play?/Describe the clash of Victorian moralities in Hedda Gabler's: why Hedda is lusty for power?

Henrik Ibsen portrays a microcosm of nineteenth century Norwegian society in his play Hedda Gabler. Hedda, the protagonist, exhibits a mixture of masculine and feminine traits due to her unique upbringing under General Gabler and the social mores imposed upon her. However, although this society venerates General Gabler because of his military status, his daughter Hedda is not tolerated due to her non-conformity to the accepted gender stereotypes.

Hedda's gender-inverted marriage to Jorgen Tesman, her desire for power and her use of General Gabler's pistols are unacceptable in her society and motif of "One doesn’t do such a thing!" that is alluded to during the play and expounded upon Hedda's death that shows that Hedda's uncertain stance between masculine and feminine gender roles and their associated traits is not tolerated by her society. Ibsen employs a reversal of traditional gender roles within Hedda and Jorgen Tesman's marriage to emphasise Hedda's masculine traits. Hedda displays no emotion or affection towards her husband Jorgen. This appearance of indifference is a trait that is usually common to men:

Tesman: "My old morning shoes. My slippers look!...I missed them dreadfully. Now you should see them, Hedda."
Hedda: "No thanks, it really doesn’t interest me”.

In another gender role reversal, Hedda displays a financial awareness, which her husband, Jorgen does not possess. Although Brack corresponds with Tesman about his honeymoon travels, he corresponds with Hedda concerning the financial matters. This is a role that is usually reserved for men. Hedda does not only display traits, which are definitively masculine, or feminine, she also objects to and often defies the conventions established for her gender by society. She rejects references to her pregnancy as a reminder of her gender:

Tesman: "Have you noticed how plump (Hedda's) grown, and how well she is? How much she’s filled out on our travels?"
Hedda: "Oh be quiet!"

Hedda is reminded not only of her feminine role of mother and nurturer here, but also as wife and "appendage" to Tesman: "And to think is was you who carried off Hedda Gabler! The lovely Hedda Gabler! now that you have got the wife your heart was set on." As a woman of the haute bourgeoisie, Hedda is "sought after" and "always had so many admirers" and has been "acquired" by Tesman as hide wife. Hedda resents the gender conventions that dictate that she now "belongs" to the Tesman family - a situation that would not occur were she a man:

Tesman: "Only it seems to me now that you belong to the family…”
Hedda: "Well, I really don’t know…”
Although these traits displayed by Hedda are masculine, they are not those, which her society cannot tolerate. To entertain herself in her "boring" marriage she plays with her father's, General Gabler's, pistols:

Hedda: "Sometimes I think I only have a talent for one thing...boring myself to death!" "I still have one thing to kill time with. My pistols, Jorgen. General Gabler's pistols"

Jorgen: "For goodness' sake! Hedda darling! Don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda!"

These pistols are a symbol of masculinity and are associated with war, a pastime that women are excluded from other than in the nurturing role of nurses and are thus not tolerated by society. Tesman implores Hedda to cease playing with them, but even his "superior" position, as her husband does not dissuade Hedda, who is found to be playing with them by Brack at the beginning of act two. Brack also reminds Hedda of the inappropriate nature of her "entertainment" and physically takes the pistols away from Hedda.

Hedda: "I'm going to shoot you sir!"
Brack: "No, no, no! Now stop this nonsense!" taking the pistol gently out of her hand.
If you don't mind, my dear lady.... Because we're not going to play that game anymore today."

As a parallel to Hedda's masculine game of playing with General Gabler's pistols, Hedda plays the traditionally female role of a "minx" with Brack.

Hedda: "Doesn't it feel like a whole eternity since we last talked to each other?"
Brack: "Not like this, between ourselves? Alone together, you mean?"
Hedda: "Yes, more or less that"
Brack: "Here was I, every blessed day, wishing to goodness you were home again"

Hedda: "And there was I, the whole time, wishing exactly the same" At the beginning of act two, Hedda encourages Brack's flirtation with her by telling him the true nature of her marriage to Tesman that it is a marriage of convenience:

Brack: "But, tell me...I don't quite see why, in that case...er..."
Hedda: "Why Jorgen and I ever made a match of it, you mean? "I had simply danced myself out, my dear sir. My time was up."

Brack is emboldened by Hedda's seeming availability and pursues the notion of a "triangular relationship" with Hedda. Not only does Hedda's "coquettish" behaviour towards Brack exhibits the feminine side of her nature, it also demonstrates that in some instances she conforms to society's expectations of females. Hedda's reference to "(her) time (being) up" shows the socially accepted view that women must marry, because they are not venerated as spinsters.

By conforming to this aspect of her society's mores and marrying before she becomes a socially unacceptable spinster, Hedda demonstrates that she is undeniably female and accepts this. Hedda's constantly seeks power over those people she comes in contact with. As a woman, she has no control over society at large, and thus seeks to infl
she comes into contact with in an emulation of her father's socially venerated role as a general. Hedda pretends to have been friends with Thea in order to solicit her confidence:

\[\text{Thea: "But that's the last thing in the world I wanted to talk about!"}
\]
\[\text{Hedda: "Not to me, dear? After all, we were at school together.}
\]
\[\text{"Thea: "Yes, but you were a class above me. How dreadfully frightened of you I was in those days!"}
\]

Once Hedda learns of Thea's misgivings about Lovborg's newfound resolve, she uses it to destroy their "comradeship".

\[\text{Hedda: "Now you see for yourself! There's not the slightest need for you to go about in this deadly anxiety..." Lovborg: "So it was deadly anxiety ...on my behalf."
}\]
\[\text{Thea: "Softly and in misery] Oh, Hedda! How could you?"
}\]
\[\text{Lovborg: "So this was my comrade's absolute faith in me."}
\]

Hedda then manipulates Lovborg, by challenging his masculinity, into going to Brack's bachelor party and resuming his drunken ways of old. Hedda's "reward" for this is to find that Lovborg's manuscript, his and Thea's "child" falls into her hands, where she burns it, thus destroying the child and alto the relationship, both of which Hedda was jealous of. Similarly, Hedda seeks to push her husband, Jorgen, into politics: "(I was wondering) whether I could get my husband to go into politics..." This would raise Hedda's social standing and allow her to attain and maintain power. Hedda's manipulation of people in order to attain power is a trait that is stereotypically predominant in men.

The society of nineteenth century Norway venerates the image of submissive, static passive and pure women. Roles of power are normally allocated to men in such a society. The society in Hedda Gabler demonstrates its intolerance of Hedda's masculine behaviour by contributing to her death. Hedda is found to be playing with her pistols in Act II by Brack. After disgracing himself and returning to his "immoral" ways at Hedda's behest, Lovborg is manipulated by Hedda into "taking his life beautifully" and she gives him one of General Gabler's pistols. However Lovborg dies from an accidental wound to the stomach rather than a patrician death from a bullet to the head and Brack, utilising his position of power within the judicial system, sees the pistol that he accidentally killed himself with. Recognising it as being General Gabler's pistol, he returns to Hedda to stake his claim. Hedda refuses to be in the power of Brack, she had been "hearty thankful that (he had) no power over (her)" however, her fear is realised as Brack attempts to force his way into a "triangular relationship" with Hedda (and Tesman)in return for not exposing the scandal that she had provided Lovborg with the instrument of his death. Hedda is "as fearful of scandal as all that" and takes her life, ironically avoiding the scandal surrounding Lovborg's death and yet causing a scandal concerning her own. Hedda's masculine preference for the pistols to any feminine task of housekeeping and her fear of scandal due to not conforming with society's accepted gender roles leads her to kill herself, thus demonstrating that things which "one doesn't do" are not tolerated by her society of nineteenth century Norway.

**Mrs Elvsted as a foil to Hedda**
**Difference of Class and Life:**

In Hedda Gabler, both Hedda and Mrs Elvsted represent two distinctive approaches to life and belong to two different social classes. Through the representation of both characters, Ibsen shows a variety of different reactions towards social obligations and conventions. That is, he introduces Mrs Elvsted as a foil to Hedda, putting her attitudes towards life and beliefs in contrast with Hedda's stress their distinguished personal qualities.

**Physical Difference:**

Physically, Hedda and Mrs Elvsted looks different to some extent. Hedda looks the particular feminine beauty and charm. Her pale and opaque complexion shows that she is introvert. She seems as if she wears a mask which conceals her feelings. Her evasive manner does not really show what lies in her mind. Also, her steel-gray eye expresses a cold, unruffled repose. That is, Hedda is not very affable and impenetrable in sight. Her features, impression and dress shows that she is an aristocratic lady. In contrast with Hedda, Mrs Elvsted has more pretty features than Hedda. Her eyes are attractive, but gives an inquiry expression showing her curiosity. While Hedda hair is neat and attractive without being conspicuous, thus confirming her outwardly as a model of social appropriateness, Mrs Elvsted's hair is excessive in every respect. It has an unusual colour almost flaxen and is unusually abundant and wavy. It is hair of that kind that does not conform to any social norms. Hedda recalls Mrs Elvsted as "the girls with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off." Hedda's envy of her spontaneity and non-conformity finds its clearest expression in her threat to burn her hair off.

**Social Stats:**

Regarding their social milieu, Hedda is dependent while Mrs Elvsted is independent and capable of work. Hedda has been given upper-class upbringing to be dependent on men, based on the assumption that she will never have to support herself. This is why she accepts Tesman's proposal. On the other hand, Thea enters the scene as a daughter of the lower middle class who is obliged to work to provide her requirement. She has worked as a governess in the house of a magistrate. This is seen through her dress which is not in the latest fashion.

**Difference in Behaviour:**

Both Hedda and Mrs Elvsted also differ in their degree of formality and subtlety. Hedda is very formal and artificial in her behaviour. She opposes intimacy and informality due to the morals and traditions of her social class. She offends and embarrasses Mrs Tesman when she meets her coldly. She shows that Miss Tesman has visited them very early. When Tesman asks her to come and see the slippers she rejects his demand aloofly. She is indifferent to his hobbies and interests. It has been threatening for her to share a special intimacy with Lovborg, so she breaks off their relationship, and threatens to shoot him with her father's pistols. On the other hand, Mrs Elvsted is spontaneous and emotional. She loves Lovborg and exerts great effort to attract him to her. She pursues him to keep herself close to her lover. While Hedda is reserved and shrewd Mrs Elvsted is spontaneous and simple-minded. Hedda wants to realise the truth of Mrs Elvsted and Lovborg's relationship. She acts the role of an interrogator who questions Mrs Elvsted and manages to extract a confession from her that she is in love with Lovborg. It is clear that Hedda is a smarter than Mrs Elvsted who is easily manipulated by Hedda and submits to her authority.

**Influence on Lovborg:**

Both Hedda and Mrs Elvsted have different influence on Lovborg. On the one hand, Hedda represents Lovborg's muse, and she likes to be his hidden source of inspiration. When he comes to her house, she manipulates him to prove that she still has authority over him. She offers him a glass of punch, but he refuses. The
manhood in the presence of Thea till he becomes nervous and drinks two glasses. She manages to break the bond of trust between him and Thea. On the other hand, Mrs Elvsted tries to reclaim Lovborg to make him give up his bohemian manner and misconduct. She is worried about his health, conduct and integrity, and encourages him to write his book. The manuscript is the fruit of her cooperation with Lovborg. Hedda considers Lovborg to be her idol of which she is so confident. Yet, Thea is aware of his human weakness and afraid that he may fall into temptation.

**Marriage:** - The marriages of Thea and Hedda have an obvious parallel, but the contrast is in the methods they take to dissolve them. Like Hedda, Thea has made a loveless marriage, a marriage of convenience. Both are fed up with their husband’s neglect. However, Thea asserts her individuality, renounces a distasteful marriage, and gain freedom. Unlike Hedda, she has no fear of gossip and scandal. "I have done nothing, but what I had to do," she says simply when speaking of having left her husband. Any struggle between these two women, one simple but action-minded, the other intelligent but incapable of action, must result in defeat for Hedda. Thea is labelled by Lovborg as "stupid", but she recognizes her individual rights and acts accordingly.

**Conclusion:** - Mrs Elvsted is set up, thematically and descriptively, in contrast to Hedda. Thea has abundant, curly golden hair versus Hedda's sparse brown hair. She has willingness to ignore conventional standard for the man she loves versus Hedda's inability either to love or to ignore conventions. She is conspicuously successful in the areas where Hedda fails. Generally, she is seen as the "good woman" opposed to Hedda's evil.

**Role and Character of Judge Brack**

*To what extant Judge Brack is responsible for the tragedy of Hedda?*

Brack is a judge of relatively inferior rank. He is a friend of both Tesman and Hedda, and he visits their house regularly. He has connections around the city, and is often the first to give Tesman information about alterations in the possibility of his professorship. He seems to enjoy meddling in other people's affairs. He is a worldly and cynical man. On certain occasions he seems to represent the whole society of the time, his opportunism, meanness, and blackmailing and lusty love aspiration make him an epitome of society.

Brack strikes as a very immoral man from the very beginning, due to the aplenty advances he made towards Hedda. He had always subtly hinted that he thought that Hedda might like “a new responsibility” and most importantly, that he will “fight for the end, for the “triangle” to be “fortified and defended by mutual consent.”

To flirt with an unwed lady is one thing. But to be thoroughly suggestive of certain immoral acts to a legally wed lady would seem to be a moral crime. A crime, which would deem Brack as an immoral judge, which is juxtaposition in the phrase itself. The depraved misdeed was too much to expect from a judge, much less to say the way that he had insinuated himself into the household of a married couple.

Brack’s manipulative nature can perhaps be considered the most powerful tool that he has, to be able to control people at his beck and call. The way he withholds his information, only to
disseminate it at an ‘appropriate’ time, when it will hit the victim the hardest, shows how well he can play the psychological game. He was apparently so good at calculating his steps that he was able to have Hedda exclaim with pain that she is “in your powers, Mr. Brack. From now on, I’m at your mercy.” He played his last hand of the pack very well, henceforth gaining control over Hedda almost at once, after we have seen her authoritative throughout the plot. The unexpected twist of events, definitely illustrates an element of surprise for the reader.

Nothing much can be mentioned or commented about Brack, except that he seems to be a guru at the game at which both he and Hedda seemed to be indulged in. His callous ways together with his tricky language have caused the one all mighty Hedda to fall prey to him, exposing the extent of his scheming nature to the reader. It certainly allows the reader to realize his true nature and to confirm the suspicions of Brack’s ulterior motives.

The presence of Brack alone is enough to allow Tesman appear trivial and ridiculous. His language as compared to Tesman seemed to have many underlying meanings, while Tesman’s, for an academic, seems rather superficial. Tesman, being a worrywart, starts to fret like a young lady when informed that his appointment might not come. He “clasps his hands together” and “filings his arms about” asking his “dearest Hedda, how can you (she) take it all so calmly.” Brack on the other hand, being the surely and confident self tries to comfort him by telling him that he will “most probably get it” but “only after a bit of competition”. Brack’s calm composure and surely words certainly outweigh Tesman’s unnecessary gestures and fretful language. The vulnerability of Tesman and Hedda’s marriage has also clearly been brought out by the intrusion of Brack. The fact that Hedda would “clasps her hand at the back of her neck, lean back in the chair and look at him” indicates how comfortable she feels with Brack. The stichomythia in their speeches also brings out the level of intimacy the both of them share as seen by the quote “Brack: A trusted and sympathetic friend...Hedda: ...who can converse on all manners of lively topics... Brack:... and who’s not in the least academic” It shows how well they complement each other, finishing each other’s thoughts as though they were in a relationship themselves. As Hedda could easily pour out her woes to a man other than her husband gives an indication of how sterile her marriage with Tesman was. So unfruitful that they had absolutely no proper communications between husband and wife that Hedda was glad to have a friend who could converse with her.

**Hedda Gabler: A Modern Tragedy**

Henrik Ibsen’s Hedda Gabler is a definitive look at social conditions involving women at the turn of the Century. His title character is a complex individual who is driven to destruction by her great desires. Hedda epitomizes women of that time period by their dependency on social convention, and she is motivated to do so many things but unfortunately is without the courage to act upon them.

There are many elements used by Ibsen to depict a tragic hero, and therefore a tragic play. For example, the reader sees a specific worldview, a main character of noble birth, and both concepts of the hamartia and peripetia which are vital to the tragic plot. This raises the question of whether this work can be considered a tragedy. Critics have continuously debated this issue, even since it was written in 1890. Many thought the character of Hedda to be too unrealistic, thus the play melodramatic rather than tragic. However, through the elements
mentioned above and by using literary techniques such as symbolism and irony, Ibsen succeeds in creating this timeless tragedy.

**Dependency between Genders:** Firstly, Ibsen creates a specific worldview to his audience, and he does this by suggesting a mirror dependency between genders. The male characters in this play are dependent on women, and the women are dependent on social conventions. Jorgen Tesman, Hedda’s vacant minded husband is dependent on his Aunt Juliane whereas Hedda is constantly restrained by her reliance on her ‘what would other think/say’ mentality. The female characters of this play are dependent on the fact that others depend on them, and Rina is a striking symbol of this very fact. She symbolizes the vulnerability of everyman being the invalid that she is thus projecting Ibsen’s idea that everybody is dependant in some way. This viewpoint is extremely accurate in describing women’s roles in European society in both the 1800’s and present day. Men are generally viewed as the bread winners, who come home after a hard day at work expecting to be taken care of by their wives. Women on the other hand, are expected to be seen and not heard, keeping both the house and family name intact.

**The Character of Hedda:** Secondly, the author has created a character of noble birth, another important characteristic of a tragic play. Evidence of Hedda’s nobility is found in the conversation between Aunt Julie and the servant Bertha. Julie is reminiscing about Hedda riding by with her father, obviously an important general of some kind. There is a portrait of General Gabler that hangs above the sofa, and the reference to the guns that he has left his daughter represent something with a much deeper meaning. The guns are kept in the back room along with the piano and writing desk, every outlet of energy for her. This symbolizes the entrapment that Hedda feels in marrying a man that is perhaps in a lower social class, and it is this background that leads directly to her hamartia, rather the decision that leads her to a tragic end and perhaps one of the more important factors in categorizing this play as a tragedy.

**Hedda’s Rash Judgments:** Hedda makes quite a few rash judgments throughout the course of this play so it is difficult to pinpoint which one to be the most detrimental. There is her decision to hold on to Eilert Lövborg’s manuscript, to give him the gun that would be the cause of his accidental death, and the final, fatal choice to end her life. However, none of these errors in judgment seem as harsh as one that the audience doesn’t even witness, that being her marriage to Tesman. Hedda was nearing her thirtieth birthday and felt pressured to get married, so she entered into a union with a man she didn’t love. She thought he was destined for greatness in his becoming a professor, but has merely set herself up for disappointment when she sees his true nature. As a result we see the entrapment that Hedda feels, a feeling that leads to her demise.

**Use of Peripetia:** Lastly, the audience sees the use of peripetia, the concept that suggests that the progression of a tragic character will lead them to a reversal: that they get what they want, but what they want is destructive. This is perhaps central to this play, for it is this that truly defines Hedda Gabler as a tragic character. Hedda’s motivation in this play is to control somebody’s destiny, and preferably male. Hedda wants to live vicariously through Lövborg, and so to some extent she does get what she wants, but the outcome is disastrous. The moment that Hedda has control of Eilert is when she gives him the gun encouraging him to kill himself, without coming out and saying so. This is what clinches Lövborg for he feels that he is no longer useful, exemplifying his dependence on women. Th
obvious when Brack tells her that Eilert has been accidentally killed and the audience sees that Hedda truly is a destructive character. This reversal is extremely ironic in terms that she wanted Lövborg to be a real man (as opposed to her husband who behaves according to his infantile dependency) and at the end we discover that Lövborg dies due to an injury that robs him of his every manliness.

**Conclusion:** The complexities of Hedda and the rest of characters in this play are all puppets of Ibsen's view and mentality. He creates a vivid picture of a woman who is socially tortured beyond her control, and she eventually is led to the tragic end of what was presumably a tragic life. Through his literary techniques and tragic elements, Ibsen creates a tragic masterpiece of his time, and one that could well be applied to this time. She portrays women in society so afraid of social scandal, and she was willing to avoid one at all costs. This is another example of irony because during that time women like Hedda did not commit suicide, and therefore in choosing to end her life she creates something to talk about. This is ironic for the simple fact that her death arose out of a situation that she so desperately tried to avoid.

**Hedda Gabler: Reversal of Traditional Gender Roles**

"The play Hedda Gabler is the product of a mind deeply preoccupied with the nature of power, particularly the power of one mind to influence and impose itself upon others".

Henrik Ibsen portrays a microcosm of nineteenth century Norwegian society in his play Hedda Gabler. Hedda, the protagonist, exhibits a mixture of masculine and feminine traits due to her unique upbringing under General Gabler and the social mores imposed upon her. However, although this society venerates General Gabler because of his military status, his daughter Hedda is not tolerated due to her non-conformity to the accepted gender stereotypes.

Hedda’s gender-inverted marriage to Jorgen Tesman, her desire for power and her use of General Gabler’s pistols are unacceptable in her society and motif of “One doesn’t do such a thing!” that is alluded to during the play and expounded upon Hedda’s death that shows that Hedda’s uncertain stance between masculine and feminine gender roles and their associated traits is not tolerated by her society.

Ibsen employs a reversal of traditional gender roles within Hedda and Jorgen Tesman’s marriage to emphasize Hedda’s masculine traits. Hedda displays no emotion or affection towards her husband Jorgen. This appearance of indifference is a trait that is usually common to men:

*Tesman:* My old morning shoes. My slippers look!...I missed them dreadfully. Now you should see them, Hedda.

*Hedda:* No thanks, it really doesn’t interest me.

In another gender role reversal, Hedda displays a financial awareness, which her husband, Jorgen does not possess. Although Brack corresponds with Tesman about his honeymoon travels, he corresponds with Hedda concerning the financial matters. This is a role that is usually reserved for men.
Hedda does not only display traits, which are definitively masculine, or feminine, she also objects to and often defies the conventions established for her gender by society. She rejects references to her pregnancy as a reminder of her gender:

 Tanzania: Have you noticed how plump (Hedda’s) grown, and how well she is? How much she’s filled out on our travels?
 Hedda: Oh be quiet!

Hedda is reminded not only of her feminine role of mother and nurturer here, but also as wife and “appendage” to Tesman. As a woman of the haute bourgeoisie, Hedda is “sought after” and “always had so many admirers” and has been “acquired” by Tesman as his wife. Hedda resents the gender conventions that dictate that she now “belongs” to the Tesman family – a situation that would not occur were she a man.

 Tanzania: Only it seems to me now that you belong to the family...
 Hedda: Well, I really don’t know...

Although these traits displayed by Hedda are masculine, they are not those, which her society cannot tolerate. To entertain herself in her “boring” marriage she plays with her father, General Gabler’s pistols.

 Hedda: Sometimes I think I only have a talent for one thing...boring myself to death! I still have one thing to kill time with. My pistols, Jorgen. General Gabler’s pistols.
 Tanzania: For goodness’ sake! Hedda darling! Don’t touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda!

These pistols are a symbol of masculinity and are associated with war, a pastime which women are excluded from other than in the nurturing role of nurses and are thus not tolerated by society. Tesman implores Hedda to cease playing with them, but even his “superior” position as her husband does not dissuade Hedda, who is found to be playing with them by Brack at the beginning of act two. Brack also reminds Hedda of the inappropriate nature of her “entertainment” and physically takes the pistols away from Hedda.

 Hedda: I’m going to shoot you sir!
 Brack: No, no, no!...Now stop this nonsense! (taking the pistol gently out of her hand). If you don’t mind, my dear lady....Because we’re not going to play that game any more today.

As a parallel to Hedda’s masculine game of playing with General Gabler’s pistols, Hedda plays the traditionally female role of a “minx” with Brack.

 Hedda: Doesn’t it feel like a whole eternity since we last talked to each other?
 Brack: Not like this, between ourselves? Alone together, you mean?
 Hedda: Yes, more or less that.
 Brack: Here was I, every blessed day, wishing to goodness you were home again.
 Hedda: And there was I, the whole time, wishing exactly the same.
At the beginning of act two, Hedda encourages Brack’s flirtation with her by telling him the true nature of her marriage to Tesman that it is a marriage of convenience:

Brack: But, tell me...I don’t quite see why, in that case...er...
Hedda: Why Jorgen and I ever made a match of it, you mean? I had simply danced myself out, my dear sir. My time was up.

Brack is emboldened by Hedda’s seeming availability and pursues the notion of a “triangular relationship” with Hedda. Not only does Hedda’s “coquettish” behaviour towards Brack exhibits the feminine side of her nature, it also demonstrates that in some instances she conforms to society’s expectations of females. Hedda’s reference to “(her) time (being) up” shows the socially accepted view that women must marry, because they are not venerated as spinsters. By conforming to this aspect of her society’s mores and marrying before she becomes a socially unacceptable spinster, Hedda demonstrates that she is undeniably female and accepts this.

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Thea: But that’s the last thing in the world I wanted to talk about!
Hedda: Not to me, dear? After all, we were at school together.
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**Hedda’s Suicide : A Reasonable Act?**

In the late nineteenth century, the forces of capitalism and colonialism that shaped European society were veiled in doubt by the evolution of several new ways of thinking. In France, the beginnings of the impressionist movement reformed art, drama and literature by questioning the long-standing tradition of realism.

In central Europe, Sigmund Freud’s revolutionary science of psychoanalysis gained momentum; changing the way people related to each other and paving the way for surrealist art and progress of alternative thinking. Finally, Karl Marx’s promotion of social systems which were alternative to the dominant capitalism of the time raised peoples’ awareness of the severe injustices their new way of living had created.

It was in this social milieu that Henrik Ibsen turned for a final time to write a play with a particular social agenda. In his effort to comment on events around him and assess the impact of society’s new ideologies on a specific echelon of society, Hedda Gabler was born.

The title of the play is the maiden name of its protagonist. The audience is invited into Hedda’s new home in Norway shortly after she has returned from honeymoon with George Tesman, a scholar of Middle Ages history. In the introductory conversation between George and their maid, Bertha, we are introduced to Hedda’s upbringing which is to play a crucial role in events to come. With the renowned General Gabler as a parent, Hedda was conditioned for a life of independence, entertainment and decadence. After her father dies and her life of horseback riding comes to an end, Hedda slowly realises that her society will not let her live in the way she would like.

As a bourgeoisie woman, taking up a job is both awkward and very difficult for Hedda. Hedda has little choice: she must marry if she wants to have any chance of supporting the extravagant way of living to which she had become accustomed.

In George Tesman, Hedda found both the perfect solution of her situation and the inevitable curse of boredom and discontentment. George, brought up by his Aunts, is as conventional and colourless as his name suggests. His conversation is trite, and he is completely oblivious.
to the subtlety; failing to notice Aunt Julie’s suggestive questions about Hedda’s pregnancy. He is dedicated to his studies, having spent his honeymoon researching “marvellous old documents that nobody knew existed”.

It would have been very dangerous for Hedda to pass up George’s offer of marriage. With Lövborg and Brack, two men with whom she had relationships in the past, indisposed, doing so would have squandered her opportunity to live comfortably in marriage. Hedda realizes the merit in marrying a man who is to soon become a professor, and feels scared of approaching age and loneliness. Her decision, however, is guided predominantly by the structure of her patriarchal society which dictates that she must depend completely on men and on marriage for her future happiness.

It is with her marriage to George that Hedda’s life of monotony and boredom increasingly strains her personality and livelihood. She declares: “Sometimes I think I only have a talent for one thing... boring myself to death!” and becomes obsessed with the task of finding interest and beauty in her life. The tragedy of Hedda Gabler begins when Hedda is unable to discover these qualities in her own life. She cannot have the fulfilment of a profession - the interest in another world of studies, colleagues and relationships. As an uninfluential member of society, she is not challenged intellectually or socially. Living under a monarch and as a woman in a patriarchal society, she can have no influence on the future of her community. With European countries establishing colonies throughout the world, Hedda realizes the inexorable domination of her society and feels a helpless victim of its hegemony.

To find the interest and beauty she desires, Hedda must turn to others. In her earlier life, she made use of Lövborg to satisfy herself. Often described as Hedda’s alter ego, Lövborg had an intense relationship with Hedda during childhood. Hedda was attracted by the “style and Romantic secrecy” and ended the relationship when it threatened to become physical. In a revealing dialogue with Lövborg, Hedda exposes her profound desire for fascination and intrigue in an otherwise uninteresting life:

The reasons for Hedda's suicide are fairly clear, she realised she could not live in a middle-class environment under the threat of Brack revealing the fact that she gave the pistol to Lovborg whilst her husband is wrapped up in a project which does not involve her and it is clear that he is not going to provide her with the attention or standard of living which she was hoping for. Her first environment, materialistic and prestigious, led her to choose her second environment purely on material values. She soon found that she could not move from one environment to the other, and with the added problem of people within her environment who reminded her of her own failings, she simply found she could not cope. It is clear that in another environment, probably a more wealthy one and one in which she received more attention, she could have been happier.

**Hedda Gabler: Triangulations between Characters**

Relationships are developed throughout the play and it is the breakdown in the relationships with Hedda that lead to the dramatic closure of the play. Hedda initiates one of the triangulations in an attempt to “have power over a human being’s fate”. Judge Brack creates the second an unsuccessful parallel to Hedda’s own power advancing creation. Jorgen Tesman and Thea Elvsted form the last triangulation in an attempt to rebirth Eilert’s manuscript.
The first triangular relationship is between Hedda Gabler, Eilert Lövborg and Thea Elvsted. Hedda created this relationship, controlling it by relying heavily on her influence over Eilert. Hedda’s power over Eilert are hinted at when Hedda says "So I, poor thing have no power over you at all?" and Eilert replies "Not where that’s concerned" Suggesting that Hedda does have power over him in other areas. Tension arises when Hedda becomes jealous of his newfound success without her, she also wishes she was his inspiration.

The relationship between Hedda and Thea is hostile on Hedda’s part because Hedda is jealous of Thea, wishing to be the Red headed, pistol wielding “woman standing between Eilert Lövborg and me (Thea).” Hedda is jealous of Thea’s beauty, threatening to “… burn it off (Thea’s hair)”, and her influence over Eilert and his work. The only way Hedda can control Thea is by controlling Eilert and due to Thea’s loyalty and devotion consequently control Thea. Thea and Eilert appear to be the perfect combination but tension arises between them as a result of Hedda burning their ‘child’.

The second triangulation is created by Judge Brack. It involves Hedda, Jorgen Tesman and Judge Brack. In this triangle, Brack tries unsuccessfully to play a role parallel to Hedda’s in the previous triangle. Brack and Hedda are from the same social circle, giving Brack an advantage over Jorgen with Hedda, making him acceptable to her more readily as a result. Jorgen is indebted to Brack but no conflict occurs between these two characters for two reasons: Brack is not looking for a commitment to Hedda and Jorgen is blinded by naiveté. The relationship Brack is working towards is purely plutonic, Hedda tempts him but is unwilling to commit to this relationship. Hedda keeps the sexual tension high and doesn’t end her relationship with Brack completely because she believes that as long as she can keep him interested, and at the same time not submit to him, she can stay on top of the power struggle with Brack and manipulate him as well.

The final triangle was mutually formed between Jorgen and Thea to rebirth the ‘child’ of Eilert and Thea. This triangle includes Jorgen, Thea and Hedda. Hedda is jealous of Thea’s Influence over Jorgen and is angry because she is gradually losing her power over Jorgen because of Thea’s influence. Hedda and Jorgen obviously had a marriage purely for convenience. Jorgen is not intimate; on his honeymoon he was “rummaging in libraries” and “copying out old parchments”. Hedda also denies any feelings for Jorgen refusing the word love saying “don’t use that sentimental word”, and telling Aunt Juille to “be Quiet” when she mentions anything referring to the baby that links Jorgen and Hedda.

Up until Act Four all of these triangles were controlled by Hedda. Hedda controls the first triangle by controlling Eilert and using alcohol on him to maintain superiority over Thea by lowering Eilert’s social standing. Hedda controls the second triangle by not allowing Brack the relationship he yearns for. The third relationship is not active until the end of Act Four. The dramatic closure of the play is not caused by the triangles themselves but the breakdown of Hedda’s power base as a result of the conflicts between Hedda and the other characters. After Hedda’s prompting “do it beautifully”

Eilert commits suicide. Immediately Hedda is unable to control the first triangle, Eilert is dead and Thea is released from the power hold Hedda had over her. Without the first triangle, Hedda turns to the second for her control, but is shocked when she discovers that Brack knows it was her gun that killed Eilert. Brack abuses his power and uses the information to try to blackmail Hedda into the relationship he has been pushing for. Hedda...
sexual relationship, nor can she refuse, Brack has won the fight for power supremacy in his triangle. Thea and Jorgen decide to recreate the manuscript together, Hedda loses power over Jorgen and the third triangle.

Hedda decides to solve her problem of no power by shooting herself in the temple. Hedda says “I want, for once in my life, to have power over a human being’s fate.” Hedda still has control over her unborn child’s life. Ironically, by killing herself, Hedda destroys the baby and her potential power over it. By killing the baby Hedda, also destroys the link between herself and Jorgen the only person who could/would have saved her. In the destruction of her baby she destroys her future; people will remember Eilert because of his ‘child’ but there is nothing left to remember Hedda by. The dramatic closure is caused by the destruction of Hedda’s power base in the form of triangular relationships; this destruction is caused by her own manipulation of the triangles.

Do you find it so incredible that a young girl, given the chance in secret, should want to be allowed a glimpse into a forbidden world of whose existence she is supposed to be ignorant?

Society demands that Hedda be ignorant of the forbidden world she so desires, and it is because of this suffocation that Hedda’s actions become perverted. One outlet for her new boredom is playing with her father’s guns – one of few pastimes that seem to give her any satisfaction. After George remarks that they will be unable to afford a riding horse or a butler, Hedda confirms: “...at least I have one thing left to amuse myself with... my pistols, George.”

After George and Brack vehemently try to dissuade Hedda from playing with the pistols, we realize that their society considers it inappropriate for a woman to indulge in interests of this nature. Ibsen highlights Hedda’s perversion by reversing the gender roles of the married couple. Hedda’s horse riding and playing with guns are seen as masculine activities; and she speaks of the financial situation of the family, a role usually reserved for men. Most significantly, she scorns at the thought of being pregnant and rejects the role of childbearing that women would traditionally embrace. “Be quiet! You’ll never see me like that!”

Instead, Hedda embraces opportunities to find gratification through people around her. When Brack asks if she could not find a goal to work towards in her life, she responds by suggesting she could get Tesman into politics. At that point, we realise that her idea of finding fulfilment has become completely misguided. Hedda considers the contest between Lövborg and George for the professorship “like a kind of championship match.” To Thea Elvsted, she comments: “For once in my life, I want to have power over a human being.”

When Judge Brack comes to hold power over Hedda through his knowledge of the burnt manuscript, her quest appears a complete failure. The reality is that, in her society, it is impossible for a woman to hold power over anyone else except through the manipulation of others.
In Lövborg, Hedda sees the opportunity to witness beauty. She envisages Lövborg dying beautifully, "with a crown of vine leaves in his hair, burning and unashamed." She encourages his suicide, handing him a pistol with which to commit the act. Jealous of Lövborg’s relationship with Thea and anxious to ensure he will carry out the "beautiful" act, Hedda burns Lövborg’s manuscript, the symbol of his relationship with Thea and the product of Thea’s inspiration of Lövborg that Hedda envies.

When carrying out these acts, Hedda is continually afraid of scandal. She worries enormously about how society will perceive her actions; an additional pressure with which she has to cope. Her fear of public scrutiny is demonstrated when she questions Thea: “But what do you think people will say?”

Ibsen makes use of the set in Hedda Gabler to illustrate the sum of these pressures on the protagonist. The Tesman’s residence is “decorated in dark colours” to create a sombre, melancholy mood. It is full of heavy wood furniture, and is covered with thick carpets. The set is symbolic of the life to which Hedda has committed herself – the death of her extravagant way of living and the start of a life of boredom. In the first two acts, the set is full of sinister bouquets of flowers which Hedda considers oppressive rather than refreshing as we would expect: "The room needs some fresh air. All these flowers!"

Judge Brack describes the smell of the residence as "a bequest from the late Mrs. Falk" – the smell of death already hangs over the characters, and, as the motif of death continues with the passing away of Aunt Rina and the obscure death of Lövborg, we realize that a climax as a result of the pressures placed on the protagonist is inevitable.

It is a culmination of these pressures that forces Hedda to suicide. In the final acts of the play, each one of these pressures grows to new proportions – the ungraceful death of Eilert and George’s plan to dedicate his life to the restoration of Lövborg’s book place added stress on Hedda. The event which finally impels Hedda to take her own life, though, is the thought of Brack having power over her through his blackmail involving the manuscript and the added grievance of knowing that she would have to spend every evening with the man. Brack ironically remarks: "We'll have great times here together, the two of us!"

Hedda plays a wild tune which is as much out of place in a household that is mourning as she is out of place in society, and ends her life beautifully with a shot to the temple.

Judge Brack’s concluding comment, “But good God! People don’t do such things!” establishes the conventionality and rigidity of his contemporary society. In the context of a society which placed significant pressures on women by denying them the life they desired, the outcome is not predictable. In Hedda’s case, a combination of pressures from her society and circumstances surrounding her upbringing lead to a perversion of her every action. Her suicide, then, is reasonable because the alternative would have been for Hedda to lead an unsatisfying life, continually restraining her behavior in fear of scandal.

In the late twentieth century, Hedda’s life may have been very different. The rise of materialism, technology and a culture of instant satisfaction have contributed to make contemporary society very different from that of the late nineteenth century. Hedda would have been able to develop a career, have a say in the future of her community and would have had suitable channels through which she could satisfy her desire for

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in life. Hedda Gabler is an outstanding example of the power of drama to illustrate the relationship between society and its members. Ibsen’s timeless reminder of how ordinary lives can be tainted by outside influences makes Hedda Gabler’s reasonable suicide a significant one in the study of literature.
Life and Works of Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett was born near Dublin, Ireland, on April 13, 1906 into a Protestant, middle class home. His father was a quantity surveyor and his mother worked as a nurse. At the age of 14, he was sent to the same school that Oscar Wilde attended.

Beckett is known to have commented, "I had little talent for happiness." This was evidenced by his frequent bouts of depression, even as a young man. He often stayed in bed until late in the afternoon and hated long conversations. As a young poet, he apparently rejected the advances of James Joyce’s daughter and then commented that he did not have feelings that were human. This sense of depression would show up in much of his writing, especially in Waiting for Godot where it is a struggle to get through life.

Samuel Beckett moved to Paris in 1926 and met James Joyce. He soon respected the older writer so much that at the age of 23, he wrote an essay defending Joyce’s magnum opus to the public. In 1927, one year later, he won his first literary prize for his poem entitled "Whoroscope." The essay was about the philosopher Descartes meditating on the subject of time and about the transience of life. Beckett then completed a study of Proust that eventually led him to believe that habit was the "cancer of time." At this point Beckett left his post at Trinity College and travelled.

Beckett journeyed through Ireland, France, England, and Germany and continued to write poems and stories. It is likely that he met up with many of the tramps and vagabonds who later emerged in his writing, such as the two tramps Estragon and Vladimir in Waiting for Godot. On his travels through Paris Beckett would always visit with Joyce for long periods.

Beckett permanently made Paris his home in 1937. Shortly after moving there, he was stabbed in the street by a man who had begged him for money. He had to recover from a perforated lung in the hospital. Beckett then went to visit his assailant, who remained in prison. When Beckett demanded to know why the man had attacked him, he replied "Je ne sais pas, Monsieur." This attitude about life comes across in several of the author’s later writings.

During World War II, Beckett joined the underground movement in Paris to resist the Germans. He remained in the resistance until 1942 when several members of his group were arrested. Beckett was forced to flee with his French-born wife to the unoccupied zone. He only returned in 1945 after Paris was liberated from the Germans. He soon reached the pinnacle of his writing career, producing Waiting for Godot, Eleutheria, Endgame, the novels Malloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, and Mercier et Camier, two books of short stories, and a book of criticism.
Samuel Beckett's first play was Eleutheria, it involved a young man's efforts to cut himself loose from his family and social obligations. This has often been compared to Beckett's own search for freedom. Beckett's great success came on January 5, 1953, when Waiting for Godot premiered at the Theatre de Babylon. Although critics labelled the play "the strange little play in which nothing happens," it gradually became a success as reports of it spread through word of mouth. It eventually ran for four hundred performances at the Theatre de Babylone and was heralded with critical praise from dramatists such as Tennessee Williams, Jean Anouilh, Thornton Wilder, and William Saroyan. Saroyan even remarked that, "It will make it easier for me and everyone else to write freely in the theatre". An interesting production of "Waiting for Godot" took place when some actors from the San Francisco Actor's Workshop performed the play at the San Quentin penitentiary for over fourteen hundred convicts in 1957. The prisoners immediately identified with both Vladimir and Estragon about the pains of waiting for life to end, and the struggle of the daily existence. The production was perhaps the most Royal Court Theatre in London.

All of Beckett's major works were written in French. He believed that French forced him to be more disciplined and to use the language more wisely. However, Waiting for Godot was eventually translated into the English by Beckett himself.

Samuel Beckett also became one of the first Absurdist playwrights to win international fame. His works have been translated into over twenty languages. In 1969 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, one of the few times this century that almost everyone agreed the recipient deserved it. He continued to write until his death in 1989, but towards the end he remarked that each word seemed to him "an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness.

The Theatre of the Absurd

Absurdity is the condition or state in which human beings exist in a meaningless, irrational universe wherein people's lives have no purpose or meaning. 'The Theatre of the Absurd' is a term coined by the critic Martin Esslin for the work of a number of playwrights, mostly written in the 1950s and 1960s. The term is derived from an essay by the French philosopher Albert Camus. In his 'Myth of Sisyphus', written in 1942, he first defined the human situation as basically meaningless and absurd. The 'absurd' plays by Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter and others all share the view that man inhabits a universe with which he is out of key. Its meaning is indecipherable and his place within it is without purpose. He is bewildered, troubled and obscurely threatened.

The origins of the Theatre of the Absurd are rooted in the avant-garde experiments in art of the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, it was undoubtedly strongly influenced by the traumatic experience of the horrors of the Second World War, which showed the total impermanence of any values, shook the validity of any conventions and highlighted the precariousness of human life and its fundamental meaninglessness and arbitrariness. The trauma of living from 1945 under threat of nuclear annihilation also seems to have been an important factor in the rise of the new theatre.
At the same time, the Theatre of the Absurd also seems to have been a reaction to the disappearance of the religious dimension form contemporary life. The Absurd Theatre can be seen as an attempt to restore the importance of myth and ritual to our age, by making man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition, by instilling in him again the lost sense of cosmic wonder and primeval anguish. The Absurd Theatre hopes to achieve this by shocking man out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical and complacent. It is felt that there is mystical experience in confronting the limits of human condition.

As a result, absurd plays assumed a highly unusual, innovative form, directly aiming to startle the viewer, shaking him out of this comfortable, conventional life of everyday concerns. In the meaningless and Godless post-Second-World-War world, it was no longer possible to keep using such traditional art forms and standards that had ceased being convincing and lost their validity. The Theatre of the Absurd openly rebelled against conventional theatre. Indeed, it was anti-theatre. It was surreal, illogical, conflictless and plotless. The dialogue seemed total gobbledygook. Not unexpectedly, the Theatre of the Absurd first met with incomprehension and rejection.

One of the most important aspects of absurd drama was its distrust of language as a means of communication. Language had become a vehicle of conventionalised, stereotyped, meaningless exchanges. Words failed to express the essence of human experience, not being able to penetrate beyond its surface. The Theatre of the Absurd constituted first and foremost an onslaught on language, showing it as a very unreliable and insufficient tool of communication. Absurd drama uses conventionalised speech, clichés, slogans and technical jargon, which is distorts, parodies and breaks down. By ridiculing conventionalised and stereotyped speech patterns, the Theatre of the Absurd tries to make people aware of the possibility of going beyond everyday speech conventions and communicating more authentically. Conventionalised speech acts as a barrier between ourselves and what the world is really about: in order to come into direct contact with natural reality, it is necessary to discredit and discard the false crutches of conventionalised language. Objects are much more important than language in absurd theatre: what happens transcends what is being said about it. It is the hidden, implied meaning of words that assume primary importance in absurd theatre, over and above what is being actually said. The Theatre of the Absurd strove to communicate an undissolved totality of perception - hence it had to go beyond language.

Absurd drama subverts logic. It relishes the unexpected and the logically impossible. According to Sigmund Freud, there is a feeling of freedom we can enjoy when we are able to abandon the straitjacket of logic. In trying to burst the bounds of logic and language the absurd theatre is trying to shatter the enclosing walls of the human condition itself. Our individual identity is defined by language, having a name is the source of our separateness - the loss of logical language brings us towards a unity with living things. In being illogical, the absurd theatre is anti-rationalist: it negates rationalism because it feels that rationalist thought, like language, only deals with the superficial aspects of things. Nonsense, on the other hand, opens up a glimpse of the infinite. It offers intoxicating freedom brings one into contact with the essence of life and is a source of marvellous comedy.

There is no dramatic conflict in the absurd plays. Dramatic conflicts, clashes of personalities and powers belong to a world where a rigid, accepted hierarchy of values forms a permanent establishment. Such conflicts, however, lose their meaning in a situation where the establishment and outward reality have become meaningless. However
perform, this only underlines the fact that nothing happens to change their existence. Absurd dramas are lyrical statements, very much like music: they communicate an atmosphere, an experience of archetypal human situations. The Absurd Theatre is a theatre of situation, as against the more conventional theatre of sequential events. It presents a pattern of poetic images. In doing this, it uses visual elements, movement, light. Unlike conventional theatre, where language rules supreme, in the Absurd Theatre language is only one of many components of its multidimensional poetic imagery.

**Existentialism**

Existentialism is "the philosophy that is centered upon the analysis of existence and of the way human beings find themselves existing in the world". Existentialism ponders the questions: Why do we exist? Why is there suffering? Why do we die?

It is the "dilemma of modern humanity" -"What do I know about man's destiny? I could tell you more about radishes." The Theatre of the Absurd presents an existentialist point of view of the world and reality, and forces the audience to "consider the meaning of their existence in a world where there appears to be no true order or meaning". Driven by the basis of existentialism, it expands the role of philosophy and metaphor in theatrical drama.

Existentialism sprung out directly after the Great Depression and World War Two, a period of despair and hopelessness. It seeks to find and define meaning and identity in a world of chaos and meaninglessness. Existentialism became popular during the Second World War in France, and just after it. French playwrights have often used the stage to express their views, and these views came to surface even during a Nazi occupation. Bernard Shaw got his play Saint Joan past the German censors because it appeared to be very Anti-British. French audiences however immediately understood the real meaning of the play, and replaced the British with the Germans. Those sorts of hidden meanings were common throughout the period so that plays would be able to pass censorship.

**Waiting for Godot : Character List**

**Estragon:** Estragon is one of the two protagonists. He is a bum and sleeps in a ditch where he is beaten each night. He has no memory beyond what is immediately said to him, and relies on Vladimir to remember for him. Estragon is impatient and constantly wants to leave Vladimir, but is restrained from leaving by the fact that he needs Vladimir. It is Estragon's idea for the bums to pass their time by hanging themselves. Estragon has been compared to a body without an intellect, which therefore needs Vladimir to provide the intellect.

**Vladimir:** Vladimir is one of the two protagonists. He is a bum like Estragon, but retains a memory of most events. However, he is often unsure whether his memory is playing tricks on him. Vladimir is friends with Estragon because Estragon provides him with the chance to remember past events. Vladimir is the one who makes Estragon wait with him for Mr. Godot's imminent arrival throughout the play. Vladimir has been compared to the intellect which provides for the body, represented by Estragon.
Lucky: - Lucky is the slave of Pozzo. He is tied to Pozzo via a rope around his neck and he carries Pozzo's bags. Lucky is only allowed to speak twice during the entire play, but his long monologue is filled with incomplete ideas. He is silenced only by the other characters who fight with him to take of his hat. Lucky appears as a mute in the second act.

Pozzo: - Pozzo is the master who rules over Lucky. He stops and talks to the two bums in order to have some company. In the second act Pozzo is blind and requires their help. He, like Estragon, cannot remember people he has met. His transformation between the acts may represent the passage of time.

The boy: - The boy is a servant of Mr. Godot. He plays an identical role in both acts by coming to inform Vladimir and Estragon the Mr. Godot will not be able to make it that night, but will surely come the next day. The boy never remembers having met Vladimir and Estragon before. He has a brother who is mentioned but who never appears.

Godot: - The man for whom Vladimir and Estragon wait unendingly. Godot never appears in the play. His name and character are often thought to refer to God.

Waiting for Godot: Summary

Act I

The setting is in the evening on a country road with a single tree present. Estragon is trying to pull off his boot, but without success. Vladimir enters and greets Estragon, who informs him that he has spent the night in a ditch where he was beaten. With supreme effort Estragon succeeds in pulling off his boot. He then looks inside it to see if there is anything there while Vladimir does the same with his hat.
Vladimir mentions the two thieves who were crucified next to Christ. He asks Estragon if he knows the Gospels. Estragon gives a short description of the maps of the Holy Land at which point Vladimir tells him he should have been a poet. Estragon points to his tattered clothes and says he was. Vladimir continues with his narrative about the two thieves in order to pass the time.

Estragon wants to leave but Vladimir forces him to stay because they are both waiting for Godot to arrive. Neither of the two bums knows when Godot will appear, or even if they are at the right place. Later it is revealed that they do not even know what they originally asked Godot for.

Estragon gets bored of waiting and suggests that they pass the time by hanging themselves from the tree. They both like the idea but cannot decide who should go first. They are afraid that if one of them dies the other might be left alone. In the end they decide it is safer to wait until Godot arrives.

Estragon asks Vladimir whether they still have rights. Vladimir indicates that they got rid of them. He then fears that he hears something, but it turns out to be imaginary noises. Vladimir soon gives Estragon a carrot to eat.

Pozzo and Lucky arrive. Lucky has a rope tied around his neck and is carrying a stool, a basket, a bag and a greatcoat. Pozzo carries a whip which he uses to control Lucky. Estragon immediately confuses Pozzo with Godot which gets Pozzo upset.

Pozzo spends several minutes ordering Lucky around. Lucky is completely silent and obeys like a machine. Pozzo has Lucky put down the stool and open the basket of food which contains chicken. Pozzo then eats the chicken and throws away the bones. Lucky stands in a stooped posture holding the bags after each command has been completed and appears to be falling asleep.

Estragon and Vladimir go to inspect Lucky who intrigues them. They ask why he never puts his bags down. Pozzo will not tell them, so Estragon proceeds to ask if he can have the chicken bones that Pozzo has been throwing away. Pozzo tells him that they technically belong to Lucky. When they ask Lucky if he wants them, he does not reply, so Estragon is given the bones.

Pozzo eventually tells them why Lucky hold the bags the entire time. He thinks it is because Lucky is afraid of being given away. While Pozzo tells them why Lucky continues to carry his bags, Lucky starts to weep. Estragon goes to wipe away the tears but receives a terrible kick in the shin.

Pozzo then tells them that he and Lucky have been together nearly sixty years. Vladimir is appalled at the treatment of Lucky who appears to be such a faithful servant. Pozzo explains that he cannot bear it any longer because Lucky is such a burden. Later Vladimir yells at Lucky that it is appalling the way he treats such a good master.

Pozzo then gives an oratory about the night sky. He asks them how it was and they tell him it was quite a good speech. Pozzo is ecstatic at the encouragement and offers to do something
for them. Estragon immediately asks for ten francs but Vladimir tells him to be silent. Pozzo offers to have Lucky dance and then think for them.

Lucky dances for them and when asked for an encore repeats the entire dance step for step. Estragon is unimpressed but almost falls trying to imitate it. They then make Lucky think. What follows is an outpouring of religious and political doctrine which always starts ideas but never brings them to completion. The three men finally wrestle Lucky to the ground and yank off his hat at which point he stops speaking. His last word is, "unfinished."

The men then spend some effort trying to get Lucky to wake up again. He finally reawakens when the bags are placed in his hand. Pozzo gets up to leave and he and Lucky depart the scene. Vladimir and Estragon return to their seats and continue waiting for Godot.

A young boy arrives having been sent by Mr. Godot. Estragon is outraged that it took him so long to arrive and scares him. Vladimir cut him off and asks the boy if he remembers him. The boy says this is his first time coming to meet them and that Mr. Godot will not be able to come today but perhaps tomorrow. The boy is sent away with the instructions to tell Mr. Godot that he has seen them. Both Estragon and Vladimir discuss past events and then decide to depart for the night. Neither of them moves from his seat.

**Act II**

The setting is the next day at the same time. Estragon's boots and Lucky's hat are still on the stage. Vladimir enters and starts to sing until Estragon shows up barefoot. Estragon is upset that Vladimir was singing and happy even though he was not there. Both admit that they feel better when alone but convince themselves they are happy when together. They are still waiting for Godot.

Estragon and Vladimir poetically talk about "all the dead voices" they hear. They are haunted by voices in the sounds of nature, especially of the leaves rustling. Vladimir shouts at Estragon to help him not hear the voices anymore. Estragon tries and finally decides that they should ask each other questions. They manage to talk for a short while.

Estragon has forgotten everything that took place the day before. He has forgotten all about Pozzo and Lucky as well as the fact that he wanted to hang himself from the tree. He cannot remember his boots and thinks they must be someone else's. For some reason they fit him now when he tries them on. The tree has sprouted leaves since the night before and Estragon comments that it must be spring. But when Vladimir looks at Estragon's shin, it is still pussy and bleeding from where Lucky kicked him.

Soon they are done talking and try to find another topic for discussion. Vladimir finds Lucky's hat and tries it on. He and Estragon spend a while trading hats until Vladimir throws his own hat on the ground and asks how he looks. They then decide to play at being Pozzo and Lucky, but to no avail. Estragon leaves only to immediately return panting. He says that they are coming. Vladimir thinks that it must be Godot who is coming to save them. He then becomes afraid and tries to hide Estragon behind the tree, which is too small to hide him.
The conversation then degenerates into abusive phrases. Estragon says, "That's the idea, let's abuse each other." They continue to hurl insults at one another until Estragon calls Vladimir a critic. They embrace and continue waiting.

Pozo and Lucky enter but this time Pozzo is blind and Lucky is mute. Lucky stops when he sees the two men. Pozzo crashes into him and they both fall helplessly in a heap on the ground. Vladimir is overjoyed that reinforcements have arrived to help with the waiting. Estragon again thinks that Godot has arrived.

Vladimir and Estragon discuss the merits of helping Pozzo get off the ground where he has fallen. When Vladimir asks how many other men spend their time in waiting, Estragon replies that it is billions. Pozzo in desperation offers to pay for help by offering a hundred francs. Estragon says that it is not enough. Vladimir does not want to pick up Pozzo because then he and Estragon would be alone again. Finally he goes over and tries to pick him up but is unable to. Estragon decides to leave but decides to stay when Vladimir convinces him to help first and then leave.

While trying to help Pozzo, both Vladimir and Estragon fall and cannot get up. When Pozzo talks again Vladimir kicks him violently to make him shut up. Vladimir and Estragon finally get up, and Pozzo resumes calling for help. They go and help him up. Pozzo asks who they are and what time it is. They cannot answer his questions.

Estragon goes to wake up Lucky. He kicks him and starts hurling abuses until he again hurts his foot. Estragon sits back down and tries to take off his boot. Vladimir tells Pozzo his friend is hurt.

Vladimir then asks Pozzo to make Lucky dance or think for them again. Pozzo tells him that Lucky is mute. When Vladimir asks since when, Pozzo gets into a rage. He tells them to stop harassing him with their time questions since he has no notion of it. He then helps Lucky up and they leave.

Vladimir reflects upon the fact that there is no truth and that by tomorrow he will know nothing of what has just passed. There is no way of confirming his memories since Estragon always forgets everything that happens to him.

The boy arrives again but does not remember meeting Estragon or Vladimir. He tells them it is his first time coming to meet them. The conversation is identical in that Mr. Godot will once again not be able to come but will be sure to arrive tomorrow. Vladimir demands that the boy be sure to remember that he saw him. Vladimir yells, "You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me to-morrow that you never saw me!"

The two bums decide to leave but cannot go far since they need to wait for Godot. They look at the tree and contemplate hanging themselves. Estragon takes off his belt but it breaks when they pull on it. His trousers fall down. Vladimir says that they will hang themselves tomorrow unless Godot comes to save them. He tells Estragon to put on his trousers. They decide to leave but again do not move.

**Waiting For Godot : Analysis**
If there is an absurdity play that has caught the imagination and the admiration of people all over the world then it “Waiting For Godot” written by Samuel Beckett. Beckett had written this in French and he translated it into English as well. It is considered as an important play in the English language. Since there are many loose ends there are many interpretations, the most famous being that he adapted Sigmund Freud’s theory into this play. There are two main characters Vladimir and Estragon and they are joined by another two Pozzo and Lucky. Then little boys come in as messengers.

**Pozzo and Lucky**

All through the play Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot. Why they wait for him or who he is, is never revealed. The audience has the liberty to come to any kind of conclusion or interpretation. The conversation and action of these two friends are unrelated for most part. There is no rhyme or reason for what is happening; a play that is completely different. Vladimir and Estragon seem to be inseparable friends and they together wait for Godot. While they wait they discuss thieves in the Gospel, they suddenly doubt if they are waiting at the correct place and the correct time.

Suddenly they hear a sound and they huddle together waiting for something to happen. Pozzo and Lucky come on to the stage and Vladimir and Estragon think it is Godot but Pozzo says he is not Godot and then witness how Pozzo treats Lucky, his servant. He is leashed and is treated as an animal. Vladimir reacts strongly to this but soon retreats. He changes his opinion very fast. Estragon eyes the chicken Pozzo is eating and wants the bone but does not get it because Lucky always gets to eat the bone.

**First Day Comes To an End**

Pozzo, they realize is going to the market to sell Lucky and hearing this Lucky cries as he does not want to leave his master. They then get to see Lucky dance and think. Vladimir and Estragon is not impressed with the dance and to think Lucky has to put the thinking hat. Once the hat is put on Lucky who was silent till then goes to speak gibberish and it goes on non-stop. All the three push him down, take off his hat and trample it to get him to stop talking. Then Pozzo decides to leave but he cannot. So like a runner he goes to the other end of the stage and kick starts from and dashes along the stage driving Lucky also out of the stage.

After they depart Vladimir and Estragon remember that they are waiting for Godot. A boy enters and tells them that Godot asked to pass on the information that he would be coming tomorrow to the same place. They try to get some information about Godot from the boy but they get to know nothing. It becomes dark. Estragon does not want to go but Vladimir thinks each should go separately but finally they go together.

**The Wait Continues**

The second act opens to the next day but there are trees on the leaves and Vladimir is singing happily. Both are happier without each other but cannot part ways and go. When Vladimir says that things have changed from the previous day, Estragon does not remember the previous day. Vladimir talks about Pozzo and Lucky but Estragon cannot recollect what happened the previous day. He even forgets that had left his boots behind and Vladimir has
to show him where his boots were kept. Vladimir confirms that they are in the right place by seeing Lucky’s hat.

So many absurd things happen on stage and they are still waiting for Godot and they hear a sound again. It is Pozzo and Lucky again, but this time Pozzo is blind and after some interaction they leave. Pozzo also does not remember having met the previous day. When they request Lucky to sing or recite Pozzo tells Lucky is dumb and they leave the stage. A boy appears and tells them that Godot will come the next day and again the two are left waiting for Godot.

**Imagery a Plenty**

The ‘waiting’ which is shown throughout the play is likened to man’s perennial waiting for one or the other desired object. Estragon is complaining and sleeping most of the time; Vladimir is also complaining. Man is always complaining and most of the time there is no action on his part to better the situation. Many have likened this drama to Freudian theory of Id, ego and super ego. Estragon represents id, Vladimir ego and Godot super ego.

Id which is the baser nature in man only thinks of physical pleasures and Estragon desires to eat the bone, the carrot; is sleeping all the time and complaining of pains. Ego is slightly elevated but thinks he is the one who is in control of the situation. Vladimir is the one who directs Estragon and he is completely dependent on Vladimir. The super ego control both and that is Godot. Godot is not perceived, yet, all the while they are waiting for Godot and are invisibly controlled by him, the super ego.

All through the play one cannot bring in one sequence of thought. Everything is unrelated and even seems crazy. It can be this style of writing that has made this play so popular. The language is crisp and there are no sermons or value additions to it. This play has touched people interested in theatre all over the world and many small theatre groups have experimented with this play. Stage direction is very simple as it is the same scene in both the acts, the props are simple. Sound and light effects are also to the minimum and this makes this play an easy one to stage. The simplicity in the stage direction coupled with the absurdity of the play must have made this play very popular with theatre lovers.

**The Circular Structure of Waiting for Godot**

"But what does it all mean?" is the most frequent statement heard after one has seen or finished reading a play from the Theatre of the Absurd movement. Beckett's plays were among the earliest and, therefore, created a great deal of confusion among the early critics.

No definite conclusion or resolution can ever be offered to Waiting for Godot because the play is essentially circular and repetitive in nature. A traditional play, has an introduction of the characters and the exposition; then, there is a statement of the problem of the play in relationship to its settings and characters. (In Waiting for Godot, we never know where the play takes place, except that it is set on "a country road.") Furthermore, in a traditional play, the characters are developed, and gradually we come to see the dramatist's world view; the play then rises to a climax, and there is a conclusion. This type of development is called a linear development. In the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd, the structure is often exactly
the opposite. We have, instead, a circular structure, and most aspects of this drama support this circular structure in one way or another.

The setting is the same, and the time is the same in both acts. Each act begins early in the morning, just as the tramps are awakening, and both acts close with the moon having risen. The action takes place in exactly the same landscape — a lonely, isolated road with one single tree. (In the second act, there are some leaves on the tree, but from the viewpoint of the audience, the setting is exactly the same.) We are never told where this road is located; all we know is that the action of the play unfolds on this lonely road. Thus, from Act I to Act II, there is no difference in either the setting or in the time and, thus, instead of a progression of time within an identifiable setting, we have a repetition in the second act of the same things that we saw and heard in the first act.

More important than the repetition of setting and time, however, is the repetition of the actions. To repeat, in addition to the basic structure of actions indicated earlier — that is:

Vladimir and Estragon Alone
Arrival of Pozzo and Lucky
Vladimir and Estragon Alone
Arrival of Boy Messenger
Vladimir and Estragon Alone

there are many lesser actions that are repeated in both acts. At the beginning of each act, for example, several identical concerns should be noted. Among these is the emphasis on Estragon's boots. Also, too, Vladimir, when first noticing Estragon, uses virtually the same words: "So there you are again" in Act I and "There you are again" in Act II. At the beginning of both acts, the first discussion concerns a beating that Estragon received just prior to their meeting. At the beginning of both acts, Vladimir and Estragon emphasize repeatedly that they are there to wait for Godot. In the endings of both acts, Vladimir and Estragon discuss the possibility of hanging themselves, and in both endings they decide to bring some good strong rope with them the next day so that they can indeed hang themselves. In addition, both acts end with the same words, voiced differently:

**ACT I:**
Estragon: Well, shall we go?
Vladimir: Yes, let's go.

**ACT II:**
Vladimir: Well? Shall we go?
Estragon: Yes, let's go.

And the stage directions following these lines are exactly the same in each case: "They do not move."

With the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky in each act, we notice that even though their physical appearance has theoretically changed, outwardly they seem the same; they are still tied together on an endless journey to an unknown place to rendezvous with a nameless person.

Likewise, the Boy Messenger, while theoretically different, brings the exact same message: Mr. Godot will not come today, but he will surely come tomorrow.
Vladimir’s difficulties with urination and his suffering are discussed in each act as a contrast to the suffering of Estragon because of his boots. In addition, the subject of eating, involving carrots, radishes, and turnips, becomes a central image in each act, and the tramps’ involvement with hats, their multiple insults, and their reconciling embraces — these and many more lesser matters are found repeatedly in both acts.

Finally, and most important, there are the larger concepts: first, the suffering of the tramps; second, their attempts, however futile, to pass time; third, their attempts to part, and, ultimately, their incessant waiting for Godot — all these make the two acts clearly repetitive, circular in structure, and the fact that these repetitions are so obvious in the play is Beckett’s manner of breaking away from the traditional play and of asserting the uniqueness of his own circular structure.

**Lucky’s Dance and Speech**

Lucky’s dance is merely a clumsy shuffling, which is a complete disappointment to Vladimir and Estragon. Thus they decide to have Lucky think. They give him his hat, and after protesting Pozzo’s brutality, they arrange themselves for Lucky’s performance of thinking. It takes the form of a long, seemingly incoherent speech. The speech is delivered as a set piece, yet it is anything but a set piece. Under different directors, this scene can be variously played. For example, Lucky most often speaks directly to the audience with the other characters at his back, while Vladimir and Estragon become more and more agitated as the speech progresses. Often Vladimir and Estragon run forward and try to stop Lucky from continuing his speech. As they try to stop Lucky, he delivers his oration in rapid-fire shouts. At times, Pozzo pulls on Lucky’s rope, making it even more difficult for him to continue with his speech. The frenzied activity on the stage, the rapid delivery of the speech, and the jerking of the rope make it virtually impossible to tell anything at all about the speech and, consequently, emphasize the metaphysical absurdity of the entire performance. Lucky’s speech is an incoherent jumble of words which seems to upset Vladimir and Estragon, for sporadically both rise to protest some element of the speech. Therefore, the speech does communicate something to the two tramps or else they would not know to protest. The form of the speech is that of a scholarly, theological address, beginning "Given the existence . . . of a personal God," but it is actually a parody of this kind of address since the nonsensical and the absurd elements are in the foreground and the meaningful aspects of it are totally obscured, as is the God whom Lucky discusses. Here, we have a combination of the use of scholastic, theological terminology along with the absurd and the nonsensical. For example, the use of qua (a Latin term meaning "in the function or capacity of") is common in such scholarly addresses, but Lucky’s repetition of the term as quaquaquaqua creates an absurd, derisive sound, as though God is being ridiculed by a quacking or squawking sound. Furthermore, the speech is filled with various academic sounding words, some real words like aphasia (a loss of speech; here it refers to the fact that God from his divine heights now has divine aphasia or a divine silence) and some words like apathia or athambia which do not exist (even though apathia is closely aligned to apathy and thus becomes another oblique comment on the apathy of God in the universe). Other absurd terms are used throughout the speech, and there is also a frequent use of words which sound obscene, interspersed throughout the speech. As an example, the names of the scholars Fartov and Belcher are obviously created for their vulgarity.

Therefore, the speech is filled with more nonsense than sense — more that is illogical than that which is logical. If, however, we remove the illogical modifiers, irrelevancies, and
incomprehensible statements and place them to the side, the essence of the speech is as follows:

**The Essence of Lucky's Speech**

"*Given [acknowledging] the existence . . . of a personal God . . . [who exists] outside [of] time . . . [and] who . . . loves us dearly . . . and [who] suffers . . . with those who . . . are plunged in torment . . . it is established beyond all doubt . . . that man . . . that man . . . for reasons unknown . . . for reasons unknown . . . for reasons unknown . . . [our] labors abandoned left unfinished . . . abandoned unfinished . . ."

Lucky's speech is an attempt, however futile, to make a statement about man and God. Reduced to its essence, the speech is basically as follows:

acknowledging the existence of a personal God, one who exists outside of time and who loves us dearly and who suffers with those who are plunged into torment, it is established beyond all doubt that man, for reasons unknown, has left his labours abandoned, unfinished.

It is significant that the speech ends at this point because man can make certain assumptions about God and create certain hypotheses about God, but man can never come to a logical conclusion about God. One must finish a discourse about God, as Lucky did, by repeating "for reasons unknown . . . for reasons unknown . . . for reasons unknown . . ." And equally important is the fact that any statement made about God is, by its nature, lost in a maze of irrelevance, absurdity, and incoherence — without an ending. Therefore, man's final comment about God can amount to nothing more than a bit of garbled noise which contains no coherent statement and no conclusion. Furthermore, Lucky's utterances are stopped only after he is physically overpowered by the others.

After the speech, Pozzo tiles to revive Lucky, who is emotionally exhausted, completely enervated by his speech. After great difficulty, Pozzo gets Lucky up, and amid protracted adieus, he begins to go, albeit he begins to go the wrong way. Pozzo's inability to leave suggests man's reliance upon others and his natural instinct to cling to someone else. But with one final adieu, Pozzo and Lucky depart.
Waiting for Godot: Various Interpretations

A Puzzling Play: - Waiting for Godot is a very puzzling play. Its essential meaning is not quite clear, with the result that different critics have approached it differently and interpreted it in various ways. Unfortunately Beckett himself did not throw much light on the meaning of the play. Under the circumstances each one of us is left to respond to the play in his own way. Each member of the audience is free to pick up the echoes to which he is most attuned. It is noteworthy also that the play has had a widespread appeal and has found acceptance with not only intellectuals but also with average theatre-goers. There is something in the play for almost everybody.

A Picture of Human Attempts to Fiddle through Life: - According to one interpretation of the play, the two tramps are two parts of a person or of a community seen subjectively, with Vladimir representing the more spiritual part and Estragon the animal; and Pozzo and Lucky make up a person or a community viewed objectively, Pozzo being the exploiter and the user of ideas, Lucky the exploited and the creator of ideas. In other words, we suffer with Estragon and Vladimir, their fears, their hopes, their hatreds, and their loves; but we view Pozzo and Lucky through the eyes of the tramps and therefore see in them only the social surface of life. Thus these four characters add up to a picture of humanity at large, and the play is, more than anything else, about the attempts of human beings to fiddle their way through life, setting up a wall of hopes and pretences between themselves and despair. Godot symbolises the greatest of these hopes, namely that there is some point to existence, that we are keeping some mysterious appointment on earth, and are therefore not random scraps of life. It does not matter much who Godot is because the play is not about Godot but, as its title states, about the waiting for him. The play is about life on earth, not hereafter.

A Picture of the Pointlessness of Human Life: - Different from this somewhat positive approach is another which is entirely negative. According to this other interpretation, the play is a fable about a kind of life that has no longer any point. The dramatist wishes to convey to us that life is devoid of action and that human beings have been pulled out of the world and have no longer anything to do with it. The two heroes, or anti-heroes, are merely alive, but no longer living in the world. The world has become empty for them. Where a world no longer exists, there can no longer be a possibility of a collision with the world. In our world today many people have begun increasingly to feel that they live in a world in which they do not or cannot act but are simply acted upon. The play seeks to capture the mood of such people and has therefore a more or less general application. The two tramps are dimly aware of the want of action in their lives and of the pointlessness of their existence. It is another matter that they still want to go on in life. The majority of people in today’s world do not after all give up living when their life becomes pointless. The tramps are waiting for nothing in particular. They have even to remind each other of the fact that they are waiting and of what they are waiting for. Thus actually they are not waiting for anything. We need not make much fuss about who or what the expected Godot is. Godot is nothing but a name for the fact that the life which goes on pointlessly is wrongly interpreted to mean waiting for something. May be, the tramps are totally unaware of the pointlessness of their existence, though there are indications to show at least a dim awareness.

A Presentation of the Ordeal of Waiting, Ignorance, Impotence & Boredom:
- A more convincing interpretation of the play is that it presents the
futile waiting, the act of waiting as an essential, characteristic aspect of the human condition. Most often people wait for something which does not materialise just as Godot does not materialise. A man may vainly wait for a job, or promotion, or the return of a long-lost child or friend, or a love-letter, or a reunion with a divorced wife, and so on. Vladimir and Estragon by their waiting indefinitely and without any tangible result thus symbolise the millions of human beings who wait for something or other without attaining it. In this sense to the play has a general validity. But the ordeal of waiting is not the only subject of the play. The two tramps do not know who or what Godot is; nor are they sure that they are waiting at the right place or on the right day, or what could happen if they stopped waiting. In other words, the two tramps are lacking in the essential knowledge; they are ignorant. Being ignorant they cannot act and so they are impotent also. Thus the tramps produce in us a sense of baffled helplessness which we experience when forced to remain in a situation which we do not understand and over which we have no control. All that they do is to seek ways to pass the time in the situation in which they find themselves. They tell stories, sing songs, play verbal games, and pretend to be Pozzo and Lucky, do physical exercises. But all these activities are mere stop-gaps serving only to pass the time. Here then we have the very essence of boredom. Thus the play represents not just waiting but also ignorance, impotence, and boredom. Vladimir and Estragon have travelled far towards total nihilism, though they have not fully achieved it. They are in a place and in a mental state in which nothing happens and time stands still. If Godot comes, a new factor may be introduced into their existence, whereas if they leave they will certainly miss him. Their waiting therefore contains an element of vague hope.

The Problem of How to Get through Life: - Beckett had the habit of repeating the same themes and images and even characters from work to work in order perhaps to emphasise the nature of the world as he saw it. In his works, whoever the characters and whatever the situations, there is nothing beyond habit, boredom, forgetfulness and suffering. This is why the many and elaborate interpretations that have been offered of this play seem superfluous. Pozzo and Lucky, for instance, have variously been described as body and intellect, master and slave, capitalist and proletarian, coloniser and colonised, Cain and Abel, sadist and masochist, even Joyce and Beckett. But essentially and more simply, they represent one way of getting through life with someone else, just as Vladimir and Estragon more sympathetically represent another way of doing so. The mysterious Godot is just some diminutive god like all the other little gods—some divine, some political, some intellectual, some personal—for whom men wait, hopefully and in fear, to solve their problems and bring point to their pointless lives, and for whose sake they sacrifice the only real gift they have, namely their free will. When Estragon asks whether he and Vladimir have lost their rights, Vladimir replies that they have got rid of them (the rights). Waiting for Godot is thus the fullest statement of the problem that troubled Beckett. The problem is: how do you get through life? Beckett’s answer is simple and depressing: we get through life by force of habit, by going on inspite of boredom and pain, by talking, by not listening to the "silence", absurdly and without hope. The two tramps in this play, with their boredom, their fear of pain, their shreds of love and hate, are a surprisingly effective version of the whole human condition—a condition for which action is no answer, chiefly because there is no obvious action to be taken: “Nothing to be done.” In other words Beckett comes to a nihilistic conclusion. The play also conveys the idea that our everyday existence is nothing but playing of games, clown-like, without real consequence, springing solely from the vain hope that it will make time pass. Our
daily activities are similar to Estragon’s meaningless action in taking off his shoes and putting them on.

The Religious Theme: - Some critics have found a religious meaning in the play and it is not difficult to see why. Vladimir raises, and seriously too, the issue of human salvation early in the play. He feels worried at the thought that one of the two thieves was damned. Estragon has all his life compared himself to Christ and says rather enviously that “they crucified (him) quickly.” The tramps wait for Godot who may represent God, and their persistence in waiting for Godot shows their faith in God. The mutual attachment of the two tramps Vladimir and Estragon and Vladimir’s protective attitude towards his friend have been interpreted as Christian virtues. Pozzo is being mistaken for Godot to begin with may also be linked with this religious interpretation. However, it is difficult to read in the play a consistent and elaborate religious allegory.

Disintegration and Regression of Man: - Among the depressing interpretations of the play is yet another. According to this interpretation, the play represents a disintegration of human beings, the climax in the play occurring when all the four characters fall to the ground upon one another, creating a formless mass from which Vladimir’s voice emerges, saying: “We are men!” Nothing escapes the destructive force of this regression: neither speech—torn to pieces in the rhetoric of Pozzo’s monologue on twilight—nor thought, which is undermined and destroyed by a whole series of absurd reasonings as well as by such passages as the incoherent speech delivered by Lucky. Lucky’s speech effectively represents the regression of man’s thinking intelligence.

The Nullity of Human Achievement: - One critic urges us not to feel perplexed by the play’s meaning. Beckett, he tells us, is no didactic writer concerned to communicate a “message” in dramatic form. Even the many Christian echoes in the play do not add up to any coherent religious statement, but rather to a meditation upon a world governed by no other divinity than some sort of malignant fate, a world in which man waits and hopes for something to give value to his life and distract him from the absurdity of his death. Waiting for Godot is a meditative rhapsody on the nullity of human attainment.

A Suggestion of the German Occupation of France: - According to yet another view, the world represented in this play resembles France occupied by the Germans during World War II when Beckett lived first in the occupied zone and then escaped to the unoccupied region. Thus viewed, the play reminds us of the French Resistance organized by underground workers. How much waiting must have gone on in that bleak world! How many times must Resistance organisers have kept appointments with many who did not turn up and who may have had good reasons for not turning up! We can imagine why the arrival of Pozzo would have an unnerving effect on those who waited. Pozzo could be a Gestapo official clumsily disguised. The German occupation of France should not of course be regarded as the “key” to the play; the play simply suggests the German occupation and thus acquires a certain historical value.

Minor Themes: - Into this wonderfully suggestive and subtle play, Beckett incorporates such minor themes as the inadequacy of human language as a means of communication and the illusory nature of such concepts as past and future.
Different Meanings for Different People: - In approaching Beckett we must give up asking what any of his plays is intended to mean. Beckett himself, when asked what a play of his meant, replied: “If I could tell you in a sentence I wouldn’t have written the play.” Waiting for Godot means different things for different people.

“Waiting for Godot” : An Absurd Play

Absurdist Drama: - Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot is thought to initiate a theatrical tradition called absurd drama. But like any other artistic puzzles, the theatre of the absurd cannot be reduced to a single bottom line. It cannot be defined in a single word or by a particular theory. In order to understand the rise, characteristics and popularity of the absurd drama we must look back to the events that took place during the first half of the 20th century in the worlds of politics, literature, philosophy and religion. The early 20th century witnessed two World Wars. In literature it gave birth to two recognizable literary styles: modernism and post-modernism. In philosophy the rise of existentialism was the most important event and the world also saw the decline of men’s faith in religion. All these happenings paved the way for the theatrical tradition the absurd drama which in fact was a reflection the age.

The term was coined by the critic Martin Esslin, who made it the title of a 1962 book on the subject. Esslin saw the work of these playwrights as giving artistic articulation to Albert Camus’ philosophy that life is inherently without meaning, as illustrated in his work The Myth of Sisyphus. The group of the playwrights whose works came to be known as the absurd plays include Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Edward Albee and Harold Pinter. These writers flout all the standards by which drama has been judged for many centuries. As playwrights they share some theatrical techniques and philosophic ideas. In their plays there is no particular attention spent developing a recognizable plot, no detailed characterization, and no readily definable theme. This bizarre rejection of any recognizable pattern or development gave birth to the term Literature of the Absurd. Philosophically almost all of them share the existentialist philosophy of absurdity and nothingness.

Beckett’s Waiting for Godot largely deals with the absurd tradition. The play is without any plot, character, dialogue and setting in the traditional sense.

Absurd Setting: - The setting of the play creates the absurdist mood. A desolate country road, a ditch, and a leafless tree make up the barren, otherworldly landscape whose only occupants are two homeless men who bumble and shuffle in a vaudevillian manner. They are in rags, bowler hats, and apparently oversized boots—a very comic introduction to a very bizarre play. There is a surplus of symbolism and thematic suggestion in this setting. The landscape is a symbol of a barren and fruitless civilization or life. There is nothing to be done and there appears to be no place better to depart. The tree, usually a symbol of life with its blossoms and fruit or its suggestion of spring, is apparently dead and lifeless. But it is also the place to which they believe this Godot has asked them to come. This could mean Godot wants the men to feel the infertility of their life. At the same time, it could simply mean they have found the wrong tree.

The setting of the play reminds us the post-war condition of the world which brought about uncertainties, despair, and new challenges to the all of mankind. A pest
with sadism and tangible violence, as a rich dividend of the aftermath of wars. It is as if the
poignancy and calamities of the wars found sharp reflections in Beckett’s Waiting for Godot.

Absurd Plot: - In the traditional sense a plot should concentrate on a single motivated
action and is also expected to have a beginning, a middle and a neatly tied-up ending. But it's
almost impossible to provide a conventional plot summary of Waiting for Godot, which has
often been described as a play in which nothing happens. It is formless and not constructed
on any structural principles. It has no Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. It starts at an
arbitrary point and seem to end just as arbitrarily. Beckett, like other dramatists working in
this mode, is not trying to "tell a story." He’s not offering any easily identifiable solutions to
carefully observed problems; there’s little by way of moralizing and no obvious "message." The
pattern of the play might best be described as circular. The circularity of Waiting for Godot is highly unconventional.

Absurd Characters: - As per as the portrayal of characters is concerned the play also
fits into the absurd tradition. A well-made play is expected to present characters that are
well-observed and convincingly motivated. But in the play we five characters who are not very
recognizable human beings and don't engage themselves in a motivated action. Two tramps,
Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo), are waiting by a tree on a country road for Godot, whom
they have never met and who may not even exist. They argue, make up, contemplate suicide,
discuss passages from the Bible, and encounter Pozzo and Lucky, a master and slave. Near
the end of the first act, a young boy comes with a message from Mr. Godot that he will not
come today but will come tomorrow. In the second act, the action of the first act is essentially
repeated, with a few changes: the tree now has leaves, Pozzo is blind and has Lucky on a
shorter leash. Once again the boy comes and tells them Mr. Godot will not come today; he
insists he has never met them before. The play concludes with a famous exchange:

*Vladimir: Well, shall we go?*
*Estragon: Yes, let’s go.*
*They do not move,*

Absurd Dialogue: - In the traditional play is expected to entertain the audience with
logically built, witty dialogue. But in this play, like any other absurd play, the dialogue seems
to have degenerated into meaningless babble. The dialogues the characters exchange are
meaningless banalities. They use language to feel the emptiness between them, to conceal
the fact that they have no desire to talk to each other anything at all.

Theme of Absurdity: - The absurd plays deal with the themes of existentialism,
especially the existentialist theme of absurdity. The absurd playwrights tried to translate
the contemporary existentialist philosophy into the drama. The absurd playwrights also tried to
portray the distressful condition of the humans. In Waiting for Godot the human condition is
shown as a dismal and distressful state. The derelict man struggles to live or rather exist, in a
hostile and uncaring world. A sense of stagnancy and bareness captivates man, and whenever
he tries to assert himself, he is curbed. In Beckett’s words, human life is the endurance and
tolerance to "the boredom of living" "replaced by the suffering of being." These phrases speak
volumes of a philosophy born out of the harsh human realities. Vladimir and Estragon are
blissfully and painfully oblivious to their own condition. They go about repeating their actions
every day unmindful of the monotony and captivity. They also do not a
question or brood over their own actions and the motives underlying their actions. The "compressed vacuum" in their lives is constantly disregarded. The idea that God or fate or some Supreme Being with control toys with the lives of men is startlingly clear. Every moment of every day, mankind waits for some sign from God that his suffering will end. And every day, God does not arrive.

So many times in the play, a possibility is suggested then immediately undercut by its unhappy opposite. This technique is used by Beckett to relay his theme that life is uncertain and unpredictable at its best, unfortunate and unending at its worst. To further state this theme, Estragon asserts that "There's no lack of void" in life. It is actually of little importance where they were the previous day, as everywhere every day the same empty vacuum envelops them. Absence, emptiness, nothingness, and unresolved mysteries are central features in the play.

Thus the play “Waiting for Godot” contains almost all the elements of an absurd play. The play depicts the irrationalism of life in a grotesquely comic and non-consequential fashion with the element of "metaphysical alienation and tragic anguish." It was first written in French and called En attendant Godot. The author himself translated the play into English in 1954. The uniqueness of the play compelled the audiences to flock to the theatres for a spectacularly continuous four hundred performances. At the time, there were two distinct opinions about the play; some called it a hoax and others called it a masterpiece. Nevertheless, Waiting for Godot has claimed its place in literary history as a masterpiece that changed the face of twentieth century drama.

"Waiting For Godot": Existentialism

Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot is a play that presents conflict between living by religious and spiritual beliefs, and living by an existential philosophy, which asserts that it is up to the individual to discover the meaning of life through personal experience in the earthly world.

Waiting for Godot is a comprehensive study in existentialism. The play in its own right contains many existentialist themes and concepts which are relayed to the audience through the actions and thoughts of the main characters. The main existentialist theme which Beckett deals with is that death is the only eventual possibility. He uses the almost religious action of waiting and turns it on its head. He does this by reducing the action to a fruitless exercise. Vladimir and Estragon are in fact waiting for nothing. I think that Beckett strongly questions the notion of religion in “Waiting for Godot”. He uses certain religious symbols such as the tree, which is one of the very few props visible on the stage.

The tree is very religious. It is believed that the tree represents life and death in a cyclical fashion. Also waiting is a central part of the play. Waiting can be interpreted as a religious activity. Waiting can be directly linked to faith. Many people of the catholic faith believe that they are on this earth waiting to go to heaven i.e. the afterlife. I think that Beckett hits out at this notion. He does this by showing that nothing happens at the end of Vladimir and Estragon's waiting. The title, waiting for Godot, is very clever. It can be, and has been read as waiting for god. It would appear, on first glance that Vladimir and Estragon are indeed waiting for god, or a godlike figure.
"But that is not the question. Why are we here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come."

We are never made aware as to whom Godot actually is. Is his character cloaked in mystery or, does Godot simply not exist? We the audience, along with the central characters, have never seen Godot. We are too simply to believe in this mysterious figure. I think that Beckett plays on the concept of faith excellently here. He demands faith from everybody and in the last scene he destroys this faith. He strongly communicates his message, there is no afterlife and we are merely waiting on this earth for one thing only, death. Beckett, as an existentialist writer, is very aware of his mortality and this echoes throughout his works, especially waiting for Godot. The title can also be read as waiting for nothing, as the elusive Godot does not make an appearance.

Beckett, as an existencialist writer, is not overly religious. It would be a mistake in opinion to relate his writing to religion. I feel that Beckett is criticising people's blind faith. Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for nothing in the play. I feel that Beckett is trying to convey this message in his drama. He is ambiguous in his writing. I think he does this to be more accessible so he can spread his core existentialist concepts. He inserts false religious symbols and metaphors in waiting for Godot and once he has baited the religious readers he bombards them with existentialist concepts. This in my opinion is a de-conversion of religion as he tries to strip the reader's faith away. Beckett sees God to be a joke just as Godot is a joke. The waiting is nothing more than the delayed inevitability that they are waiting for nothing, but their own inevitable death. Godot is nothing, and thus god is nothing. This ties in with the existentialist view that death is the only inevitable outcome in life.

"Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late!"

Beckett writing exists freshly in the wake of the world war. Morality is a key concept in Waiting for Godot. In life, morality is passed down from god. Beckett questions morality. Can morality exist without god? It is clear war and its destructive capability caused many people to question their morality. The losing of Pozzo's watch is a very significant scene to the play. We see how one character, Pozzo, is bound to the constraints and rules of time. Time itself can be seen as a great symbol and a metaphor for death. Beckett refers to time through the character of Pozzo. He shows the audience how they are mortal and that everyone's days are numbered. Pozzo's fear of time may be linked to the existentialist themes of this play. Pozzo is well aware of his mortality. The watch marks his ageing and with each tic he is moving closer to his death. He is bound to this and it is a faith he cannot escape. The watch is a constant reminder of this. When the watch is lost Pozzo is free from all anxieties. He no longer is bound to time or no longer recognises his own mortality, even though it still exists and is ever present. When the watch is lost time becomes redundant. Time becomes nothing, just as Godot is nothing. This is another test of faith laid down by Beckett. It is an experiment to see if something which is not present can still exist. Through the on stage characters, he shows us that this is not entirely possible. Time is banished from the physical world of which they inhabit. The banishment of time is an important symbol. Beckett shows us that it is
possible to remove a belief system, even one as controlling as time. We see that even time is just another concept thought up by somebody else.

In conclusion we can say that Godot has some physical presence in the play. Godot is the tree. The tree is the central prop in the play. But it could be would argue that Godot is the central prop. Vladimir and Estrago were not waiting by the tree for Godot, but were waiting alongside Godot unknown’s to themselves. Godot is in front of everyone from the start. The tree on stage is dead. Godot is also dead. Godot in my opinion is faith. Estragon and Vladimir have faith throughout the play even though they are waiting by a symbol which declares faith to be dead. This is great irony. Beckett is trying to say that people will always have faith even when they are bombarded with signs that there is no God. This may relate to the World War. Beckett fought in the war and witnessed the devastation caused by it. The war copper-fastened Beckett’s belief that there is no god as there was no divine intervention to stop the bloodshed. The war itself was a great symbol, like the tree in waiting for Godot, to show that faith is dead and god does not exist. But people are blind to the obvious.

"Waiting for Godot" : Significance of the Title

Waiting for Godot is a multi-sided play with significant title. Its meanings and implications are complex. It is possible to look upon it as a clever farce or view it as a tragic exposition of human predicament. Its themes have certain topicality but at the same time, they possess a timeless validity and universality. It is an existentialistic play but at the same time mocks at the attitude of existentialism. It seems to have some religious implications even though it seems of be questioning profoundly the Christian concept of salvation and grace.

The title "Waiting for Godot," suggests waiting for a mysterious stranger who has obvious symbolic dimensions and implication. Godot may be a representative, in Beckett’s contemporary term of some authority, who has promised protection to the tramps. He may be regarded as a symbol of the hope of the ordinary French citizen in French under German occupation or he may be considered as the link in Resistance French Movement with Estragon and Vladimir two resistance workers who have been told to contact him. Obviously their men can come only when the coast is absolutely clear, or waiting for Godot may be a symbol of waiting for a Divine Saviour.

The significance of the title can also be explored in another way, as the fundamental imagery of “Waiting for Godot” is Christian for the depth of experience which Backett is probing; there is no other source of imagery for him to draw on. His heroes are two tramps who have come from nowhere in particular and have nowhere particular to go, their life is in a state of apparently fruitless expectation. They receive messages, through a little boy, from local landowner, Godot, who always is going to come in person tomorrow, but never do come, Their attitude towards Godot is partly one of hope, partly of fear, The orthodoxy of this symbolism from a Christian point of view is obvious, The tramps with their rags and misery represent the fallen state of man! The squalor of their Surrounding, their lock of a state in the world represents the idea that there in this world we can build no conducive state to live in.

The ambiguity of their attitude towards Godot Their mingled hope and fear and the doubtful tone of the boy’s messages represent the state of tension and
an average Christian must live in this world, avoiding presumption and also avoiding despair. Yet the two tramps Didi and Gogo, as they call each other, represent something far higher than the other two characters in the play, the masterful and ridiculous Pozzo and his terrifying slave Lucky, Didi and Gogo stand for the contemplative life and Lucky and Pozzo stand for the life of practical action taken mistakenly, as an end in it.

As for as view of Godot as a Divine Saviour is concerned, it is strengthened by they did not request Godot to do anything definite for them, all they did, was to make a sort of vague or supplication to him. Vladimir says more than once that if Godot comes they would be saved. The resemblance of "God" is too clear to be missed. Moreover, they are also afraid of him, when Estragon suggests that they might drop Godot, Vladimir reminds him that he would punish them if they do that.

Thus Godot may be God, terrible and white beard, as conceived in the Old Testament. The tramps waiting for him may thus be the representatives of human beings who must keep each other's company, quarrelling and foolish talking, until they find a rope to hang themselves, or until final night make the act of waiting unnecessary. Being poor and unpriovided they are typical specimens of common, anti-hemic humanity. The tramps like Pozzo and Lucky also seem to symbolize human regression, that is to say, the deterioration or "backward evolution" in human. In this way the title "Waiting for Godot" is applicable to act of Christianity.

As regards the relevance of the title of the play to the German occupation of France, we observe two men waiting for another name, which may not be his real name. A ravaged and blasted landscape, a world that was once ampler and more open, but it is permeated with pointlessness now, mysterious dispensers of beating and tile anxiety of the two who wait their anxiety to be as inconspicuous as possible in a strange environment. All this reminds the reader and the audience of France occupied by the Gennens, in which its author spent the war years. It indicates how much useless waiting must have gone on that bleak world. As such the monotonous waiting is likely to create uncertainty and loss of hope. The tramps in the play are sitting in a similar condition of mind.

This view suggests that "Waiting for Godot" is a play about a mysterious world where two men wait. Only a fraction of human race had experienced the German occupation of France and only of fraction of that fraction waited for some Godot.

Nevertheless, the title of the play is also suggestive of the meaninglessness of life. The way the two tramps pass time his real name is indicative of the boredom and triviality of human activities, the lack of significance in life and the constant suffering which are the results of this existence. It also brings out the hollowness and insincerity of most social intercourse. Estragon and Vladimir question each other, contradict each other abuse each other and reconcile each other without any serious meanings or intention. All these devices are employed to one end - to the end of making their waiting for Godot less unbearable. Estragon takes off his boots, gropes inside them, and shakes them out expecting something to fall out of them, but nothing happens. Vladimir does the same with hat with the same result. The very essence of boredom and triviality is concentrated in the scene in which Estragon and Vladimir repeatedly put on and take off the three hats their own and Lucky. It is utter lack of meanings which derives Estragon and Vladimir to the thoughts of suicide but the world of the play is one in which no significant action is permitted, their
not within their reach. "Waiting for Godot" is so to speak, a play about the philosophy, which underscores that. Man feels upon being confronted with the fact of existence; thereby confirming the suitability of the title.

**The Breakdown of Language as a Theme**

**The Breakdown of Language:** - Beckett’s plays are concerned with expressing the difficulty of finding meaning in a world subject to change. His use of language probes the limitations of language both as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the expression of valid statements, an instrument of thought.

His use of the dramatic medium shows that he has tried to find means of expression beyond language. On the stage one can dispense with words altogether (for instance, in his mime-plays), or at least one can reveal the reality behind the words, as when the actions of the characters contradict their verbal expression. “Let’s go”, say the two tramps at the end of each Act of Waiting for Godot, but the stage directions inform us that “they don’t move”. On the stage language can be put into such a relationship with action that facts behind the language can be revealed. Hence the importance of mine, knockabout comedy, and silence in Beckett’s plays—Krapp’s eating of bananas, the pratfalls of Vladimir and Estragon, the variety turn with Lucky’s hat, Clov’s immobility at the close of Endgame, which puts his verbally expressed desire to leave in question. Beckett’s use of the stage is an attempt to reduce the gap between the limitations of language and the sense of the human condition he seeks to express in spite of his strong feeling that words are inadequate to formulate it. The concreteness and three dimensional nature of the stage can be used to add new resources to language as an instrument of thought and exploration of being. Language in Beckett’s plays serves to express the break-down of language. Where there is no certainty, there can be no definite meanings—and the impossibility of ever attaining certainty is one of the main themes of Beckett’s plays. Godot’s promises are vague and uncertain. In Endgame, Hamm asks, “We’re not beginning to mean something?” Clov merely laughs and says: “Mean something! You and I mean something!”

**Language Ineffective as a Means of Communication:** - Ten different modes of the breakdown (or disintegration) of language have been noted in Waiting for Godot. They range from simple misunderstandings and double-entendres to monologues (as signs of inability to communicate), clichés, repetitions of synonyms, inability to find the right words, and telegraphic style (loss of grammatical structure, communication by shouted commands) to Lucky’s farrago of chaotic nonsense and the dropping of punctuation marks, such as question marks, as an indication that language has lost its function as a means of communication, that questions have turned into statements not really requiring an answer. A whole list of passages drawn up by a critic from Waiting for Godot shows that the assertions made by one of the characters are gradually qualified, weakened, and hedged in with reservations until they are completely taken back. In a meaningless universe, it is always foolhardy to make a positive statement.

**The Breakdown of Dialogue:** - But more important than any merely formal signs of the disintegration of language and meaning in Beckett’s plays is the nature of the dialogue itself, which again and again breaks down because no truly logical discussion or exchange of thoughts occurs in it either through loss of meaning of single words or th
characters to remember what has just been said. In a purposeless world that has lost its ultimate objectives, dialogue, like all action, becomes a mere game to pass the time.

**Devaluation of Language:** - Beckett’s use of language is thus designed to devalue language as a vehicle of conceptual thought or as an instrument for the communication of ready-made answers to the problems of the human condition. And yet his continued use of language must, paradoxically, be regarded as an attempt to communicate the incommunicable. Such an undertaking attacks the cheap, and facile complacency of the view that to name a problem is to solve it or that the world can be mastered by neat classification and formulations.

**Beckett, a Great Master of Language:** - Beckett’s entire work can be seen as a search for the reality that lies behind mere reasoning in conceptual terms. He may have devalued language as an instrument for the communication of ultimate truths, but he has shown himself a great master of language as an artistic medium. He has moulded words into a superb instrument for his purpose. In the theatre he has been able to add a new dimension to language—the counterpoint of action, concrete, many-faceted, not to be explained away, but making a direct impact on an audience. In Beckett’s theatre it is possible to bypass the stage of conceptual thinking altogether, as an abstract painting bypasses the stage of the recognition of natural objects. In Waiting for Godot and Endgame, plays drained of character, plot, and meaningful dialogue, Beckett has shown that such a seemingly impossible feat can in fact be accomplished.

**Waiting for Godot : Religious Significance**

**St. Augustine’s Remark**

When asked about the theme of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett is reported to have referred to the following sentence in the writings of St. Augustine “Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the thieves was damned.”

**Theme of the Uncertainty of Salvation:** - The theme of the two thieves on the cross, the theme of the uncertainty of the hope of salvation and the chance bestowal of divine grace, does indeed pervade the whole play. Vladimir states it right at the beginnings, when he says: “One of the thieves was saved. It’s a reasonable percentage.” Later he enlarges on the subject. One of the two thieves is supposed to have been saved and the other damned, says Vladimir. But he asks why only one of the four Evangelists speaks of a thief being saved. Of the other three Evangelists, two do not mention any thieves at all, and the third says that both of them abused Christ. In other words, there is a fifty-fifty chance of salvation but, as only one out of four witnesses (the Evangelists) reports it, the chances are considerably reduced. As Vladimir points out, it is a curious fact that everybody seems to believe that one witness: “It is the only version they know.” Estragon, whose attitude has been one of scepticism throughout, merely comments “People are bloody ignorant apes.”

**The Chance Remarks Made By the Two Thieves:** - It is the shape of the idea that fascinated Beckett. Out of all the evildoers, out of all the millions and millions of criminals that have been, executed in the course of history, only two had the chance of salvation in so unique a manner. One happened to make a hostile remark; he was
happened to contradict that hostile remark; and he was saved. How easily could the roles have been reversed! These, after all, were not well-considered judgments, but chance exclamations uttered at a moment of supreme suffering and stress. As Pozzo says about Lucky:

“Remark that I might easily have been in his shoes and he in mine.
If chance had not willed it otherwise.
To each one his due.”

Godot’s Unpredictability in Bestowing Grace: - Godot himself is unpredictable in bestowing kindness and punishment. The boy who is his messenger looks after the goats, and Godot treats him well. But the boy’s brother, who looks after the sheep, is beaten by Godot. “And why doesn’t he beat you?” asks Vladimir. “I don’t know, sir,” the boy replies. The parallel to Cain and Abel is evident: there too the Lord’s grace fell on one rather than on the other without any rational explanation. Here Godot also acts contrary to Jesus Christ at the Last Judgment: “And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” But if Godot’s kindness is bestowed as a matter of pure chance, his coming is not a source of pure joy; it can also mean damnation. When in Act II Estragon believes Godot to be approaching, his first thought is that he is accursed and as Vladimir triumphantly exclaims:

“It’s Godot! At last! Let’s go and meet him,”

Estragon runs away, shouting:

“I’m in hell.”

Two Divisions of Mankind: - The chance bestowal of grace, which human beings cannot comprehend, divides mankind into those who will be saved and those who will be damned. When in Act II, Pozzo and Lucky return, and the two tramps try to identify them, Estragon calls out: “Abel! Abel!” Pozzo immediately responds. But when Estragon calls out: “Cain! Cain!” Pozzo responds again. “He’s all humanity,” concludes Estragon.

Pozzo’s Effort to Attain Salvation: - There is even a suggestion that Pozzo’s activity is concerned with his frantic attempt to draw that fifty-fifty chance of salvation upon himself. In Act I, Pozzo is on his way to sell Lucky at the fair. The French version of the play, however, specifies that it is the Market of the Holy Saviour to which he is taking Lucky. Is Pozzo trying to sell Lucky to redeem himself? Is he trying to divert the fifty-fifty chance of redemption from Lucky to Pozzo? He certainly complains that Lucky is causing him great pain, that he is killing him with his mere presence—perhaps because his mere presence reminds Pozzo that it might be Lucky who will be redeemed. When Lucky gives his famous demonstration of his thinking, the thin thread of sense that underlies the opening lines seems to be concerned with the accidental nature of salvation: “Given the existence of a personal God outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathy, divine athambia, divine aphasia, loves us dearly with some exception for reasons unknown and suffers with those who are plunged in torment....” Here we have a description of a personal God, with his divine apathy, his speechlessness (“aphasia”), and his lack of the capacity for terror or amazement (“athambia”), in other words, a God who does not communicate with us, cannot feel for us, and condemns us for reasons unknown.
Pozzo’s Failure: - When Pozzo and Lucky reappear the next day, Pozzo blind and Lucky dumb, no more is heard of the fair. Pozzo has failed to sell Lucky; his blindness in thinking that he could thus influence the action of grace has been made evident in concrete physical form.

A Religious or Christian Play: - Waiting for Godot then seems to be concerned with the hope of salvation through the workings of grace. And this view supports the belief that it is a Christian or a religious play. Vladimir’s and Estragon’s "waiting" might be explained as signifying their steadfast faith and hope, while Vladimir’s kindness to his friend, and the two tramps’ mutual interdependence might be seen as symbols of Christian charity.

Evidence Against this Conclusion: - But these religious interpretations overlook a number of essential features of the play. These features are the play’s constant stress on the uncertainty of the appointment with Godot; Godot’s unreliability and irrationality, and the repeated demonstration of the futility of the hopes pinned on him. The act of waiting for Godot is shown as essentially absurd and therefore devoid of any religious significance.

Thought of Suicide: - There is one feature of the play that leads us to assume that there is a better solution to the tramps’ predicament, a solution which the tramps themselves consider preferable to waiting for Godot. That solution is suicide. “We should have thought of it when the world was young, in the nineties”, says Vladimir at the outset. Suicide remains their favourite solution, unattainable owing to their own incompetence and their lack of the practical tools to achieve it.

Not Tied to Godot: - Estragon, far less convinced of Godot’s promises than Vladimir, is anxious to reassure himself that they are not “tied” to Godot. Vladimir gives him the necessary assurance: “Tied to Godot! What an idea! No question of it. For the moment”. When, later, Vladimir falls into a sort of complacency about their waiting, Estragon immediately punctures it. And Vladimir is quite ready to admit that they are waiting only from irrational habit.

The Tramps’ Faith: - In support of the Christian interpretation, it might be argued that Vladimir and Estragon, who are waiting for Godot, are shown as clearly superior to Pozzo and Lucky, who have no appointment, no objective, and are wholly egocentric, wholly wrapped up in their sado-masochistic relationship. It is their faith that puts the two tramps on a higher plane. It is evident that Pozzo is overconfident and self-centred. “Do I look like a man that can be made to suffer”? he boasts. Even when he gives a melancholy and moving description of the sunset and the sudden failings of the night, we know he does not believe the night will ever fall on him; he is not concerned with the meaning of what he recites, but only with its effect on his listeners. Hence he is taken completely unawares when night does fall on him and he goes blind. Likewise Lucky, in accepting Pozzo as his master and in teaching him his ideas, seems to have been naively convinced of the power of reason, beauty, and truth. Estragon and Vladimir are clearly superior to both Pozzo and Lucky—not because they pin their faith on Godot but because they are less naive. They do not believe in action, wealth, or reason. They are aware that all we do in this life is as nothing when seen against the senseless action of time, which is in itself an illusion. They are aware that suicide would be the best solution. They are thus superior to Pozzo and Lucky because they are less self-centred and have fewer illusions. The hope, the habit of hoping, that Godot will come after
all is the last illusion that keeps Vladimir and Estragon from facing the human condition in the harsh light of fully conscious awareness. For a brief moment, Vladimir is aware of the full horror of the human condition: “The air is full of our cries......At me too someone is looking......” But the routine of waiting, which has become a habit, prevents an awareness of the full reality of being.

**The Dead Voices:** - Vladimir’s and Estragon’s pastimes are designed to stop them from thinking. “We’re in no danger of thinking any more....Thinking is not the worst......What is terrible is to have thought”, says Vladimir. Vladimir and Estragon talk incessantly because they wish to hear the “dead voices” which explore the mysteries of being and the self to the limits of anguish and suffering. The long silence that follows the cross-talk about those voices is broken by Vladimir in “anguish”, with the cry “Say anything at all!”

**Conclusion:** - The hope of salvation may be merely an evasion of the suffering and anguish that spring from facing the reality of the human condition. But this does not invalidate the religious implications of the play. It is possible, however, to believe either that the play visualizes the possibility of salvation or that it negates such a possibility. Which alternative a reader adopts will depend upon his mental make-up because each reader will respond to the play in his own way.

**“Waiting for Godot”: Realism**

“Waiting for Godot” occupies a prominent place in the annals of English literature for highlighting the basic truths of human beings belonging to any age or religion. The play can be interpreted by various ways. It is a play in which fact and fancy, illusion and reality are mingled together. In “Waiting for Godot” man’s sufferings, whether physical or metaphysical, are shown in such a way that we feel them as our own suffering. The play is a mirror of our age because it shows the inner hollowness, helplessness and meaninglessness of modern man’s life. The theme of the play has a universal appeal. The tramps represent all humanity. Their sufferings are the sufferings of all human beings; no matter in which country they live in or what religious beliefs they have. They reflect modern man’s loneliness, absurdity, forgetfulness, and illusions, waiting condition, deferred hope, physical suffering, mental anguish, death wish and isolation. The main subject of the play is waiting and the act of waiting is an essential aspect of the human condition. Vladimir says:

**We’re waiting for Godot.**

And the sentence is repeated in the course of the play like a refrain. It is not clear in the play who or what Godot is. The tramps themselves have only a vague idea of who Godot is. They wait for him in a state of ignorance or helplessness. The play thus depicts waiting, ignorance and boredom and all these things are directly experienced by us in life, wait is essential – the offer of a job, the possibility of promotion, the return of a long-lost friend, a love letter etc. Thus we discover a common ground between ourselves and the two tramps who are waiting for Godot.

The play highlights the theme of habit, boredom and “the suffering of being”. The play is a fable about a kind of life that has no longer any point. Godot may stand for God. Or for a mythical human being or for a meaning of life or for death but the play i
stagnant life. The heroes or anti-heroes are merely alive but a life without action and purpose. In our world millions of people do not act but are acted. The tramps, in spite of their inaction and pointlessness of their existence, still want to go on. The millions of people today do not give up living when their life becomes pointless. Thus the plight of two tramps is no different than that of an average man and that's why people are able to respond to the play. It is not without reason that Estragon suggests hanging as a remedy. Under the condition in which we live, most of us have subconsciously thought of hanging ourselves. The mood of despair is not limited but has become a general attitude of the people.

Lucky and Pozzo represent master slave relationship through centuries. The pathetic and miserable condition of Lucky represents the exploited class of all ages and Pozzo the exploiter. Pozzo is a capitalist of our times who suck the blood of the poor and then throw them away like the peel of banana. But even then both the classes are interdependent upon each other.

The play is valid for all those who can assimilate the general anguish into their particular experience and thus translate it into their own terms. “Nothing to be done” is the main dilemma of our life. In spite of having got marvellous progress in all fields of life, man is still in confusion and perplexity of mind. His moral scruples prevent him doing something wrong but at the same time his worldly lust incites him to do the same wrong. Beckett makes us realize that man is the main cause of the sufferings of man. The contrast between the relationships of the two pairs of characters becomes an important clue for the understanding of the play and produces certain echoes in us.

In nutshell we may say “Waiting for Godot” is a mirror in which everyone can see his own face because Vladimir and Estragon’s problems of everyman. We are all waiting for the reality of our existence. Every day we turn the page of our life with this hope that perhaps today the reality will out but in the end we still remain unknown. That’s why the play touches the apex of appreciation by an audience of prisoners at San Quentin in the USA because they were confronted with their own experience of time, waiting, hope and despair. Thus the play is a mirror of our times and there is enough in the play, which can be called the echo of our own mind and heart.

**Waiting For Godot : A Tragi-Comedy**

Tragic-comedy is a play which claims a plot apt for tragedy but which ends happily like a comedy. The action is serious in theme and subject matter and tone also sometimes but it seems to be a tragic catastrophe until an unexpected turn in events brings out the happy ending. The characters of a tragic-comedy are noble but they are involved in improbabilities. In such a play tragic and comic elements are mixed up together. Fletcher, in his “Preface to the Faithful Shepherdess”, defines a tragic-comedy as:

"A tragic-comedy is not so called in respect to mirth and killing, but in respect it wants death which is enough to make it no tragedy. Shakespeare’s 'Cymbeline' and 'The Winter's Tale' may also be categorized as tragic-comedy."

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069
The English edition of “Waiting for Godot”, published in 1956 describes the play as a “tragic-comedy” in two acts. There are many dialogues, gestures, situations and actions that are stuff of pure comedy. All musical devices are employed to create laughter in such a tragic situation of waiting. The total atmosphere of the play is very akin to dark-comedy. For example, Vladimir is determined not to hear Estragon’s nightmare. The latter pleads with him in vain to hear him, saying that there is nobody else to whom he may communicate his private nightmares.

The audience burst out in laughter when they see Estragon putting off and on his boots. Vladimir’s game with his hat appears as if this is happening in a circus. Vladimir is suffering from prostrate problem. Vladimir’s way of walking with stiff and short strides is as funny as Estragon’s limping on the stage. Estragon’s gestures of encouraging Vladimir to urinate off-stage are farcical. The comedy in this play at certain times gives the impression of Vaudeville.

There are many dialogues:

_Estragon_: Let’s go.
_Vladimir_: We can not.
_Estragon_: Why not?
_Vladimir_: We are waiting for Godot.
(_They do not move._)

These dialogues occur like a comic paradigm in the play.

Estragon and Vladimir put on and take off each other’s hat as well as that of lucky again and again. It shows that in the world of tramps, there is no place of significant actions. The most farcical situation in the play is the one where the tramps are testing the strength of the cord with which they wish to hang themselves. The cord breaks under the strain. One cannot have an uninhibited laugh at the situation for there is also something deeply uncomfortable.

“Waiting for Godot” has several moments of anguish and despair. Someone beats Estragon daily.

_Estragon_: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

Estragon’s feet and Vladimir’s kidneys are also taken to be granted. The tramps resent that they should be asked whether it still hurts. It goes without saying that it hurts all the time. When Vladimir asks Estragon whether his boots are hurting him, he responds:

“Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!”

A little later Estragon asks Vladimir about his kidney trouble and the latter replies in the same words:

“Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!”

In fact his trouble is so bad that it does not even permit him to laugh. Life lies all bleak and barren before them and that only valid comment on it is the one with which the play opens, “Nothing to be done”. Theirs is a world of negation in which inactivity is the safest course; as Estragon says:
“Do not let us do anything, it’s safer”.

The tramps are living at the barest level of existence. Carrot, turnips and radishes are all they have to eat. Estragon’s remarks show tragedy and helplessness:

"Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful.”

The situation of Lucky is quite pathetic, especially in view of his glorious past, as Pozzo describes it. His speech tells us that in his sonar moments Lucky must have brooded deeply over the anguish of the human situation. The anguish breaks in his incoherent harangue:

“... the flames, the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labours abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard (melee, final vociferations) tennis ... the stones ... so calm ...Cunard ... unfinished ...”

The comedy in “Waiting for Godot” at once turns into tragedy when the audience thinks about the helplessness of tramps. Estragon and Vladimir are waiting for someone who never comes. In order to pass time they indulge in irrelevant, meaningless activity. The element of force fades away and miserable condition of man looms large in our imagination. Their life can be compared with that of a prisoner for whom there is no escape, even suicide is impossible. Every activity is a mockery of human existence.

The changing of farce into absurdity brings a lot of tragic sentiment in the play. Estragon’s nakedness is a picture of ‘man’s miserable condition’. The absurd living is a major source of tragedy. The source is the situation of pointless waiting of Estragon and Vladimir. They do not know who Godot is. They are sure neither about the time nor about the place of their appointment. They even do not know what will happen if they stop waiting? Lack of essential knowledge makes them totally impotent and powerless. They are glued to a situation. Nothing is certain all they can say is “Nothing to be done”.

The total effect of this co-mingling of tragic and comic suggests that Samuel Beckett’s is a realistic dramatist who looks at life from a position of a pessimist and an optimist. The form of tragic-comedy is highly suitable to this vision of life. The climax of Beckett’s tragic-comedy is the role of Lucky. He is wearing servant’s vest while holding his master’s overcoat, a basket and a stool. His neck is tied with one end of the rope. His appearance is not only fantastic but grotesque also. The moment we realize that he is a half-wit; he becomes an image of man’s misery. We are all the more sorry for Lucky when it is revealed that Pozzo has learnt all the beautiful things of life from lucky. But now Pozzo is taking the same person to sell in a fair. The relationship of a ringmaster and his trained animal, changes into a relationship of an owner and a slave. It is an exploitation of a man by a man who stops the audience from bursting out into laughter. Comedy has been checked by tragic element or sentiments, while the effect of tragedy has been mitigated by farce created through characters, dialogues, gestures and actions.

We can sum up with the remarks of Sean O’ Casey,
“Beckett is a clever writer, for within him there is no hazard of hope; no desire for it; nothing in it but a lust for despair and a crying of woe, not in a wilderness, but in a garden.”

Waiting for Godot as a Christian religious play

Samuel Beckett speaks little in Waiting for Godot, yet manages to invites colossal critical discourses. Meaning in its traditional sense dissolves gaseously in Beckett’s works, yet each performance or reading of the play gives birth to a new meaning. As William Mueller has observed:

“The human predicament described in Beckett’s first play is that of man living on the Saturday after the Friday of the crucifixion, and not really knowing if all hope is dead or if the next day will bring the life which has been promised.”

Sixty years have passed since the first production of En Attendant Godot in Théâtre de Babylone, but the various attempts so far made to analyse Waiting for Godot as a Christian drama with biblical allegory somewhat relied on the Mueller motif.

Biblical allusions, allegories and images in Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot abounds in religious allusions. Christianity is introduced as early in the play as Vladimir asks whether Estragon have read the Bible or not. The nondescript tree too can have multiple interpretations, but ecclesiastical scholars love to see it as an image of the Cross. Moreover, notwithstanding Beckett’s refusal of any godliness in Godot, we thoroughly feel that the absent protagonist appears to be a messiah for the two tramps.

Yet another religious interpretation of Waiting for Godot is encouraged by the correlation of Lucky’s idea of God having white beard, and the boy’s identical description of Godot. The never ending waiting also reflects the basic biblical idea of Christ’s return on the Doomsday, putting an end to all sufferings, the sufferings of Vladimir and Estragon. In fact, what helps Didi and Gogo sustain their existence amidst eternal barrenness is their faith, that Godot will surely come, tomorrow if not today, and harmonize all the disorders.

Once, Gogo compared himself to Christ. It seems more than a distant coincidence the he ironically mirrors the last few days of Christ. Estragon spent the night in a ditch, so did Christ in a cave after his death. Also, having heard about Estragon being beaten up, Vladimir reaches out to embrace him like loving Veronica. Also, Pozzo examines the cuts on Estragon’s leg as he wakes up, thus re-enacting the Apostle’s examination of Christ’s wounds after his rising.

The most prominent biblical reference in Samuel Beckett’s play, however, is the crucifixion myth. Vladimir ambiguously reminds Estragon that one of the two thieves was saved; and later when the Boy says that Godot spares him but beats his brother we immediately recall the crucifixion discourse. Only, there is a reversal of the biblical allegory of the sheep being rewarded and the goats damned. Crucifixion is also conveyed through the tree, the tramps’ attempt to hang themselves from it, the skull in Lucky’s speech and so forth.
Act Two is yet another symbol of crucifixion. Vladimir's feeding Estragon on carrot is reminiscent of Jesus feeding a crowd of five thousand on meagre foods. The tree for Estragon seems "more like a bush", thus invoking Exodus's picture of Moses on Mount Sinai. These references are apparently disconnected, but the overall tone they create tempts the recipient more and more into a religious interpretation.

**Beckett’s problematization of religious elements in Waiting for Godot**

Beckett, nevertheless, problematizes whatever religious element exists in the Waiting for Godot. We never find an answer to Vladimir's shocking question that why the other thief was not saved and why only one of the four saints narrated the incident. Our faith is at once destabilized; we calculate like Vladimir the percentage of redemption in a divine gambling. Just as religious bias has often slowed down human civilisation, and bigotry hindered human liberation, here the tramps' faith on Godot stops the linear timeline and prevents them from going away. It is religious faith once again that led the entire mankind to inaction:

"**Estragon: Don't let's do anything. It's safer.**
**Vladimir: Let's wait and see what he says.**"

Faith is once again undermined as Estragon and Vladimir talk over the certainty of Godot's offerings:

"**Estragon: A kind of prayer.**
**Vladimir: Precisely.**
**Estragon: A vague supplication.**
**Vladimir: Exactly.**
**Estragon: And what did he reply?**
**Vladimir: That he'd see.**"

There are also oblique hints to the Christian practice of confession. Estragon is least interested in Vladimir's discourse on crucifixion; and when Estragon wants to share a nightmare and thus get relief, Vladimir adamantly refuses to hear him.

In his first appearance Pozzo enters with all the embellishments of a false prophet, and initially Vladimir and Estragon mistake him as Godot. Can he be seen as Godot's alter ego, the religious oppressiveness? Pozzo whips Lucky, burdens him with sandbags, leads him by a rope and tells him when to act. At the extreme, Lucky can speak only when Pozzo gives him his hat and allows him to. Was Beckett suggesting through this the controlling nature of the Church?

The importance of messengers does not end with Pozzo and Lucky. Godot's errand-boy resembles Christ as God's messenger, and both meet similar mistreatment at their recipients. The Boy reinforces this allusion by telling that his master spares him but beats his brother, a relationship recalling Cain, Abel and their Lord. Ironically, the names Cain and Abel are later explicitly mentioned in the text.

Waiting for Godot thus abounds in biblical allegories, advocating more and more for a religious interpretation. Still, considering it only as a dramatised Christian allegory will be an oversimplification. Like Beckett, his play as well as his characters are n
specific theory or interpretation. Viewing Waiting for Godot as a Christian play may be a way to approach it, but surely not the only one.

"Waiting for Godot" : Significance of Time

"Waiting For Godot" is dramatization of modern enigmas in a comical way.

"Waiting for Godot" appears as depthless play, "Nothing happens, no one comes, No one goes, and it is awful". However beneath its surface absurdity, there lie layer of meanings, presenting a coarse picture of human life. The play is composed of multiple themes. It has become a classic and provides the critics much to speculate on, when Beckett was asked who is Godot? He replied, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play".

"Waiting for Godot", concerned with the hope of salvation through the working of grace has been considered as Christian or religious play. G.S. Erase is of the opinion that this is a modern morality play on permanent Christian theme; he mentions the play in the same breath as every man and the Pilgrim’s progress. The tramps wait for Godot who may represent God and their persistence in waiting for Godot shows their faith in God. The mutual attachment of two tramps and Vladimir’s protective attitude towards his friend has been interpreted as Christian virtue. When Beckett was asked about the theme of Waiting for Godot, he sometimes referred to a passage in the writing of St Augustine, "Do not despair-one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume-one of the thieves was damned".

However the theme of two thieves on the cross, the theme of uncertainty of hope of salvation and the fortuitousness of the bestowal of grace do indeed seems to be an insignificant observation. Godot is nothing but a name for the fact that the life which goes on pointlessly is wrongly interpreted to mean "Waiting for Godot".

Disintegration and regression of man is another depressing interpretation of the play. The play represents the disintegration of human beings, the climax in the play occurs when all the four characters fall to the ground upon one another, creating of formless mass from which Vladimir's voice emerges saying, "we are men". Nothing escapes the destructive force of this regression neither speech torn to piece in the rhetoric of Pizza’s monologue on twilight nor thought which is undetermined and destroyed by a whole series of absurd reasoning as well as by such passages as the incoherent speech delivered by Lucky. Luck’s speech effectively represents the regression of man’s thinking intelligence.

According to yet another view, the world represented in this play resembles France occupied by German during World War II, when Beckett lived first in the occupied zone and then escaped to the unoccupied region. The play reminds us of the French Resistance organized by underground workers. How much waiting have gone in that bleak world. How many times must Resistance organizers have kept appointments with many who did not turn up? We can imagine why the arrival of Pozzo would have an unnerving effect on those who waited. Pozzo could be a Gestapo official clumsily disguised. The German occupation of France pervades the whole play. Godot himself is unpredictable on bestowing kindness and punishment. The parallel to Lane and Abel is evid
bestowal of grace, which passes human, understanding, divides mankind into those that will be saved and those that will be damned.

But these interpretations, says Martin Esslin seem to overlook a number of essential features of the play - its constant stress on the essential uncertainty and the repeated demonstration of the futility of hopes pinned on him. According to this, whether Godot is meant to suggest his intervention as supernatural or whether he stands for a mythical human being, his exact nature is of secondary importance. So "the subject of the play is not Godot but waiting ... and Godot simply represents the objectives of our, waiting-and event, a thing, a person death". The play is a picture of the antics of man as he tries to distract himself until Godot comes. The two tramps, thus, while away their time in a succession of never ending games. In the very opening of the play, Estragon and Vladimir agree "Nothing to be alone". The only alternative left is, therefore, to wait for Godot Estragon, as time and again to be reminded of this fact:

"Let's go we can't Why not We, re waiting for Godot Ah"

Having nothing to do they childishly engage in playing games? Both of them take off shake and peer inside their boot and hat.

Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is constant change. Yet the ceaseless activity of time is self-defeating, purposeless and therefore null and void. The more things change, the more they are the same. Pozzo exclaims in his final great outburst, "Have you not done formatting me with your accursed time?" They give birth astride to grave, the light gleams an instant, then its night once again.

Still Vladimir and Estragon live in hope and wait for Godot whose coming will bring the flow of lime to a stop. Towards the end of the play when Vladimir is about to realize, he has been dreaming and must wake up and face the world as it is, Godot's messenger arrives, kinds his hopes and plunges him back into the passivity to waiting.

The play is also considered to be a fable about a kind of life that has no longer any hope that is the meaninglessness of life. The way by, the two tramps pass time is indicative of the boredom and triviality of human activities. The lack of significance in life and the constant suffering which existence is, the two tramps are dimly aware of the want of action in their lives but they still want to go on. Majority of people in today's world do not give up living when their life becomes pointless. The tramps are waiting for nothing in particular. They have even to remind each other of the fact that they are waiting and of what they are waiting for. Thus actually they are not waiting for anything. It should not of course be regarded as the "Key to the play".

Another theme is that, suffering is an inseparable part of human condition. Vladimir cannot even laugh without suffering. Estragon's feet make life a long torture for him. They have nowhere to rest their heads. This suffering pervades the episode of Lucky and Pozzo 100. Lucky gives expression to the human condition by dancing what he styles the "Dance of the Net". In Act-II both Lucky and Pozzo have suffered great physical affection. The most is that suffering is both purposeless and without the co
the end.

The theme of exploitation is only implicit in the main story but it is explicit in the episode of Pozzo and Lucky. The Net, in whom Lucky believes himself to be caught, is an economic one. The exploited become so demoralized that are unable to offer any resistance to the exploiters. Pozzo states that it was just once that Lucky failed to obey his command. Even when Pozzo has become blinded, Lucky does not have the guts to free himself from his enslavement.

Into this wonderfully suggestive and subtle play Beckett incorporates such minor themes as the inadequacy of human language as a mean of communication and the illusory nature of such concepts as part and future.

It is thus peculiar richness of a play like "Waiting for Godot" that it opens vistas to so many perspectives. It is an existentialist play at the same time, it also mocks at the attitudes of existentialism. It seems to have some religious implications even though it seems to question profoundly the Christian conception of salvation and grace. It is open to philosophical religious and psychological interpretation, yet about all, it is a poem on time, and the mysteries of existence. It is the paradox of change and stability.

"Who is Godot in "Waiting for Godot"

Ever since its first production "Godot" has been a puzzle for critics. In 1958 Beckett was asked to explain Godot’s character. The dramatist promptly replied, "If I know I would have said so in the play". This is to say in other words that Godot could be interpreted in many ways. To whatever extent we stretch our imagination it is never clear who he is? The majority of the critics are, however, of the view that Godot is God whom human being asks for help when they are helpless and miserable.

What we learn from the play is that Godot has made a promise to Vladimir that he would see him and Estragon near a tree on a country road. In compliance Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot's arrival. They have a faint hope that Godot might bring some change in their lives. It is ironic that they do not know exactly what they would ask him for? Vladimir says, “Too nothing definite”. Godot did not promise anything to him.

He is in absurd situation. The question arises, when the tramps know that Godot will not bring any change in their lives, then why do they wait for him? The answer is simple, Estragon and Vladimir wait for him as a mother of habit exactly in the manner as human beings think that some superpower can rescue them from the terrible situation in which the,’ find themselves.

The play clearly shows that Godot has his own limitations. Before making a firm promise to the tramps, he has to consult his family, friends, agents, correspondents, books and bank accounts. From these details, the impression, which we get, is that Godot is either a bureaucrat or a minister. If Godot is God, then he is a bureaucrat God that is quite whimsical. Moreover, he has no sense of justice. He beats the shepherd boy for nothing. Lucky in his famous speech refers to personal God of men who is, of course, incapable of fairness. It means that God is not a time judge, because he rewards one with grace but
punishes the other for nothing. If this interpretation is true, one thing becomes clear that "Waiting for Godot" is a satire on Christian concept of hope and salvation. But this critical judgment cannot be supported by further proof. Thus, the connection between God and Godot is immaterial. Certainly there is little resemblance between the two. Another interpretation of Godot is that he is a symbol of power and authority.

This can be confirmed from the dialogues of Vladimir and Estragon when Pozzo appears on the scene with a whip in his hand, they take him for Godot later on, and they themselves reject their assumption. At this point in the play another description makes us to imagine ‘Godot’ as God. The boy informs that Godot has white beard and has mastery over goats and sheep. According to biblical connotation human beings are the flock of God to whom people normally turn when they are in trouble. But the play is a tragedy in which no one comes to their rescue.

Godot can be interpreted in still another way, His arrival can be identified with prosperity and happiness. As no change occurs and nobody comes, this interpretation is also undependable. Psychologically, Godot could be unconscious of man. He is as inaccessible as the sub-conscious of man, But the physical descriptions with clear-cut features such as white beard do not support this meaning. Of course, it is highly illogical to gather our impression of Godot and show him to have any similarity or resemblance.

According to some critics, Godot’s failure to come is bitter comment of the second coming of Christ. This meaning is also purely fanciful because the act of waiting is essentially an obscure act. The purpose of waiting has never been defined by Beckett.

In finale, we can reassert our first contention that Godot is an enigma, a mystery, and a puzzle.

**Waiting for Godot : Nothing Happens Twice**

*There is nothing done in it; no development is to be found: and there is no beginning and no end." Discuss this view."

When Waiting for Godot was first presented on the stage, it offered to theatre audiences an experience unknown before. It was a new kind of play, a play which broke entirely fresh ground. It was a wholly unconventional dramatic composition. It was unconventional in respect of its character-portrayal as well as its plot-construction. It was unconventional also in not depicting any dramatic conflict in the accepted sense of the word. In fact, there was an all-round deficiency of action, characterization and emotion in this play. And yet the play proved immensely popular, and its popularity has never declined.

The critic who said that Waiting for Godot was play in which "nothing happens, twice", was not far wrong. The keynote to this play is to be found in the memorable words which Estragon utters with regard to his life and the life of his friend, Vladimir. Those words are: "nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" Because of the strange paucity of action and situation in the play, a critic in sheer desperation has remarked that practically nothing happens in it:
"There is nothing done in it; no development is to be formed; and there is no beginning and no end." Indeed, the entire action boils down to this.

On a country road, near a tree, two tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, idle away their time waiting for Godot. One takes off his boots, and the other talks of the Gospels. One eats carrot with the other offers. They have nothing substantial to say each other. They address each other by two diminutives, Gogo and Didi. They cannot go away because they are waiting for someone called Godot. Eventually a boy arrives with a message that Godot will not come this evening but surely tomorrow. The two trams decide to go way and come back again the next day. But they do not move and the curtain falls. Earlier, two other characters, a cruel master called Pozzo and his half-crazy slave called Lucky, incomprehensible speech made up of disconnected fragments. In Act II the waiting goes on; Pozzo and Lucky pass by once more, but the master I now blind and the slave is dumb. The master and the slave stumble and fall and are helped on their way by the tramps. The same boy comes back with the same message—namely that Godot will not come this evening but that he will come on the following day. Everything remains as it was in the beginning. The two tramps would like to hang themselves, but they have not got a suitable rope. They decide to go away and come back again the next day. But they do not move and the curtain falls.

Waiting for Godot is a play made up out of nothingness. The spectator or the reader is fascinated by the strangeness of what he witnesses, hoping for a turn in the situation or a solution, which never comes. They paly holds the audience from the beginning to the end, and that audience remains riveted to the two tramps who do nothing and say practically nothing. The two tramps are incapable of anything more than mere beginnings of impulses, desires, thoughts, moods, memories, and impressions. Everything that arises in them sinks back into forgetfulness before it arrives anywhere. They both live, to a large extent, in a twilight-state and though one of them, Vladimir, is more aware than his companion, complete physical listlessness prevails throughout. Their incapacity to live or to end life (and this is the opening and concluding theme of the play) is intimately linked with their love of helplessness and of which-dreams. They are full of frustrations and resentments, and they cling to each other with a mixture of interdependence and affection.

There had been in the pasts some attempts to do away with theatrical conventions regarding action on the stage. But this play marks a sort of climax. No dramatist had ever taken so great a risk before, because what this play deals with is the essential, without any beating about the bush, the means employed to deal with it being the minimum conceivable.

Waiting for Godot does not tell a story; it explores a static situation. Act II precisely repeats the pattern of Act I. Act I ends thus:

**Estragon:** Well, shall we go?  
**Vladimir:** Yes, let’s go  
(They do not move)

Act II ends with the same lines of dialogue, but spoken by the same characters in reversed order. No dramatist had ever taken such an extreme position. Not only have conventions been done away with, but even some necessary information
form the reader. According to the conventional view, a play was to have a certain plot necessitating certain situations and actions, and characters who performed those actions and who were caught up in the tangles of the plot. But Waiting for Godot hardly offers a plot. It is as if we were watching a sort of regression beyond nothing. The little we are given to begin with soon disintegrates like Pozzo, who comes back bereft of sight, dragged by Lucky bereft of speech. "This is becoming really insignificant," says one of the two tramps at this point. "Not enough," replies the other. This answer is followed by a long silence. From beginning to end the dialogue seems to be dying.

At various stages one or the other of the two tramps suggests something to pass the time-making conversation, repenting, hanging themselves, telling stories, abusing one another, playing at Pozzo and Lucky. But each time the attempt fails; after a few uncertain exchanges they peter out, admit failure. The words "we’re waiting for Godot" occur again and again like a refrain. But it is a senseless and tiresome refrain; it has no theatrical values; it represents neither hope nor longing. A typical situation in the play is Pozzo and Lucky falling down, followed by the two tramps, and all of them lying or the ground in a helpless heap, from which one tramp’s face emerges to pronounce: "we are men."

Waiting for Godot is based on Beckett’s dual obsession with journey and stasis. No doubt a number of adjustments are made during the interval between the two Acts: Pozzo goes blind and Lucky becomes dumb; the tree puts forth some leaves, Estragon’s boots are changed, and Lucky gets a new hat. These changes serve to show that something is still taking its course in time. The tree’s movement from winter to spring apparently in a Single night is not something believable. The tree moves fast in relation to the tramps, reminding us that objective time proceeds, indifferent to their anguish. But otherwise there is very little movement. Sentences remain unfinished; stories are interrupted (for example, that of the English man in the brothel); Lucky is not allowed to complete his terrible speech; thoughts, like the speculation on the two thieves, do not reach a conclusion; actions, like the two attempts of the tramps to hang themselves, do not take complete shape; indeed thoughts and actions fade... into a helpless uncertainty, contusion and silence. All the devices of the tramps to pass their time eventually collapse into nothing.

No one in the theatre had, before Beckett, dealt with the experience of ignorance and impotence. Nor could anyone do so as long as the dramatist and the public thought along the traditional lines of a well-made play with a strong story involving conflict, character-development, and a final solution. Impotence cannot produce action, and without action there can be neither conflict nor solution. Movement would, therefore, be clearly impossible under these circumstances. But, according to the traditional view, a static drama was a contradiction in terms. Beckett solved the difficulty by substituting situation for story, and direct impact of logical, indirect description. But he did more than solve on particular artistic problem. He created in effect the whole new concept of drama much as the Impressionists created a whole new concept of painting.

Thus, to a very large extent, Beckett has stripped down action, situation, emotion, and characterization. It may be noted, however, that the stripping down process can go much further as Beckett himself went on to prove in Endgame and Happy Days. The extreme, in this respect, is reached in Beckett’s play. How It Is in
characters crawl painfully along face downward in the mud and communicate by jabs with a tin-opener. Compared to any of these, Vladimir and Estragon are highly articulate persons possessing a sharp sensitivity. It is to be noted, also that despite the paucity of incident, the play achieves, with conspicuous success, Its purpose of communicating the experience of waiting, of boredom, of helplessness, of impotence, and of ignorance to the audience.

**Human Relationships in Waiting for Godot**

In 'Waiting for Godot' we have the two major relationships which mainly constitute the central theme of the drama. Inspite of Vladimir-Estragon relationship and Puzzo-Lucky relationship we have in this play the absent Godot's relationship with these characters and with his servant boy. We have to judge how these relationships form the fabric of the drama.

Vladimir and Estragon are the two main figures of the play. Estragon seems to be a cowardly person who suffers from nightmarish visions. So he needs the care and guardianship of his friend and really cannot do anything without him. Vladimir on the other hand is certainly more intelligent and more alert than Estragon. But inspite of that he is more or less a pathetic character finding himself quite himself and feeling compelled indefinitely to wait for Godot who is likely to bring about a change in the present situation but whose arrival seems to be very doubtful. Both Estragon and Vladimir represent the ordeal of waiting. They also represent ignorance, helplessness, impotence and boredom. They do not have the essential knowledge; they do not know who exactly Godot is; they do not know what Godot will do for them; they do not know what would happen if they stopped waiting for Godot. They are forced to resort to various devices to pass time but each attempt sizzles out. This passing of the time is a mutual obsession with the two men. Nothingness is what these tramps are fighting against, and nothingness is the reason why they keep talking. The condition of the two helpless individuals is the condition of everyman.

Vladimir-Estragon relationship symbolizes a relationship of naturalistic. Occasionally the two tramps talk of parting but never take the suggestion seriously. They illustrate the bond of understanding. They are full of frustration and resentment, but they cling to each other with a mixture of interdependence and affection deriving comfort from calling each other by the childish names ‘Gogo’ and ‘Didi’. Again they are incapable of anything more than mere beginnings of impulse, desires, thoughts, moods, memories and impressions. Vladimir compares their proud past with their gloomy present now and then.

Vladimir and Estragon are the distinct individuals and Estragon are the distinct individuals having different characters, attitudes and temperaments. They are alive in a non-world. In spite of their inaction and pointlessness of their existence these two men still want to go on like millions of people who want to go even when their life becomes pointless.

The theme of the disintegration and regression is mainly symbolized by Puzzo-Lucky relationship. Puzzo and Lucky symbolize the relationship between capital and labour or between wealth and the artist. Some critics tell us that Puzzo is no other than Godot himself. According to this view Godot is God and Puzzo is, therefore, God. Some critics also are of the view that while Puzzo and Lucky may be body and intellect, master and slave, capitalist and proletariat, colonizer and colonized, cain and Abel, sadist and masochist, etc.
they represent essentially and more simply one way of getting through life with someone else. Just as Vladimir and Estragon, more sympathetically another way of doing so.

The relationship between Pozzo and Lucky is reflected in the physical bond that holds them together—the link of the rope. The relationship between them is that of dominant and the dominating, though in the second act it takes on the aspect that of the dumb leading the blind. The relationship also represents the exploitation of the social life where Pozzo is one of the haves, dinning on chicken and wine, while Lucky is the have-not to whom he throws the gnawed bones. The drudgery and inhuman treatment have reduced Lucky to the level of an animal. Lucky has to bear all sorts of bags and baggage. But he is not treated as a man. So he is below the level of animals, rather a mere machine in some respect.

Lucky and Pozzo create a metaphor of society. Although Pozzo and Lucky present an obvious and sharp contrast to each other. They have one thing in common—They are both driven by a desperate attempt to avoid panic which would ruin them if they lost their belief. It becomes more and more evident in the course of the play that Lucky believes that his safety his only with the pattern of a mutual sadomasochistic relationship between them. Moreover, Pozzo-Lucky pair may be compared to the collective pseudo-ego.

One critic is of the view that Pozzo represents mankind and Lucky represents Christ. If this view is accepted what takes place before the tramps is the reacting of the Redemption. Another possible interpretation is that Pozzo represents the psychological aspect of human personality and Lucky the spiritual which is in time brutalized by the treatment.

Moreover, Godot seems to be some sort of medieval land-lord. He has agents and correspondents working for him; he has a shepherd who rears the sheep and a goatherd who rears the goats. Actually Godot is capricious in his relationship, he beats the one but loves the other. The tramps are afraid of Godot, so is the boy. Thus Godot rules through fear.

Thus, these three inter-relationships are very much significant from the dramatic point of view. The tramps’ waiting symbolizes humanity’s vain hope of salvation. Moreover, the meaninglessness and the helplessness which are the main issues of the drama are focused by these relations.

**Waiting for Godot : Theme of Waiting**

**A Situation Having a General Human Application:** The two key words in the title are “waiting” and “Godot”. What Godot exactly means has been the subject of much controversy. It has been suggested that Godot is a weakened or diminutive form of the word “God.” Godot may therefore suggest the intervention of a supernatural agency. Or perhaps Godot stands for a mythical human being whose arrival is expected to change the situation. We may presume, too, that both these possibilities (a supernatural agency and a supposed human being) may be implied through the use of the name “Godot”. Furthermore, although Godot fails to appear in the play, he is as real a character as any of those whom we actually see. However, the subject of the play is not Godot; the subject is “waiting”, the act of waiting as an essential characteristic aspect of the human condition. Throughout their lives, human beings always wait for something; and Godot simply represents the objective of their
waiting—an event, a thing, a person, death. Beckett has thus depicted in this play a situation which has a general human application.

**A Direct Presentation of Waiting, Ignorance, Impotence and Boredom:**
- At first sight this play does not appear to have any particular relationship with the human predicament. For instance, we feel hardly any inclination to identify ourselves with the two garrulous tramps who are indifferent to all the concerns of civilised life. Godot sounds as if he might have some significance; but he does not even appear on the stage. However, soon we are made to realise that Vladimir and Estragon are waiting and that their waiting is of a particular kind. Although they may say that they are waiting for Godot, they cannot say who or what Godot is, nor can they be sure that they are waiting at the right place or on the right day, or what would happen when Godot comes, or what would happen if they stopped waiting. They have no watches, no time-tables, and there is no one from whom they can get much information. They cannot get the essential knowledge, and they are ignorant. Without the essential knowledge they cannot act, and so they are impotent. They produce in us a sense of baffled helplessness which we experience when forced to remain in a situation which we do not understand and over which we have no control. All that they do is to seek ways to pass the time in the situation in which they find themselves. They tell stories, sing songs, play verbal games, and pretend to be Pozzo and Lucky, do physical exercises. But all these activities are mere stop-gaps serving only to pass the time. They understand this perfectly. “Come on, Gogo,” pleads Didi, breaking off a rejection on the two thieves crucified with Christ, “return the ball, can’t you, once in a way?” and Estragon does. As Estragon says later, “We don’t manage too badly, eh Didi, between, the two of us…….We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist” Here we have the very essence of boredom—actions repeated long after the reason for them has been forgotten, and talk purposeless in itself but valuable as a way to kill time. We could appropriately say that the play is not about Godot or even about waiting; the play puts “waiting” on the stage. The play is waiting, ignorance, impotence, boredom, all these having been made visible on the stage before us. As a critic says, Beckett in his dramas does not write about things but presents the things themselves. In other words, a play by Beckett is a direct expression or presentation of the thing itself as distinct from any description of it or statement about it. In the waiting of the two tramps we, the audience, recognise our own experience. We may never have waited by a tree on a deserted country road for a distant acquaintance to keep his appointment, but we have certainly experienced other situations in which we have waited and waited. We may have waited and waited for a communication offering a job, or for the arrival of a train, or for a love-letter, or for something to turn up. In other words we can discover a common ground between ourselves and the two tramps who are waiting for Godot. We feel with them and with millions of others who have known ignorance, impotence, and boredom. Here is then the recognisable significance of the play and it is this which accounts for the play’s widespread appeal.

**The Mood of Vain Expectancy:** - Vladimir and Estragon have travelled far towards total nihilism, but they have not fully achieved it. They still retain enough remnants of hope to be tormented by despair. And in place of hope as a dynamic, they have expectancy. This is the main motif of the play, spelt out in the title which in an earlier version was implied: Waiting. The two tramps are in a place and in a mental state in which nothing happened and time stands still. Their main preoccupation is to pass the time as well as they can until night comes and they can go. They realise the futility of their exercises and
filling up the hours with pointless activity. In this sense their waiting is mechanical; it is the same thing as not moving. In another sense, it is an obligation. They have to remain where they are, though they resent doing so and would like to leave. This might be called a moral obligation, since it involves the possibilities of punishment and reward. If Godot comes, a new factor may be introduced into their existence, whereas if they leave they will certainly miss him. Their waiting therefore contains a certain element of hope, no matter how cynical they may be about it. This mood of expectancy has also a universal validity, because whenever we wait we are expectant even though we are almost certain that our waiting will not be rewarded.

“Waiting” and The Flow of Time: - It is in the act of waiting that we experience the flow of time in its purest, most evident form. When we are active, we tend to forget the passage of time; but if we are waiting passively, we are confronted with the action of time itself. Being subject to the flux of time, human beings are, at no single moment, identical with themselves. We can never be sure that the human beings we meet are the same today as they were yesterday. When Pozzo and Lucky first appear, neither Vladimir nor Estragon seems to recognise them; Estragon even takes Pozzo for Godot. But after they have gone, Vladimir comments that they have changed since their last appearance. Estragon insists that he did not know them while Vladimir insists: “We know them, I tell you. You forget everything.” In Act II, when Pozzo and Lucky re-appear, cruelly deformed by the action of time, the tramps again have their doubts whether these are the same people whom they met on the previous day. Nor does Pozzo remember them. Here, then, is another aspect of “waiting” which is conveyed to us: the act of waiting makes us experience the flow of time. To wait means to experience the action of time, which is constant change. And yet, as nothing real ever happens, that change is in itself an illusion. The more things change, the more they are the same. That is the terrible stability of the world. “The tears of the world are a constant quantity,” says Pozzo, “For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops.” One day is like another, and when we die, we might never have existed. As Pozzo exclaims in his great final outburst:

"Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time? They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more."

Still Vladimir and Estragon live in hope: they wait for Godot whose coming will bring the flow of time to a stop. Godot represents to the two tramps, peace and rest from waiting. They are hoping to be saved from the fleetingness and instability of the illusion of time, and to find peace and permanence outside it. Then they will no longer be tramps or homeless wanderers, but will have arrived home.

Themes of Habit and “The Suffering of Being” : - Waiting for Godot is a dramatization of the themes of habit, boredom, and “the suffering of being”. Habit is a great deadener, says Vladimir; and, by the time he says so, he and Estragon have had about ninety, minutes on the stage to prove it. It is the sound of their own voices that re-assures the two tramps of their own existence, of which they are not otherwise always certain because the evidence of their senses is so dubious. The tramps have another reason also to keep talking. They are drowning out those voices that assail them in the silence, just as they assailed nearly all Beckett’s heroes in the novels.
The Pointlessness of Existence:  

This play is a parable, Godot may stand for God, or for a mythical human being, or for the meaning of life, or for death, or for something else. The play is a fable about a kind of life that has no longer any point. This fable is a representation of stagnant life. It is a fable that suffers from a lack of cohesion because a lack of cohesion is its very subject-matter. This fable does not relate an action because the action it relates is life without action. This fable offers no story, because it describes man eliminated from, and deprived of history. The characters in this play have been pulled out of the world, and they no longer have anything to do with it. The world has become empty for them. The two heroes, or anti-heroes, are merely alive, but no longer living in a world. And this concept is carried through with a merciless consequence. Where a world no longer exists, there can no longer be a possibility of a collision with the world. In our world today millions of people have begun increasingly to feel that they live in a world in which they do not act but are acted upon. The two tramps, inspite of their inaction and the pointlessness of their existence, still want to go on. The millions of people today do not after all give up living when their life becomes pointless. The tramps are waiting for nothing in particular. They even have to remind each other of the very fact that they are waiting and of what they are waiting for. Thus, actually they are not waiting for anything. But, exposed as they are to the daily continuation of their existence, they cannot help concluding that they must be waiting. And, exposed to their continued waiting, they cannot help assuming that they are waiting for something. It is meaningless to ask who or what the expected Godot is. Godot is nothing but the name for the fact that the life which goes on pointlessly is wrongly interpreted to mean waiting, or as waiting for something. What appears to be a positive attitude of the two tramps amounts to a double negation: their existence is pointless and they are incapable of recognising the pointlessness of their existence. (Beckett himself said that he was not so much concerned with Godot as with waiting).

Waiting for Godot : Man's Battle with Himself

Although it appears on the surface that Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot is a tragicomedy about two rather pitiful vagrants and their brief encounter with another pair of sad and confused men. In fact Beckett was writing about man's battle with himself.

Estragon, whose main concern is releasing his sore feet from the constraints of their smelly, tight boots, takes life on the chin. He seems to believe that all one needs to do is go passively along with whatever life happens to put in our way and it will all sort itself out eventually. Why waste our time trying to mould life to the way we would like it to be? Why fight the inevitable? If 'they' are intent on giving us a beating, we might as well let them. It will come to an end and we may get away with less of a beating if we don't fight back: we can then relax again - until the next time. If, while allowing life to do its worst we die, that's okay too.

Vladimir, on the other hand, wants more. He keeps hoping something will happen to make his life more agreeable. He hopes Godot will provide an answer; any answer. Vladimir can't understand why Estragon is so carefree acute; about allowing himself to be beaten and humiliated.

Vladimir is the side of us that expects life to provide our answers. The side that looks to others for help in recognising the treasures we are sure are there just waiting for us to embrace them.
Neither Vladimir nor Estragon is too fond of life to dismiss the idea of ending it by hanging from a nearby tree - but they both know it won't really happen. It's simply a way of passing the time: a sort of 'I Spy' - I spy with my little eye, a tree for hanging ourselves on - the way we sometimes dwell on our problems because, paradoxically, we enjoy feeling sorry for ourselves.

Vladimir needs Estragon but the feeling isn't reciprocated, though Estragon is happy enough to spend time with Vladimir. We need to convince ourselves that we are worthwhile. We search our conscience for affirmations of our reason for being. If we don't care what happens to us, we have no need for a close association with our conscience. Vladimir and Estragon were each other's consciences.

When Pozzo and Lucky appear on the scene, Vladimir sees another chance for a way out of the doldrums. Could Pozzo be Godot? No? Ah well, he still may be a welcome diversion while they continue to wait.

Pozzo uses Lucky while he has something to offer but as soon as he has run out of whatever Pozzo needed from him, Lucky loses his appeal and is allowed to slip backwards into abject misery; good only as a beast of burden to be sold to the highest bidder.

Vladimir and Estragon feel sorry for Lucky but do nothing to help him, especially when it seems being helped is something Lucky no longer believes in nor wants. It's easier to believe Lucky is simply someone who has lost his sense of reason and might as well be left alone. Lucky's plight is put in the Too Hard basket.

Often we see only what we can use in a person rather than seeing the person himself. When we grow weary of someone who no longer appeals to us or can no longer provide us with what we need, they become a burden. We become blind to the things that once attracted us to them and can no longer hear their pleas to be loved and needed.

On a larger scale, once we stop caring about our fellow man, we become blind to the problems of the world and the oppressed can lose the ability to speak to us.

Time, as Dylan Thomas said, passes. Was it yesterday? Was it last year? When did Vladimir and Estragon last wait here for Godot? When did they last see Pozzo and Lucky? Does it matter? In the scheme of things, what is a day; or a year, or a lifetime?

Man lives his life waiting. He waits to be born, he waits to become a man, he waits to become successful, he waits to find true love, he waits to find peace; he waits to die.

While he waits, he considers. Faced with many decisions, man argues with himself about which path to take. Should he, like Vladimir, keep hoping tomorrow will bring the answers? Should he, like Estragon, forget about looking for answers? Forget the questions. Should he let life unfold around him and simply 'go with the flow'?

If those around him are suffering, if they are under threat, should he try to help? If he does and he receives a kick in the shins for his trouble, should he give up and let someone else deal with it or should he pick up the handkerchief and try again to wipe the brow of the oppressed?
Waiting for Godot is man waiting for life to unravel its mysteries. It is man and his conscience. It is man's inhumanity towards man. It is the question of meaning. Is there a meaning? Are we right to look for answers or should we go blindly forward while we can, pausing only to give our feet an airing, because the answers, like Godot, will never come and nothing we think or do will make any difference.

"The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. Let us not speak well of it either. Let us not speak of it at all. It is true the population has increased."

Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the gravedigger puts on the forceps.

We are all born mad. Some remain so.

Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (Pause. Vehemently.) Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late!

To-morrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of to-day?


Habit is a great deadener.

There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the fault of his feet.

Better hope deferred than none.

My mistakes are my life.
Our vulgar perception is not concerned with other than vulgar phenomena.

God is a witness that cannot be sworn.

Why are we here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come.

A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. . .In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness!

Let us not waste our time in idle discourse!

From the meanest creature one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessings.

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I ... sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?

Waiting For Godot : Role of Chance

The purpose of life is something mystic, that us, humans, have always seeked, yet don't really know how to find. What is our reason to live? The fact we can't explain it, leads us to believe it's because of a force greater then ours. There are lots of different names to call it. God. Fate. We don't know what the meaning of life is, and there's noone we can ask. This feeling can be pretty depressing in itself, and Waiting for Godot focuses on this feeling and on the way people try to find something to live for

The play basically says that our lives rely on chance entirely, and because of it, they are meaningless, and thats the reason why people rely on unknown forces guiding them through life. And the interesting part is, that even the sources, that should justify the fact that there are greater powers in the universe then we can comprehend, say that human existence has a lot to do with chance. This is clarified when a story from the bible about two thieves is mentioned. „One of the two thiefes was rescued. Thats a reasonable percentage.“ (Beckett, 8) Percentage represents that chance involved in human life, and the fact that that our fate relies on chance shows that randomness is an important factor in ones life. Beckett uses this quote from the Bible to show, that even a sacred text that has been an a help for thousands of years acknowledges the existence of chance. One of the two thieves. Thats 50%. A 50% chance for salvation, and we have absolutely no control regarding this chance.

The fact that God (if he exists) stays silent, makes the chaos even bigger. The situation that God lets life work like this, makes him guilty. The people's belief in God is explainable though, because it makes them believe that there's a reason to live. As Pascal, a french philisopher said (he was a believer by the way), there's nothing to lose, because if it turns out God doesnt exist, then people wouldnt care for anything anyway, but if it turns out he does, at least you were on the safe side all the way. But God's silence is the main thing that keeps the characters in hopelessness, and makes this work of art a tragedy, even though the characters act comically. Either God doesnt exist, or he just doesnt care. And this statement tells that there's no divine involvment in life.

The world in Waiting for Godot is one without any meaning, which shows that chaos and hopelessness are the leading forces of the world. The events in the
Vladimir and Estragon are at the same place every day, waiting for Godot, doing the same activities over and over again to pass time. This shows the chaotic's world effects on the characters. As Einstein says: „The sign of going mad is doing something over and over again, and expecting different results.‟

We don’t know the time cycle the events transpire in. Time is a very interesting aspect in this play. It exists, but the reasons for this are not entirely clear, because the present, the past, the future, these things don’t mean anything in this world. Time is a mess. A very good symbolization of the fact that things are still happening though, are Pozzo and Lucky. They are completely different in Act I and Act II. (Pozzo is healthy/blind, Lucky is able to speak/mute). Beckett uses the change in the situation of Lucky and Pozzo to show that time, and therefore, life, is meaningless.

Humans try to be distracted from this fact. Vladimir and Estragon both try to stay cheerful in the play, and try to pass time with pointless activities. Doing this, they act comical, which adds a humorous aspect to the play. "The positive attitude of the two tramps thus amounts to a double negation: their inability to recognize the senselessness of their position" (Andres, 143-144).

Vladimir and Estragon do various things to get distracted from the endless wait. Discussing mundane topics, sleeping, and sometimes contemplating suicide. They do this because they try to ignore the fact that they are waiting for a figure, which is part of their imagination, and might never even come.

They are waiting for Godot, and they think his arrival will be a salvation to all their problems. They probably know this is only a wish that might never come true, but at least they have something to look forward to. The only other alternative is death, and although they think about it, they don’t have the courage to do it. In the end all a human can do are pointless actions, or to perish.

They do these pointless actions because they hope relief will come in a form of an outside force. Godot symbolizes this force, and although he likely doesn’t exist, he at least gives their lives a meaning. By waiting, they achieve at least a bit of meaning. Vladimir, while contemplating whether or not to help Pozzo in Act II, declares, "What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come-" (Beckett, 51)

Even though salvation is an illusion, it’s needed to be able to handle life, and that humans have to rely on „Godots“ to live. It’s not clear whether Godot is real or not. This is shown by the fact that in both acts, they mistake Pozzo for Godot. That means they have never seen Godot before. The only contact they have with him is the messenger boy he sends everyday, telling them that Godot will come the next day. When Vladimir finally realises that Godot in fact will never come, great depression overcomes him. Vladimir realizes that he has no choice but to put up with the illusion, and go on. There’s no point. But there’s no other option.

"All of these characters go on, but in the old ruts, and only by retreating into patterns of thought that have already been thoroughly discredited. In the universe of this play, 'on' leads nowhere" (Webb, 41).
"Waiting for Godot" is all about how the world is based on chance, and the fact that a world based on chance can’t have a real time sequence, and is therefore pointless, which makes life pointless too. Realizing this, humans will create distractions and diversions, in the form of patterns and reliance on divine forces, to provide them a purpose to live.

In my opinion this book is a very good demonstration of the big questions every human has to face in their lifetime.
Seeing Myself in Waiting for Godot

Some people wondered why in high school my favorite book was Waiting for Godot, a drama described on the title page as “a two-act play in which nothing happens twice.” In fact, my liking a play that does not portray a series of connected incidents telling a story but instead presents a pattern of images showing bewildered people in an incomprehensible universe initially baffled me too, as my partiality was more felt than thought. But then I read a piece by the critic Martin Esslin, who articulated my feelings. He wrote in “The Search for the Self” that throughout our lives we always wait for something, and Godot simply represents the objective of our waiting—an event, a thing, a person, death. It is in the act of waiting that we experience the flow of time in its purest most evident form. (31)

I realized that I was seventeen in high school passively waiting for something amazing to happen to me just like Vladimir and Estragon. I also realized that experiencing time flowing by unproductively was not for me regardless of how “pure” that experience might be. At several points in the play, Estragon states that he wants to leave, but Vladimir always responds, “We can’t . . . we’re waiting for Godot” (8). Neither one knows why the wait nor who Godot is or looks like, and they both admit, when asked by Pozzo why they mistook him for Godot, that “we hardly know him at all!” (20). Yet, they wait for him instead of looking within themselves for meaning in their lives. They even turn to close-at-hand sources about them to provide reasons for their wait: from inside a hat or a boot (8). But, as Lucky points out, the “reasons [are] unknown” and always will be (28). Therefore, their external search is pointless to give life meaning. Or put another way, Vladimir and Estragon wait endlessly for life to begin.

As simple as it is, I see myself in them, waiting for someone or something to bring me meaning, to guide me, to spark my life. The existentialist ideas behind much of Waiting for Godot cut to the quick, as I, too, struggle through life trying to achieve some sort of purposeful meaning (Bryce). Like everyone else, I am a victim of waiting and going nowhere fast. As embarrassing as it is to me now, in high school, I ached as I searched to fill an empty part of me with love or true friendship, and at last I found him! But rather than acting on what I felt for him, I sat there and waited, hoping that he would notice me, the perfect soul mate. I did everything I could to draw attention, all those silly girl things like wearing tons of make up, dressing in cute outfits, and trying new hair styles. Only, I never made the effort to reveal my feelings for him and possibly create something meaningful: finding out whether or not my emptiness would go away. Because of my inability to create purposeful action, I lost my chance. He found someone else, and I never saw him after that. To paraphrase Otis Redding, after that I was determined not to be like Vladimir and Estragon “just sittin’ on the side of the road, / wasting time” (7-8). No longer would I demurely wait for Prince Charming, and, even more importantly, no longer would I wait for another to give my life meaning. I must look within first. Though I want love and will continue the search, Waiting for Godot nevertheless spoke to me then as it speaks to me now: I shall take control of my own struggle through life no matter how bewildering and incomprehensible it, the world, and the universe may be.

While waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon experience the flow of time “in its purest most evident form” (Esslin 31), which means, ironically, that time is hard
shows that none of the characters ever actually knows how much time has passed. For example, in the play's beginning, Estragon and Vladimir do not even know what day it is. The characters know that they are to wait for Godot on a Saturday, but Estragon states, “but what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? Or Monday? Or Friday?” (10). The second act of the play claims to start on the next day, but the phrase the next day can be interpreted as any day after the first act. When Vladimir and Estragon return to the tree where they are supposed to wait for Godot, Vladimir insists that both he and Estragon were there the day before and tells Estragon, “But we were there together, I could swear it!” (68). Estragon, however, has no memory of that. Coming across Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir and Estragon discover that Pozzo and Lucky have become blind and mute. After Vladimir pesters him about when he became blind, Pozzo states, “I woke up one fine day and was blind as Fortune. Don't Question me! The blind have no notion of time” (99). Having a limited amount of time on one’s hands—a lifetime, for example—does not matter if one sees no purpose and does nothing to make life meaningful. Beckett’s characters continue to go without purposeful action and, thus, live an absurd life devoid of meaning.

I confess that before my encounter with Godot, I never really thought about time or even what day of the week it was. None of it really mattered. Every day seemed just another day: school, work, friends, soccer practice, whatever. And worse, when I experienced my crush on that guy, I became completely oblivious to time. Time evaporated, and the world was slipping from my grasp. Friends disappeared; school became a blur. I cannot remember work at all. And not because I was in Never-Never Land with him that time stopped, but because I was waiting doing nothing that I let time stop, and my life became foolishly absurd. The play forced me to ask what exactly it was that I had been doing with my life, and am I now creating purposeful action? This question stays in my mind. Godot gives me pause to reflect on who I am, what I am doing here, and the dreams I want to pursue.

Ruby Cohn states, “Godot is the promise that is always awaited but never fulfilled” (45). Vladimir and Estragon never break through the state of nothingness because they use the excuse that they will be given purposeful action only when Godot arrives. Beckett ridicules people who wait for someone like Godot to tell them what to do with life. It is their excuse for inactivity. Godot will never arrive. Essentially Godot is waiting for Vladimir and Estragon to do something, but neither Vladimir nor Estragon knows what to do. But I do, and the play reinforces my resolve to continue pursuing my dreams, my purposeful action, despite how difficult or lonely the struggle. I shall not end up on the wayside waiting to “be saved” (60), shrugging my shoulders, and resignedly sighing, “Nothing to be done” (7).
Waiting for Godot : The Symbolical Meanings

Beckett is known to have commented, "I had little talent for happiness."- This sentence in itself is absurd, like the most famous drama of Beckett: Waiting for Godot. But what exactly absurdity means?

The original or dictionary meaning of absurd is ‘Out of harmony’. utterly or obviously senseless, illogical, or untrue; contrary to all reason or common sense; laughably foolish or false. But the word has a different meaning when it is used in the theatre of the absurd.

Marking the difference between a good play and an absurd play, Martin Esslin opines:

If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of: if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares' if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogues, these often consist of incoherent babblings.

Waiting for Godot is chock-full of pairs. There’s Vladimir and Estragon, the two thieves, the Boy and his brother, Pozzo and Lucky, Cain and Abel, and of course the two acts of the play itself. With these pairs comes the repeated notion of arbitrary, 50/50 chances. One thief is saved and other damned, but for no clear reason. If Vladimir and Estragon try to hang themselves, the bough may or may not break. One man may die, one man may live. Godot may or may not come to save them. In the Bible, Cain's sacrifice was rejected and Abel's accepted for no discernible reason. It’s minor, but Estragon’s line in Act I: "My left lung is very weak […]. But my right lung is sound as a bell!" More pairs, more arbitrary damnation. Even the tone of Waiting for Godot is filled with duality: two person arguments, back-and-forth questions, disagreement-agreement, questions and (often inadequate) answers.

The tree is the only distinct piece of the setting, so we’re pretty sure it matters. Right off the bat you’ve got the biblical stuff; Jesus was crucified on a cross, but that cross is sometimes referred to as a "tree," as in, "Jesus was nailed to the tree." That Vladimir and Estragon contemplate hanging themselves from the tree is likely a reference to the crucifixion, but it also parodies the religious significance. If Jesus died for the sins of others, Vladimir and Estragon are dying for...nothing.

But we can also think of the two men not as Jesus, but rather as the two thieves crucified along with Jesus. This fits quite nicely with gospel’s tale as Vladimir tells it; one thief is saved and the other damned, so Didi and Gogo are looking at a fifty-fifty chance. The uncertainty that stems from inconsistency between the four gospels is fitting, too, since Vladimir can’t be certain if Godot is coming to save either one of them.

Furthermore, Vladimir reports that he was told to wait for Godot by the tree. This should be reassuring – it means the men are in the right place. As Estragon points out, they’re not sure if this is the right tree. And, come to think of it, they can’t even be sure if this is a tree or not. It kind of looks like a shrub.
The tree could be the tree of life. So the tree’s random blooming would suggest that it is something of a tree of life. And, according to the proverb, that means a desire has been fulfilled.

Moreover the tree’s sprouting leaves could be an ironic symbol pointing out that, far from fulfilled desires, hopes have been deferred yet another day – much like Vladimir’s ironic claim in Act II that "things have changed here since yesterday" when, clearly, nothing at all has..

While Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot, they also wait for nightfall. For some reason (again, arbitrary and uncertain), they don’t have to wait for him once the night has fallen. The classic interpretation is that night = dark = death. The falling of night is as much a reprieve from daily suffering as death is from the suffering of a lifetime.

There’s also the issue of the moon, as its appearance in the sky is the real signal that night has come and the men can stop waiting for Godot. Estragon, in one of his "wicked smart" moments, comments the moon is "pale for weariness [...] of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us." Though the man remembers nothing of yesterday, he does in this moment seem to comprehend the endless repetition of his life. And if the moon is weary just from watching, imagine what that says about the predicament of the men themselves.

Carrots and turnips are in one sense just a gag reel for Vladimir and Estragon’s comic bits. But I was interested in their disagreement over the vegetable: "Funny," Estragon comments as he munches, "the more you eat, the worse it gets." Vladimir quickly disagrees, adding that, for him, it’s "just the opposite." On the one hand, this could be a completely meaningless conversation – the point is simply that Vladimir is in disagreement, playing at opposites, adding to the bickering duality between himself and Gogo.

On the other hand, the carrot could be about the meaning of life. It could be a hint as to the differences between the way Vladimir and Estragon live their lives. Vladimir’s subsequent comment, an addendum to his carrot claim, is that he "gets used to the muck as [he goes] along." He resigns himself to banality. Estragon, on the other hand, wearies as time passes – much like the weary moon he observes in Act II. When Pozzo later dishes about smoking, he claims that a second pipe is "never so sweet [as the first]. But it’s sweet just the same." This is a third and distinct answer to the carrot question.

When Lucky is commanded to dance in Act I, Pozzo reveals that he calls his dance "The Net," adding, "He thinks he’s entangled in a net." You would think a guy tied up on a rope leash would feel confined enough. Of course, the image of Lucky writhing in an imaginary net is a lasting image for the play as a whole, and especially for the plight of Vladimir and Estragon, who, as we’ve said before, are confined in a prison – or perhaps a net – of their own imaginations.

There seems to be no shortage of inane props in Waiting for Godot, and these three have one thing in common: they are all absurd objects on which the men have developed irrational dependences. Lucky cannot think without his bowler. Pozzo needs his vaporizer to speak. Estragon seems condemned to forever take his boots on and off, as does Vladimir with his hat. This is another great combination of the tragic and the comic; the situation is hilarious for its absurdity, but dismal at the same time.
Estragon is repeatedly repelled by smells in Waiting for Godot. Vladimir stinks of garlic, Lucky smells like who knows what, and Pozzo reeks of a fart in Act II. It seems every time Estragon tries to get close to a person, he is repelled by their odor. It looks to us like smells represent one of the barriers to interpersonal relationships. Estragon isn’t just repelled by odors – he’s repelled by the visceral humanity of those around him. There’s something gritty and base about the odour of a human body, and for Estragon it’s too much to handle.

There are several interpretations of Waiting for Godot, the two most well-known are the religious one and the political one.

The religious interpretations posit Vladimir and Estragon as humanity waiting for the elusive return of a saviour.

If this is the basic idea, then this makes Pozzo into the Pope and Lucky into the faithful. The faithful are then viewed as a cipher of God cut short by human intolerance. The twisted tree can alternatively represent either tree of death, the tree of life, the tree of Judas or the tree of knowledge.

Political interpretations also abound. Some reviewers hold that the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky is that of a capitalist to his labor.

This Marxist interpretation is understandable given that in the second act Pozzo is blind to what is happening around him and Lucky is mute to protest his treatment. The play has also been understood as an allegory for Franco-German relations.

An interesting interpretation argues that Lucky receives his name because he is lucky in the context of the play. Since most of the play is spent trying to find things to do to pass the time, Lucky is lucky because his actions are determined absolutely by Pozzo. Pozzo on the other hand is unlucky because he not only needs to pass his own time but must find things for Lucky to do.
Life and Works of Anton Chekhov

Chekhov is one of Russia's many important literary figures, and one of the greatest playwrights of modern times. He won the Pushkin Prize and he is known for his short stories and his plays, works that often combine elements of both comedy and tragedy. While works reflect the frequently turbulent developments specific to his homeland, their lasting appeal lies in Chekhov's talent for exploring universally human situations with such grace and dexterity.

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born in Tanarog, Russia, near the Sea of Azov, on January 17, 1860. The very fabric of Russian society was permanently altered when Chekhov was only one year old: on February 19, 1861, Russia's serfs were freed. Chekhov himself was the grandson of a serf, and the overturning of this older social order plays a central role in many of his writings.

When his father's business failed, the family moved to Moscow, a Russian centre for intellectuals. There, Chekhov grew intellectually, although he developed in two different directions. On the one hand, at the age of twenty he attended medical school at the University of Moscow, preparing himself for his lifelong profession as a physician. While at medical school, Chekhov also began writing to help support his family. He worked as a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines; the respect he gained from these often humorous pieces encouraged Chekhov to begin writing serious short stories. Tolstoy, an older Russian contemporary of Chekhov's, was a great influence on the young writer and medical student. Chekhov was quoted as saying that medicine was his lawful wife and literature was his mistress, and he remained devoted to his two professions throughout his life.

Chekhov graduated from medical school in 1884, and while he began his life as a physician, the period after his graduation also marks the moment when Chekhov began writing seriously. During the late eighties, Chekhov wrote both short stories, such as The Bear in 1888, and The Wedding in 1889, and plays, which include Ivanov in 1887 and The Wood Demon in 1889. Although these works are only of moderate acclaim and are not the masterpieces that Chekhov is best known for, they form an important part of his development as a literary figure. For example, Chekhov came back to The Wood Demon in 1896, and after re-working it and re-titling it, the finished product, known as Uncle Vanya, propelled Chekhov's success and fame in his own life and to this day.

During the early 1890's, Chekhov's writing experienced something of a dry spell. Unfortunately, Chekhov suffered from health problems, and he spent much of the early nineties with his family or travelling to gentler climates. During this time of travel, Chekhov was able to pursue his interest in all things French, particularly French farce, and a genre, which marks his own theatrical comedy.
In 1896, Chekhov entered the period of creativity for which he is best known. At the turn of the century, he authored four plays, commentaries on Russian society, which have gained him lasting acclaim: The Sea Gull in 1896, Uncle Vanya (a derivative of 1889's The Wood Demon) in 1896, The Three Sisters in 1901, and The Cherry Orchard, his last great play, in 1904. Chekhov spent these years between Moscow and Crimea, dividing his time between his works and nursing his failing health. Olga Knipper performed in each of these four plays; in 1901, she and Chekhov married. The Cherry Orchard was first performed in Moscow on January 17, 1904, Chekhov's last birthday, with his wife in the leading role. Chekhov died of pulmonary tuberculosis on July second of that year, in Germany.

Chekhov changed the theatrical world with these four plays. He was often disappointed when they were performed as tragedies; although they each have sad elements to them, Chekhov believed that this darker side of the plays should in no way undercut the immensely funny comic elements, which pervade even in the seemingly darkest moments. This confusion of the comic and tragic genres is one of Chekhov's important contributions not only to theatre, but also to literature in general. Chekhov is also known for the emphasis he places on dialogue and off-stage action, otherwise known as "indirect action." The most important events in Chekhov's plays do not necessarily occur on Chekhov's stage; often, the audience experiences some of the most pivotal and dramatic action not by seeing it, but by hearing about it from the characters. In this concept of indirect action is an innovation on the part of Chekhov, whose impact on theatre and literature continues even today.

About The Cherry Orchard

The nineteenth century offered two important developments to Russia which are manifested in the play. In the 1830's, the railroads arrived, an important step in Russia's move into a more international sphere. More importantly, in February of 1861, Russia's vast population of serfs was liberated for good, bringing a long-awaited social change. These two dimensions, social change and the growing importance of the international community, pervade the play and even drive the plot.

The railroad facilitates Madame Ranevskyin coming and going across borders, but the intrigue itself deals with the theme of social change: the aristocratic family loses power as the former serf gains, and a whole host of other characters fall in between. With the changes in the class system, debates about the nature of progress and freedom spring up across Russia, and these questions are reflected in The Cherry Orchard as well. The theme of social change is an international theme at the moment when the play was written: countries everywhere, including the United States, were experiencing similar growing pains and similar philosophical debates.

Chekhov's writing style is very pertinent to the population of Russia at this moment. While former aristocrats still patronized the arts, there was also a growing class of less educated, nouveau-rich attending the theater. Chekhov's plays are famous for their simple language, which many hold partly responsible for his popularity. The fact that his play discusses every social class in language that everyone can understand makes his play accessible to people of all backgrounds. It makes high-brow jokes while also being universally comedic.
Chekhov had a strong sense of social duty; his play implies that a sense of social duty towards others is necessary for the advancement of humanity. This idea is manifested in the fact that nearly all of his characters are sympathetic. Chekhov felt it was important that his characters be sympathetic, and indeed, The Cherry Orchard lacks a villain. While the play certainly criticizes our faults, it only does so to guide us in the right direction: the sympathetic quality of the characters, the accessibility of the language, combined with the factors of social change makes The Cherry Orchard critical and philosophical, yet fundamentally an optimistic work.

**The Cherry Orchard: Historical Context**

**Politics:** In 1904, the year *The Cherry Orchard* was first produced, Russia was in a state of upheaval. The Japanese declared war on Russia on February 10, 1904, following Russia's failure to withdraw from Manchuria and its continuing penetration of Korea. The Japanese defeated Russia at the Yalu River on May 1, 1904; by October of that year the Japanese had forced Russia to pull back its forces. This war was the beginning of tensions in Asia and the establishment of Japan as a military force.

On the home front, Russia’s minister of the interior, Vyacheslav Plehve, exercised complete control over the public. He forbid any political assemblies, required written police permission for small social gatherings, and forbid students to walk together in the streets of St. Petersburg, Russia’s capital. On Easter Sunday of 1904, 45 Jews were killed, 600 houses were destroyed in Kishenev in Bessarabia on orders from Plehve, and the police were instructed to ignore rioting in the streets. These events culminated with Plehve’s assassination on July 28, 1904. This kind of civil unrest marked the beginning of a time of great conflict and transformation in Russia that ended with the Communist Revolution in 1917. These tensions both in and outside Russia made life difficult for Russian citizens. The middle class began to assume an elevated position in society as many nobles lost their wealth and large, lavish estates. As the Ranevsky family discovers, Russia is changing and the climate is no longer hospitable to those who do not act in their own interests. Trofimov’s character alludes to the strict control of the public when he speaks of the “things he’s seen” that have caused him to age prematurely. When the serfs were freed, the landowners were forced to pay for labour, and as conditions in Russia worsened due to war and the totalitarian regime, revolution becomes imminent.

**Transportation and Industry:** The Trans-Siberian Railroad’s link from Moscow to Vladivostok opened in 1904. This is the longest line of track in the world, spanning 3,200 miles between the two cities. In the United States, the first New York City subway line of importance opened on October 27, with the Interborough Rapid Transit, known as the IRT, running from the Brooklyn Bridge to 145th Street with stops in between. This system would grow to become the world’s largest rapid transit system, covering more than 842 miles. These transportation systems are important because, as society became more urbanized around the world, it changed. Large plots of land, such as the cherry orchard in Chekhov’s play, were broken up into smaller plots for building and industry. The railroads allowed people of all economic backgrounds to travel and allowed goods to be shipped long distances using much less manpower.
Science and Technology: Marie Curie discovered radium and polonium in uranium ore in 1904; these two new radioactive elements helped to fuel the nuclear age in the decades to come. Also in 1904, German physicists Julius Elster and Hans Friedrich Geitel invented the first practical photoelectric cell, which led to the invention of radio. The first wireless radio distress signal was sent the same year. Clearly, the time in which Chekhov wrote *The Cherry Orchard*— during 1903 and 1904—was a time of much change and scientific advancement. The simple way of life on the orchard was being phased out of existence; a different mindset was required for the dawning age of science and industry. The Ranevsky family is unable to adapt to this new, quickly evolving world in which discoveries are made almost weekly and change is imminent.

Literature and Drama: 1904 saw the first publication of such works as Lincoln Steffens's expose of urban squalor *The Shame of the Cities, The Late Mattia Pascal*, by Italian novelist Luigi Pirandello, Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*, and *Reginald*, by English writer Saki, also known as H. H. Munro. Plays which, like *The Cherry Orchard*, were first produced in 1904 include: *Riders to the Sea* by John Millington Synge, *Pandora's Box* by Frank Wedekind, *Candida* and *How He Lied to Her Husband* by George Bernard Shaw, and *The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*, by James M. Barrie. Chekhov’s style was substantially different from his contemporaries’; his self-proclaimed “farce,” *The Cherry Orchard*, portrays psychology and human behaviour far more realistically than many of his fellow playwrights. Unlike the other plays of its time, *The Cherry Orchard* focuses upon an historical era and examines the whole of society rather than just characters.

The Cherry Orchard: Synopsis

*The Cherry Orchard* describes the lives of a group of Russians, in the wake of the Liberation of the serfs. The action takes place over the course of five or six months, but the histories of the characters are so complex that in many ways, the play begins years earlier.

The play opens in May, inside the cherry orchard estate; friends, neighbours, and servants are preparing for the long-awaited return of Madame Ranevsky, the mistress of the house, and her daughter Anya. Madame Ranevsky has two daughters. She had fled the cherry orchard five years before, after the deaths of her husband and young son. She is now returning from France, where her abusive lover had robbed and abandoned her. She has accrued great debts during her absence.

Lopakhin begins by telling the story of his own success: born a serf, he has managed to make himself a fortune. Another former serf, Firs, readies the house during Lopakhin’s speeches. Firs has maintained the same post he always has, despite the Liberation. Dunyasha confesses a potential romance between her and Ephikhodof, but no one is interested.

Finally, Madame Ranevsky returns. Her friends and family are overjoyed to see her. Act I introduces many subplots: a romance between the tutor Trophimof and Anya, another hopeful romance between her sister Barbara and wealthy Lopakhin, a love triangle between the servants Dunyasha, Yasha, and Ephikhodof, the debt of the neighbor Pishtchik, the class struggles of Lopakhin and Firs, the isolation of Charlotte, etc. The main intrigue of the play, however, hinges on Madame Ranevsky’s debt. Neither she nor her brother Gayef have money
to pay the mortgage on the cherry orchard estate, and unless they find a solution, the state will be auctioned off in August.

Lopakhin suggests that Madame Ranevsky build villas on the estate. She can lease them and use the money to pay the mortgage. Madame Ranevsky and Gayef object to the idea, and prefer to work something out on their own. However, as spring passes into summer, Madame Ranevsky only finds herself more in debt, with no solution in sight. Strange romances between Anya and Trophimof and Dunyasha and Yasha continue, while nothing develops between Lopakhin and Barbara and Dunyasha and Ephikhodof. Firs' health is declining. Madame Ranevsky is receiving letters from her lover, and Gayef begins to consider a job at a bank. Pishtchik takes out loans from Madame Ranevsky, whose own funds are dwindling away to nothing.

On the night of the auction, no solution has arrived. Madame Ranevsky holds a ball. Charlotte performs, and guests and servants alike dance. Madame Ranevsky and Trophimof have a serious conversation about Madame Ranevsky's extravagance; not only does she continue to run up debts, but she is now considering returning to her abusive lover in France. Madame Ranevsky is nervous about the outcome of the auction; she is still hoping for a miracle.

Finally Gayef and Lopakhin return: Lopakhin has bought the cherry orchard. Barbara is furious, and Madame Ranevsky is devastated. Lopakhin, however, cannot hide his happiness: he has bought the estate where his family lived as serfs. Ironically, he encourages the party to continue, even though the hosts are no longer in the mood to celebrate.

Act IV shows Madame Ranevsky leaving the cherry orchard for the last time. Lopakhin has bought champagne, but no one except the uppity servant Yasha will drink it. Lopakhin and Trophimof share a tender farewell: Trophimof will return to the university. Charlotte complains that she no longer has a position; Ephikhodof has a new position with Lopakhin. Pishtchik is able to pay off some of his debts. Gayef has a job at a bank, Barbara a position as a housekeeper, and Yasha will stay on with Madame Ranevsky, who is returning to France. Many characters try to confirm that Firs has been sent to the hospital. Lopakhin misses his last chance with Barbara, and Dunyasha cries that Yasha is leaving.

Madame Ranevsky and Gayef share a nostalgic moment alone before leaving on a relatively optimistic note. In the last moment, we hear axes cutting down the orchard, and Firs stumbles on to stage, forgotten, locked in the house. He lies down to rest and presumably dies.

**Character List**

**Madame Ranevsky:** Madame Ranevsky is one of the leading characters in the play. She is the owner of the cherry orchard estate, and she is a woman with a complicated history. She comes from an aristocratic family, but she married beneath her, and her husband was an alcoholic. She had three children with him before his death: Barbara, Anya, and Grisha. Grisha drowned shortly after his father's death, causing Madame Ranevsky to flee in despair. Grisha died approximately five years before Act I. Madame Ranevsky took a lover in Paris, and abusive man who robbed her and took another mistress. She is returning to Russia after leaving him.
Madame Ranevsky has accumulated many debts upon her arrival in Russia, and cannot pay the mortgage on her estate. Throughout the play, her debts are a symbol of her personality; she is an excessive woman who does whatever her emotions incline her to do, regardless of consequences, financial or otherwise. One moment she cries in panic and despair about how to pay her mortgage, yet the next moment she gives her neighbour a healthy loan to pay his own. Her behaviour is irrational, and that characteristic is both her most charismatic quality and her most serious weakness.

Of all of the characters in this play, Madame Ranevsky is among those with no capacity to adapt to a changing society. She continues to be generous with her friends, and even with strangers, living the life of a kind and wealthy aristocrat, even though the power of the aristocracy no longer ensures her any wealth, and the few assets that she has are dwindling quickly. She tells herself that she can control her purse and abandon her horrible lover, yet she cannot keep even these most fundamental of resolutions. Even after losing the cherry orchard, Madame Ranevsky remains sadly unable to change: she continues to surround herself with expensive and suspicious help, such as Yasha, and she rejoins her lover in Paris, despite his abusive history.

**Yermolai Alexeyitch Lopakhin:** Lopakhin is the other lead character in The Cherry Orchard. He is a neighbour of Madame Ranevsky, perhaps in his thirties, unmarried. His father and grandfather were serfs on the cherry orchard estate all of their lives. Although he was born into a family of serfs, Lopakhin has managed to use the Liberation of the serfs to his full advantage and is now a wealthy landowner and a shrewd businessman.

The change in class Lopakhin has experienced during his lifetime is amazing; at the end of the play, he is not only a wealthy man, but he is the owner of the estate where he was born a serf. Lopakhin is a symbolic character in that he epitomizes the success possible for the newly freed serfs. However, while his bank account makes him more powerful than the aristocratic former owners of the estate, he is an interesting specimen because he still has qualities that betray his modest beginnings. He is well dressed and respected, yet he is not literary or cultured; both his preposterous misquotings of Hamlet and his poor penmanship embarrass him.

Lopakhin's talent for business distinguishes him from the other characters; this attribute is both his best and worst quality. His preoccupation with money and success are his trademark. On the one hand, his savvy allows him great personal success with finances; he has completely overcome the poverty he was born into. On the other hand, as Barbara points out, he is almost too preoccupied with business to enjoy important aspects of humanity, such as love and friendship. In some sense, his appetite for business opportunities leads him to betray Madame Ranevsky, his first benefactor, by buying and cutting down her cherry orchard. Lopakhin is a complicated character, and he can be portrayed as a villain, a hero, or something in between the two. The ambiguity in his character is precisely what makes him, and all the other characters in the play, so mesmerizing to the audience.

**Leonid Andreyitch Gayef:** Gayef is Madame Ranevsky's older unmarried brother. He has no particular profession, and apparently lives off of the family fortune. He and Lopakhin do not get along; there is evidence to suggest that Gayef resents Lopakhin's success, for he treats all of the non-aristocratic characters with derision.
It is ironic that Gayef can be snobbish towards other characters, because he himself is a walking disaster. He is constantly running off at the mouth and embarrassing himself. His trademark behaviour is an imaginary game of billiards; whenever he has put his foot in his mouth, he acts like he is playing billiards to distract himself and others. He is humorous, but he is clumsy and ungraceful. He clearly demonstrates that being of the nobility and being a noble person are two mutually separable categories.

Although he is a constant social catastrophe, Gayef does demonstrate some ability to adapt that his sister lacks. Although he is never effective, he is always dissuading her spending. Moreover, at the end of the play, he is one character who makes a somewhat positive decision, accepting a modest position in a bank. In some ways this job is a step down, but it is also a step into reality, something which many of the characters in the play do not attain.

Barbara: Barbara is Madame Ranevsky’s oldest daughter. She is somewhat old to still be single, perhaps in her twenties; her family anticipates that she will marry Lopakhin, and although she would like to, Lopakhin never proposes to her. Barbara virtually runs the estate, a fact visually represented onstage by the massive ring of keys she wears at her waist. She is a controlling person, but she cannot look out for her mother as well as she looks out for the servants. She cries frequently, usually over her mother's spending or Lopakhin's mixed signals.

Barbara’s controlling practicality is her best and worst quality. On the one hand, her level head keeps the estate running when there is no money to run it with; on the other hand, the responsibility she feels towards the cherry orchard causes her nothing but grief and stress. Her desire to help and be productive keeps the household running as it drives everyone mad. Barbara's greatest wish is to join a convent or become a pilgrim. At the end of the play she takes on a position as a housekeeper.

Anya: Anya is Madame Ranevsky’s youngest daughter, in her teens, the complete opposite of her fretful, responsible older sister. Anya is very innocent and appears very much a child. She is usually happy. She is an idealist, like Trophimof, but she is not as philosophical as he. Her happiness is inspiring, helping the family even through these hardships, yet it does not accomplish anything concretely productive. Anya can comfort her mother with her optimism, but she cannot influence her. It is unclear whether Anya’s idealist attitude will be enough to bring her success.

Peter Trophimof: Trophimof is an important character in the play because, amid a world full of people like Madame Ranevsky and Gayef, he consistently speaks some sort of sense. He tutored Madame Ranevsky’s deceased son, and as such, represents the past, although he is very concerned with the future. He is an idealist and a student. His intellectual qualities both empower him, by leading him to demand more from Russia and humanity than any other character, and hinder him, by making him appear a bit inaccessible, emotionally. The play creates a romantic tension between him and Anya, which he is too philosophical to act upon. He often speaks wisely, but he holds a powerless position and is not able to exert influence.

Firs Nikolayevitch: Firs was born a serf on Madame Ranevsky’s estate, and although the serfs have been freed, Firs remains on the estate because he has no other opportunities.
Although he and Lopakhin share the same background, Firs has not been able to adapt to the changing society as Lopakhin has. Firs is a figure who represents time, a character who symbolizes the old class system. At the end of the play, he is accidentally left behind, and he presumably dies onstage. His death marks the passing of the old class system, the passing of the aristocracy's reign on the cherry orchard, and the passing of a phase in Russian history.

**Dunyasha:** Dunyasha is a young servant on the cherry orchard. She enjoys the attention of Ephikhodof, but is far more interested in Yasha, with whom she enjoys a romance. She is a comic character who represents many of the class issues at work in the play. Despite her humble station, Dunyasha fancies herself a lady, and her pretensions constitute some of the funniest moments in the play. These dreams of hers are both irritating and hopeful because they are all possible. Her character has a serious function when one regards her interactions with other characters: Lopakhin and Firs, for example. Both men criticize Dunyasha for not remembering her station. This criticism is ironic because both of these men are former serfs who defy conventional classifications of station. Consequently, Dunyasha's character serves to focus attention to hypocrisy, as well as hope: in this new topsy-turvy social order, no one is in a position to criticize Dunyasha's plans.

**Yasha:** Yasha is Madame Ranevsky's man-servant. Like Dunyasha, he is young, from the village, and extremely pretentious. He is involved with Dunyasha. He is also a very comic character, although he is also the only character in the play who seems truly cold and without consideration for anyone but himself. He follows Madame Ranevsky around like a parasite, feeding off of her loose control of her purse and begging to be taken abroad. He is a snob to most everyone, often openly rude and insulting to others in public. He refuses to see his own mother, a villager. Yasha is the only character in the play who does not appear to have any redeeming personality traits.

**Simeon Panteleyitch Ephikhodof:** Ephikhodof is a young clerk who works on the estate. He is a comic character, and his nickname is "Twenty-Two Misfortunes" (or "Two and Twenty Hard Knocks," depending on the translation). His entrances and exits are generally marked by his falling on or off stage. He is infatuated with Dunyasha, but she does not return his interest. At the end of the play, Lopakhin employs him. Ephikhodof is an optimistic figure, because despite the disasters which constantly follow him, he is always relatively happy. He accepts fate as it comes to him, and he deals with it calmly, if not gracefully. He also has an enormous capacity to laugh at himself, and this ability perhaps contributes to his good humor. Perhaps his significance is that we should never take ourselves too seriously: if we do, we will be disappointed, but if we don't, we can still be content even under adversity.

**Charlotte Ivanovna:** Charlotte is Anya's governess, although she is no longer employed at the end of the play. She is an orphan, and she is popular for her magic tricks. She is a strange character, generally treated as more of a spectacle than a person, and many of her lines address her own isolation. She is not depressed; on the contrary, she is lively and energetic, but neither does she bring great cheer to the play. Depending on the performance, she can be either an amusing or an uncomfortable character to watch.

**Simeonof-Pishtchik:** Pishtchik is a land-owning neighbor of the cherry orchard. He is always impressed with Charlotte's magic tricks, and he is a very social fi
successful jokes where others fail. He spends the play in debt, although he is able to pay off some of it at the end. His requests for loans can often be interpreted as disrespectful and selfish, as Madame Ranevsky does not have enough money for her own debt. However, because Pishtchik is able to pay some of his loans at the end of the play, he is one character who may achieve a sort of redemption through the course of the drama. The miracle that saves his estate is an optimistic aspect to the end of the play, although the fact that he has forgotten that Madame Ranevsky must leave is not.

**Act Wise Summary of The Cherry Orchard**

**Act I**

The play is set in Russia, in the late 1800's. Act I opens at dawn, in the month of May, inside Madame Ranevsky's estate. The acts are not divided into scenes, although the entrances and exits of different characters delineate distinct moments of action.

Lopakhin, a wealthy neighbour, and Dunyasha, a maid, are waiting for Madame Ranevsky, her daughter Anya, and their companions to return to their cherry orchard estate from France, where they have spent five years. The room they are in is called the nursery. Dunyasha and Lopakhin begin by discussing the tardiness of the trains, and Lopakhin recounts his childhood memories of Madame Ranevsky, who once brought Lopakhin, then a serf's son, into the main house, after his father struck him, to care for him and to wash him. After Lopakhin's speech, Dunyasha expresses her anxiety at the return of the family.

Ephikhodof, a clumsy clerk infatuated with pretentious Dunyasha, enters the nursery with a nosegay, his boots squeaking the whole way. Lopakhin sends Dunyasha for a drink, and he and Ephikhodof have a brief and comic discussion on the weather and squeaky boots. Dunyasha re-enters, and Ephikhodof falls over her on his way out. Dunyasha confesses to Lopakhin that Ephikhodof has proposed to her. Lopakhin is not interested, but Dunyasha goes on to explain her feelings; she is fond of the clerk's personality, but not his clumsiness, and she does not know what to do.

Madame Ranevsky finally arrives, bringing her daughters Barbara and Anya, her brother Gayef, Anya's governess Charlotte, and Pishtchik, a neighbour, along with her. Madame Ranevsky cries, as she often does. After a brief moment of welcome-home chaos, the stage is empty except for Anya and Dunyasha, who grew up together. Dunyasha tries to discuss Ephikhodof, but only captures Anya's attention by mentioning that Trophimof, the tutor of Anya's deceased younger brother Grisha, is in the house. Barbara, the older daughter, enters with an enormous ring of keys at her waist. Dunyasha leaves to make coffee, and the sisters reunite. Barbara is also a crier, and she cries with happiness at seeing Anya, and then with distress as Anya describes the family's financial problems. Madame Ranevsky, used to living the luxurious life, is spending money she does not have, and now the family cannot pay the interest on the mortgage; the cherry orchard will be sold in August. Lopakhin enters during this tense moment, moos like a cow at Barbara, and exits. Barbara hopes to marry Lopakhin, and society expects it. She confesses to Anya that he has not proposed, and begins crying again. She announces that she wants to become a pilgrim.
Dunyasha returns with coffee; Yasha, Madame Ranevsky's social-climbing servant, enters with bags. He does not recognize Dunyasha; when she tells him her name, he embraces her, calls her a "little cucumber," and chases her around the room. Dunyasha squeals in delight and Yasha runs out before Barbara can reprimand him.

Anya ponders the significance of tutor Trophimof's return. She briefly describes the death of her father six years early, followed shortly by the death of her younger brother, who drowned at age seven. These events prompted Madame Ranevsky to go abroad and forget her misfortunes, and Anya reflects that Trophimof, who was her brother Grisha's tutor, might remind Madame Ravensky of the tragedy.

After Anya's reflections, Firs, a former serf and present servant, enters the scene. He is talking to himself, for he is half deaf and of questionable sanity. Although he is not quite communicating with anyone else on stage, one can tell he is delighted at his mistress's return, and his comments, as usual, are nostalgic and focus on events of years gone by. He proclaims that now that he has seen his mistress Madame Ranevsky come home, he is ready to die, a comment which clearly illustrates the old social order in Russia.

Madame Ravensky, her brother Gayef, and neighbours Pishtchik and Lopakhin enter. Gayef pretends he is playing billiards, his trademark behavior. Anya says good night and exits. Firs waits on Madame Ranevsky and Barbara suggests that the guests go home. Madame Ranevsky thanks Firs profusely and starts crying again, with joy. Firs responds to her thanks with completely unrelated comments, due to his hearing problems. Pishtchik and Lopakhin begin complimenting Madame Ranevsky. Lopakhin goes on to complain about Gayef, who thinks Lopakhin a snob, and insists he loves Madame Ranevsky dearly. Madame Ranevsky is excited and begins kissing the furniture; Gayef breaks the mood by telling her of members of the household that have died in her absence. Madame Ranevsky already knows, but her reaction is interesting. She becomes very quiet and still, with none of her usual drama. This change in her behaviour emphasizes her flaws as a character; she is a creature of positive excess reacting with more emotion to the furniture of her home than to the death of her old friends.

Lopakhin is about to leave, and he changes the subject with his plan to save Madame Ranevsky's estate from auction: if she cuts down the cherry orchard and the old house, she can build villas, sell them to the nouveau rich, pay off the interest, and make a profit. Madame Ranevsky and Gayef do not understand the suggestion. Pishtchik changes the subject by asking Madame Ranevsky about Paris.

Barbara enters with Yasha and two telegrams for her mother from Paris; Madame Ranevsky tears them up dramatically; Gayef then announces that the cupboard in the room is one hundred years old. Pishtchik acts astonished, which encourages Gayef to embarrass himself, which he does frequently. He gets on his knees and recites a dramatic and ridiculous ode to the cupboard, while the rest of the company looks on, embarrassed for him and astonished. When he realizes how foolish he looks, he begins playing imaginary billiards again. Pishtchik saves the mood by swallowing an entire box of pills: although his act is equally foolish as Gayef's speech, everyone finds it wildly entertaining. Firs continues to mumble, and Charlotte, the governess enters. She is a strange personality; a social misfit. She teases Lopakhin, refuses to do a conjuring trick, and goes off to bed. Lopakhin says his good-byes. Pishtchik asks Madame Ranevsky for a loan to pay his mortgage, despite the
perfectly well that she cannot pay her own; she refuses him. Firs fusses over Gayef's clothes, and Barbara discover Anya asleep. Gayef and Madame Ranevsky look out over the orchard and reminisce.

Trophimof enters in shabby student clothes to greet Madame Ranevsky. At first she appears to not know him, so he explains himself as her deceased son's tutor; then she suddenly throws her arms around and beings to cry. She is not crying in happiness, but rather mourning for her son. She is startled to see that he has grown old, and a brief discussion of age follows; the subject irks Madame Ranevsky, but it does not seem to bother Trophimof. Pishtchik and Gayef begin to say their goodnights, and Pishtchik once again asks Madame Ranevsky for a loan to pay his own mortgage. This time she agrees, and despite a brief protest on his part, Gayef also concedes the money to Pishtchik. As Madame Ranevsky, Trophimof, Pishtchik, and Firs leave, Barbara announces to Yasha that his mother wants to see him. Yasha complains bitterly about this visit; as he exits, and Gayef discusses the family's financial problems with his nieces, referring to a distant aunt as an obscure source of economic hope. Gayef continues to describe what a small hope it is; in his opinion, the aunt, although wealthy, would disapprove of Madame Ranevsky's "sinful" life. Through his rather harsh criticisms of his own sister, another example of indirect action, we learn that Madame Ranevsky married beneath her aristocratic station, and, upon the death of her husband, became another man's mistress. Anya, one of the play's two idealists, is hurt by Gayef's words against her mother; Gayef is instantly shamed, and tries (rather ungracefully) to wriggle out of the situation by changing the subject. He bemoans the way his own words constantly embarrass him, as they did with his speech to the cupboard. He swears on his honor that he will do all he can to save the property, and says goodnight. Barbara drags a sleepy Anya towards her room; Trophimof enters to watch them leave and, as Anya disappears from stage, whispers after her "My sunshine! My spring!"

**Act II**

Act II opens in the outdoors, in the summertime. The set consists of a bench; the town in visible in the background. Charlotte, Yasha, and Dunyasha are sitting on the bench; Ephikhodof is standing, playing a guitar. Charlotte is dressed for hunting, and is cleaning her gun. She meditates out loud on her past; she is an orphan who spent her childhood performing tricks in county fairs, and she describes her continuing feelings of isolation.

No one else appears to be listening. Ephikhodof mistakes his guitar for a mandolin, and a brief comic exchange follows, wherein Ephikhodof focuses his attention on Dunyasha, Dunyasha fawns over Yasha, and Yasha smokes a cigar and admires himself. Charlotte enthusiastically attempts to join in on the bungled conversation, but no one wants to talk to her, and she leaves in something of a huff. Ephikhodof tries to get Dunyasha alone, but she sends him away so she can be alone with Yasha. The two of them have a rather comic and pretentious conversation, which informs the audience that they have become romantically involved. With the noise of another party approaching, Dunyasha scurries off to protect their secret romance.

**Madame Ranevsky**, Gayef, and Lopakhin enter the scene; Lopakhin is trying to convince Madame Ranevsky to sell the cherry orchard. She changes the subject by complaining about Yasha's cigar. Three conversations ensue: Lopakhin demands an answer, but no one responds to him, Gayef considers the railroad to himself, and Madame Ranevsky p
funds and her excessiveness. She drops her purse and Yasha picks up the coins. Madame Ranevsky complains that she spent too much money at lunch; she then complains that Gayef had another tirade, which embarrassed her, and Lopakhin agrees. Yasha laughs out loud at Gayef's foolishness, and Madame Ranevsky sends him away.

Lopakhin insists on the subject of the cherry orchard; there is a millionaire interested in the property. Gayef and Madame Ranevsky discuss the prospect of their wealthy aunt sending them money, but Lopakhin is scandalized to hear the amount they expect; it is nowhere near enough to pay the interest on the mortgage. Lopakhin insists that they build villas and sell them to save themselves financially; Madame Ranevsky and Gayef do not focus on the practicality of this suggestion, but, rather, moan about how tedious they find villa residents.

Madame Ranevsky follows this discussion by criticizing herself for the bad luck she has brought on herself during her life. She married an alcoholic, and when he died, followed shortly by her son, she went off with another man. She cared for this man through his illnesses, and he repaid her by robbing her in Paris and finding another woman. Madame Ranevsky attempted suicide, but instead returned to Russia. Her outpour is prompted by the fact that she has just received another telegram from her lover, asking her to return to Paris. She rips up the telegram and discusses a band, heard in the distance, with Gayef.

Lopakhin talks about his peasant roots again, referencing his poor penmanship as a symbol of his original class, and Madame Ranevsky advises him to marry, suggesting Barbara as a wife. Lopakhin goes along with the conversation, but his words do not betray enthusiasm. Gayef announces he has been offered a position in a bank, and Madame Ranevsky scoffs.

Firs enters, bringing a coat for Gayef, and through a misunderstanding, begins to discuss his recollections of the Liberation. Trophimof, Anya, and Barbara enter, and everyone sits. Lopakhin teases Trophimof about being escorted by two girls and being such an old student, and Trophimof responds by citing Lopakhin's carnivorous economic tendencies. Everyone laughs at the joke, although it may be truer than they would like. Madame Ranevsky begs Trophimof to continue a philosophical discussion from the day before; as he embellishes his ideas on the nature of man, we discover him to be another idealist, and full of good sense.

Gayef interrupts the mood by making an embarrassing ode to nature. An owl is heard, and Firs announces that a great misfortune is coming, just as it did before; he is referring to the Liberation. A tramp enters, startling the party, and begs for money, Madame Ranevsky cannot find any small change, and so gives him a considerable sum. The tramp exits, and Barbara howls in despair at her mother's spending. Madame Ranevsky announces that she has arranged the marriage for Barbara and Lopakhin. Barbara is mortified, and Lopakhin wriggles out of the situation by misquoting Hamlet.

Everyone exits except for Anya and Trophimof. Trophimof ponders that Barbara never lets them alone, and Anya considers that Trophimof has made her cease to love the cherry orchard as she once did. They both have larger, philosophical issues on their mind. Trophimof explains how the orchard makes him feel; although it is two hundred years old and has seen so much history, it frightens him that it has seen so little positive change. They philosophize together about the future; they have a romantic relationship, although being the idealists that they are, their relationship is not sexual. Barbara calls Anya into the house, and they exit.
Act III

Act III is set inside the estate, during a party in August on the day of the auction of the cherry orchard. Music is heard. Pishtchik, Charlotte, Trophimof, Madame Ranevsky, Anya, Barbara, and Dunyasha enter in the background, with assorted guests, and dance the grand-rond. Firs serves drinks. Pishtchik and Trophimof come into a sitting area and Pishtchik complains about his money troubles dozes from time to time. Barbara comes into the sitting room and Trophimof teases her, calling her Madame Lopakhin. She is angry, both at the joke, and at the expense the party represents. She leaves, and Trophimof comments to Pishtchik that Pishtchik could have done great things in his life with all the energy he has devoted to scrounging for money to pay his loans. Pishtchik agrees, and falls into a momentary panic, thinking he has lost his purse, which he quickly recovers.

Madame Ranevsky and Charlotte enter. Madame Ranevsky wonders where Gayef is, and why she had the dance. Charlotte performs card tricks for the group; they all applaud, and Pishtchik announces that he loves her. Her final magic trick involves making Anya appear from behind a shawl; she kisses her mother and quickly scurries away. She then performs the same trick with Barbara, and exits herself, with Pishtchik following.

Madame Ranevsky cannot distract herself from the outcome of the auction. Barbara insists that their wealthy aunt will have bought the cherry orchard for Anya’s sake, but Madame Ranevsky knows that the aunt does not trust her enough to spend so much money on her.

Trophimof breaks in to tease Barbara, calling her Madame Lopakhin again. Barbara is upset; it's not that she doesn't want to marry Lopakhin, but he has never proposed. Despite all the discussion of how they should get married, he always wiggles out of his opportunities. Barbara thinks his hesitance is because he is too occupied with money; she herself announces that she would join a nunnery in an instant, if only she had money to join. Trophimof mocks her, and she starts crying again.

Yasha enters, laughing, to announce that Ephikhodof has broken a billiard cue, and Barbara rushes off to reprimand him. Madame Ranevsky seizes the opportunity to criticize Trophimof for teasing Barbara. He explains that he does it because she always follows he and Anya around, trying to prevent a romance. He insists her efforts are useless, as he and Anya are "above love;" Madame Ranevsky comments grimly that she must therefore be beneath it.

She begins to panic about the outcome of the auction; Trophimof points out that now it is far too late to panic, as she in essence lost the cherry orchard long before through her inaction. She announces that the cherry orchard is a symbol of her family and of her self; when they sell it, they sell her as well. She holds a telegram from her abusive lover during her tirade, and she begins to cry. Madame Ranevsky confesses to Trophimof that her lover has asked her back, and that she will go. Trophimof is devastated by her choice; he too begins crying and pleads with her. Madame Ranevsky becomes defensive and then insulting, calling Trophimof a freak for not considering love, saying he is too cold to be able to understand her.

Trophimof runs out furious, and Madame Ranevsky instantly begs him to return. A crash is heard, and Anya enters, laughing that Trophimof has fallen down the stairs. The music starts again. Trophimof and Barbara enter, and Madame Ranevsky casually apologizes. They dance;
Yasha and Firs enter, Firs complaining about his health. Yasha is irritated by the conversation, and Firs become offended.

Anya announces that she has heard that the cherry orchard has been sold, although no one knows to whom. Madame Ranevsky asks Firs where he will go if the property is sold, implying that she will not bring him with her; he announces he will go anywhere she tells him to. She notes that he looks ill, and Yasha interrupts to ask Madame Ranevsky to take Yasha back to Paris with her when she returns. Pishtchik enters, asks Madame Ranevsky to dance, and then begs her for another loan. She does not respond to either Pishtchik or Yasha, but her silence is as good as a yes.

Dunyasha enters, tittering about a compliment she received while dancing; both Yasha and Firs make irritated comments. Ephikhodof has followed Dunyasha out, and he maintains his good cheer despite her attempts to shoo him away. Barbara hurries in to scold Dunyasha and Ephikhodof for acting like guests. Ephikhodof sticks up for himself, but Barbara manages to remove him after a brief moment of comedy.

Lopakhin enters just as Ephikhodof leaves, coming face-to-face with a furious Barbara. Everyone rushes in to hear what happened at the sale. Before Lopakhin can answer, Gayef follows him in, wiping tears away. Lopakhin responds that the cherry orchard has, in fact, been sold. Madame Ranevsky begs for more information, but Gayef exits, taking Firs with him. Finally, Lopakhin answers the question; he has bought the cherry orchard. Madame Ranevsky falls into a chair, and Barbara throws her keys to the ground, and exits. Lopakhin begins his speech slowly, about how a millionaire immediately outbid Gayef's small sum, and then grows more and more excited as he describes his own triumph. By the end of his speech, he cannot hide his delight, and he commands the musicians to play. Anya leads her crying mother off the stage, promising her a new orchard, which symbolizes a new life.

**Act IV**

The scene opens in October, in the same room as Act I, but now the furniture is piled in a corner. Gayef and Madame Ranevsky stand outside, saying good-bye to the peasants. Madame Ranevsky gives them her purse, and Gayef chides her. They go into another room, and Lopakhin attempts to call them back to have some champagne, held by Yasha. They will not have any, and Yasha drinks the champagne instead, criticizing its quality as he sips, while Lopakhin defends its worth.

Trophimof enters, looking for his galoshes so he can prepare to leave. He will see the family into town, and then return to the university in Moscow. Lopakhin makes a joke about how old Trophimof is to be a student; although Trophimof is irked at the joked, he and Lopakhin share a very tender farewell. Trophimof declines Lopakhin's offers of champagne and money, but he accepts an embrace, and advises Lopakhin not to draw too much attention to himself. Trophimof is still looking for his galoshes; Barbara throws a pair at him from offstage. Lopakhin again insists on giving Trophimof money, not out of pity, but as a sign of respect. Trophimof, however, then insists that as a free man, he cannot accept Lopakhin's money. The sound of axes is heard, and Anya enters to ask that they stop cutting down the orchard until the family has left. Lopakhin is embarrassed and exits after Trophimof to see to the request.
Anya asks Yasha if Firs has been sent to the hospital. Yasha says he thinks so, but Anya asks Ephikhodof to find out for sure. Yasha is insulted that she does not accept his answer, and Ephikhodof lightly comments that he wishes he were as close to death as Firs. Barbara enters the room and asks if Firs has gone to the doctor, and Anya responds yes, although she has yet to receive a definite answer. Barbara ponders why, if Firs has left for the hospital, the note for the doctor has been left behind. Anya exits to send the note after him. Barbara announces to Yasha that his mother wants to say good-bye; Yasha responds with irritation.

Barbara disappears, and Dunyasha enters, crying over Yasha. Yasha is not moved; he is excited about going to Paris, and brushes Dunyasha off. His action is cold, but it is unclear whether or not Dunyasha is crying because she is upset or because it seems the glamorous thing to do.

Madame Ranevsky, Gayef, Anya, and Charlotte enter. Madame Ranevsky acts excited about her new life, and Gayef looks forward to his new job. Anya is not going with her mother; she is going to study, and she and her mother plan their anticipated reunion. Charlotte sings, holding a bundle as though it were a baby, and then throws the bundle away as she announces she is now without a position. Madame Ranevsky insists she will find Charlotte a new job.

Pishtchik enters, exhausted from his walk. He has somehow come into some money, and he pays Lopakhin and Madame Ranevsky a token portion of the debt he accrued with them. Only after explaining his luck does he realize Madame Ranevsky is leaving; he begins crying as he says his good-byes, and wishes her well before he exits.

Madame Ranevsky takes care of her final business. Anya again confirms that Firs has been to the hospital. Then Madame Ranevsky pushes Lopakhin one final time to marry Barbara. Lopakhin agrees that he will propose, and goes to offer the champagne again, but Yasha has drunk it all.

After Madame Ranevsky, Anya, Charlotte, Gayef, and Yasha have left, Barbara enters. Lopakhin inquires as to her plans now that the cherry orchard has been sold. Barbara says she has taken a position as a housekeeper, and Lopakhin replies that he has asked Ephikhodof to take on the cherry orchard for him. Lopakhin exits, without proposing, and Barbara sits on the floor and cries for a moment. The entire household re-enters, and everyone picks up luggage and says their final good-byes; the scene is chaotic. Gradually everyone leaves the room, save Madame Ranevsky and Gayef, who share one final moment of nostalgia while Anya calls them away from without. Finally, he responds to her calls, and the room is empty for a moment.

As the doors are locked from without, Firs enters. He has been forgotten, left behind. He complains that he does not feel well, and lies on an old bench. He is still for a moment, and the play ends.

**Analysis of the Play**

The Cherry Orchard focuses on the tensions of changing times. This tension between what was and what is centers on different levels. One level, personal tragedy, is very specific and
the death of Madame Ranevsky's son Grisha five years before the start of the play is one example. On another level, the play centers on the complications with major changes in an entire society: the recent freedom of the serfs and the decaying power of the aristocracy are two more general aspects of Russian history which affect the play.

Lopakhin's first speech is important because it immediately introduces this theme of Russia's newfound class mobility. In 1861, the system of serfdom was ended in Russia, and although this event happened perhaps fifteen years before Act I, it drives the action of the play. Lopakhin himself points out the irony in the situation developing in Russia; Lopakhin, born a serf, is now a wealthy, well-dressed landowner, calling on his aristocratic neighbor, Madame Ranevsky, as an equal. Despite his financial success, he still refers to himself as "a peasant of the peasants," noting a difference between himself, a nouveau rich, and the aristocratic members of the upper class. This speech introduces an ambiguity in Lopakhin's character which can only be resolved in a performance of the play; it is unclear from the text alone whether Lopakhin feels love, respect, and gratitude towards Madame Ranevsky and her family, or whether he harbors some resentment towards this household that held his father and grandfather as slaves. All of the characters in the play possess a similar ambiguity, which can only be alleviated by a director's choice.

Not only are Lopakhin's intentions unclear from the text alone, but he interacts with the other characters in very complicated ways, due, in part, to his own change in class. Although Lopakhin revels in his own economic transformation, he chides Dunyasha for not remembering her place in society, acting too much like a lady when she is only a maid. The close chronology between these two moments at the very opening of the play creates a tension about class differences which pervades the entire play. Dunyasha and Lopakhin come from similar, lower class backgrounds; however, Lopakhin has been able to fulfill his aspirations and rise through the class system, while Dunyasha is still trying. Lopakhin can easily be portrayed as a hypocrite for moments like his criticism of Dunyasha.

Ephikhodof, the next character to enter, is something of a clown, and his entrances are sources of comedy. Although he is an extreme example, he is not unlike the rest of the characters in the play: they are all ridiculous in some way. Even Barbara, who seems so stern, can be portrayed as a parody. Her keys, for example, are often as enormous as they are loud, depending on the performance. These keys are attached to her throughout the play, and they are a symbol of her authority in the household; her practicality and her sense of duty are both her biggest strengths and her most ridiculous qualities. While the sight and sound of her keys are a symbol of her power, they are also an unwieldy and ridiculous object. Barbara and her keys stand in sharp contrast to the younger sister, Anya, one of the play's two idealists. Anya is a charismatic character because she is both capable of being appalled at her mother's extravagant spending, and capable of forgiving her every flaw. She may appear more comic in later acts, when she and Trophimof, the other idealist, voice their philosophies.

Anya's criticism of her mother's overspending in France is important because it is one of The Cherry Orchard's many examples of indirect action, a technique Chekhov is famous for. The action described in the speech has not taken place on the stage, and is therefore indirect; the play revolves around the character's on-stage reactions to such off-stage action, for although this sort of action is not seen, it actually drives the plot. Lopakhin's opening speech is another example of indirect action, which both informs the audience of the past and maneuvers the development of the action.
Firs is a highly symbolic character, for as the oldest character, he is a remnant of the past. He spent almost his entire life as a serf on the estate. Freedom has not changed his life as it has changed Lopakhin's; although neither is a serf now, Firs is old and has nowhere else to go, so he stays on in the household as he always has, while Lopakhin has become independent and wealthy. The two of them reflect two different sides of the Russian serfs' freedom; together on stage, they create rather a complete picture of the fate of the old serfs, while Madame Ranevsky and her brother Gayef illustrate the fate of the old aristocracy. Madame Ranevsky's often comically joyful tirades on her homeland and her family demonstrate that she is a woman of excess. This excessiveness is both her most charismatic trait and her greatest weakness; she too is a ridiculous character. The contrast in her reactions to seeing her furniture again and the reality of her acquaintances' deaths implies early on in the play that this woman is completely incapable of dealing with difficulty; she ignores problems and constantly exaggerates her abilities and her emotions to create a perfectly happy world for herself.

For Madame Ranevsky and Gayef, cutting the cherry orchard down is not an option: the estate is too important. Their inability to comprehend the sense of Lopakhin's lucrative suggestion implies that they are two characters of the old aristocracy who cannot change with the changing times. They do not understand that if they do not cut down the orchard, it will go to auction and whoever buys it will cut it down anyway. Pishtchik is another character who does not seem capable of adapting and saving himself. He feeds off of others; he knows Madame Ranevsky has her own financial problems, yet he insists on asking her for money, complimenting her and goading her until she agrees. Madame Ranevsky agrees because of her own fundamental flaw, her excessiveness; she continues to live the life of a wealthy woman even as her assets dwindle. Even Gayef, the bumbling social idiot, can criticize her for this behavior, although he is too weak to stop her. Yasha is similar to Pishtchik in the way he feeds off Madame Ranevsky. His behavior with regards to his mother demonstrates his own flaw as a character. He has not seen his mother for five years, and he is more concerned with himself and impressing the family he serves than he is with visiting his own mother. Although he and Pishtchik both have charismatic moments on stage, they are both fundamentally parasites who frequent the cherry orchard for the purpose of benefiting from Madame Ranevsky's weak control of her purse.

Charlotte and Trophimof are the two final characters who appear onstage in this act. Each appears only briefly. They are both outsiders, and it is therefore appropriate they neither is fully integrated into the action until a later act.

Act I is thematically occupied with the development of different characters' strengths and weaknesses. These themes are demonstrated again during Act II, but the central issue in Act II is the development of the play's views on Russian history, social and economic change, and the concept of progress.

These ideas of social change are demonstrated in the personalities and actions of the characters. For example, the moment when Madam Ranevsky drops her purse is a symbolic one. She is talking to herself, complaining that she spends more than she should, when she drops her purse and spills her money. This action is an accident, yet it differs very slightly from the way she behaves in general. She complains that she does not have enough money to pay her own mortgage. Then, moments later, she gives Pishtchik money for his mortgage. She laments that there is barely enough for the servants of the house!
dines at restaurants and tips the waiters in gold. Her words suggest that she wants to save her money, but her actions always betray a tendency to the opposite. She is careless with her purse, whether she is dropping her money deliberately or not. After she drops it in the garden, Yasha scurries to her side to help her collect the coins; this picture continues the symbolism established at the beginning of this sequence. Although Yasha is only helping his employer to collect what she has dropped, his eagerness to help with this particular task parallels the way in which he shadows Madame Ranevsky so that he might benefit personally from her own excessive tendencies with her purse.

Another thematically loaded moment in Act II immediately follows the incident of the spilled coins; Lopakhin tries to persuade Madame Ranevsky and Gayef to sell their property as villas, and they will have none of it. The siblings hesitate for two reasons. In Act I, they explained that their estate and cherry orchard are too important to be torn down; at this moment, in Act II, they condemn the idea of dealing with villa residents as "vulgar." This exchange between the decaying aristocratic family and Lopakhin, the wealthy former serf, illustrates many of the important social issues at work in the play. Now that the serfs have been freed, the older upper class no longer has an economic position with such long-term security. However, Madame Ranevsky and Gayef appear incapable of taking any economic threat seriously. It is interesting that the prospect of having villa residents is so distasteful to them. Villa residents would not come from old money, as Madame Ranevsky and Gayef do, but would rather come from the nouveau rich created by the rearrangement of the Russian classes. Madame Ranevsky and Gayef's resistance to Lopakhin's suggestions therefore illustrates their inability to adapt to their changing society; they continue to think themselves somehow above their problems and above having to depend on people from common families. The intrigue of the play revolves around whether or not they can overcome this current blindness to their necessity to adapt.

Firs addresses this same issue in his entrance; he recalls the happiness of the serfs immediately following the Liberation, but laments that they did not understand why they should be happy. At least before the Liberation, Russia was an ordered society. Although the Liberation created a more fair class system, it did not necessarily improve the lives of individuals or create a stronger country. Firs' choice to remain with Madame Ranevsky and Gayef, despite his freedom, demonstrates the same reservations about social change that they have, but from a different class perspective.

Trophimof has a much stronger presence in this act, and his philosophical remarks further meshes out the ideology of the play. Trophimof is the only character in the play who consistently speaks words of wisdom. The tensions he meshes out in his own views of Russian society may represent the thesis of the play as a whole, as many of the details he points out are directly dealt with in the action. Through his final discussion on the cherry orchard, Trophimof contrasts the idea of change with the idea of progress. While he is apparently in favor of the freedom of the serfs, he also does not consider the Liberation as a source of positive social change. He is optimistic, in that he hopes Russia and humanity will correct their shortcomings in the future, but he is also realistic, in that he views the Liberation as necessary change, but not sufficient.

Act III is full of juxtapositions. In this act, not only do characters’ class and social differences come out, but the way in which they interact in various moments emphasizes both the extreme differences between their personalities, and the similarities. Par
exaggerated distinctions between these characters that create an awareness of some quality that unites them all.

The characters in this play are all remarkably distinct from one another on an individual level, but in a greater sense, they are similar because they all possess a tendency towards excess. For example, in the scene where Madame Ranevsky and Trophimof discuss their involvement with love, Trophimof asserts that he and Anya are "above love," to which Madame Ranevsky responds that she must be "beneath love." This moment is ironic because it emphasizes the differences between these two characters. On the one hand, Trophimof has found a lovely young woman with whom he shares certain chemistry. However, he and Anya are intellectual idealists, and they will part from each other at the end of the play forever, without having taken advantage of any opportunity they might have had together. On the other hand, Madame Ranevsky is fleeing to Russia from her cheating, abusive lover. She, however, is a woman controlled too much by her passions and not enough by her intellect, and at the end of the play she will return to the side of this monster who has so mistreated her. Trophimof and Madame Ranevsky have opposite problems when one considers the details of their situations, but in terms of the end of the play as a whole, they are in the same position: they each had a good opportunity, but by being so much themselves, they have managed to lose it.

Act III also contains the pivotal moment of the play's action: the sale of the cherry orchard, bought by none other than Lopakhin himself. This moment brings together many of the central ideas in the play. In the first place, it is the most beautiful example of indirect action, the technique which Chekhov is famous for, in the entire play. The sale of the cherry orchard takes place offstage, far away, yet its expected fruition completely drives the action of the plot. Moreover, this moment, which occurs offstage, provides the most dramatic of all moments on-stage, teaching us that visual action is superfluous, and indeed, unnecessary, next to the reactions of finely sculpted characters.

This scene is a moving account of the social change occurring in Russia; Lopakhin is now the owner of the estate where his father and grandfather were serfs, and Madame Ranevsky is homeless. This moment is full of the most powerful irony in the entire play, as the roles of the two main characters have been completely reversed from the beginning of their history to this moment. Theirs is the most extreme example of the changes in class which effect each character in the play.

In addition to being the most important moment in the play in this respect, this scene also has the potential to be the most important moment in terms of the development of Lopakhin and Madame Ranevsky as characters. Lopakhin is both triumphant and tactless; Madame Ranevsky is naïve and devastated. This dual aspect of the scene exits in the text, and it can be either emphasized or done away with, depending on the performance of the play. In any interpretation of the play, however, this interpretation of this scene must control the characters' identities from the beginning of a performance, and even still there are endless possibilities. Whether Lopakhin comes off as vindictive or as lovable throughout the play, this speech can be either the moment where the audience most identifies with him and feels his triumph, or most resents him for his lack of tact. By the same token, whether Madame Ranevsky is charmingly innocent or annoyingly naïve throughout the first two acts, at this moment, the audience sees her at her weakest; we may see her as a fool who acted too late or as a poor abused woman, beaten down by misfortune.
These moments of irony and symbolism are the fabric of the entire play, not only Act III. Part of the richness of the play depends on the variety of interpretations it supports. However, in choosing one's own interpretation, the reader should bear in mind that Chekhov was disappointed when his play was performed as a tragedy; the fact that the play may contain various moral lessons should in no way undermine the light-hearted, comic moments which pervade the entire play and are just as important to its substance.

Act IV is an act when many of the play's loose ends come together. At the same time, the end of the play also remains ambiguous, and a performance may choose to either alleviate or preserve some of the loose ends that the text does not provide definite answers to.

Act IV is an act when many characters are most themselves. Lopakhin and Trophimof, for example, share a stunning good-bye. They are fond of each other, and they each make a gesture towards one another which acts as a sign of their respect for one another. Their gestures, however, differentiate in such a way that they are complete and true expressions of each man's own personality. Trophimof, for example, analyzes Lopakhin and gives him advice. This sort of mental exercise is what Trophimof, the philosophical idealist, does best, and although his words are somewhat critical, they are also well-meaning. Lopakhin, true to his recent success and consequent sense for the financial, offers Trophimof a small sum of money as a parting gift. He takes care to explain that he offers the money not out of pity, but out of respect, because he understands how inconsequential ideas of loss can be. They each offer the other the best thing they have that the other can find useful: Trophimof offers wisdom, and Lopakhin offers free money. We cannot quite know if Lopakhin follows Trophimof's advice, but we do know that Trophimof is too philosophical to accept Lopakhin's money. In this sense, their gestures are somewhat stunted, yet the scene remains extremely tender nonetheless, optimistically demonstrating that such different individuals have more in common than one would expect at the beginning of the play.

Although Lopakhin and Trophimof part so gracefully, not all of the characters' final appearances inspire optimism. While things are looking up for Pishtchik and Anya radiates hope, Charlotte forces the audience to remember that this final parting of ways is not joyous for everyone. The loss of the cherry orchard does not only affect Madame Ranevsky; as a result of the sale, Charlotte finds herself unemployed, with an uncertain future. Ephikhodof, Barbara, and Gayef have new jobs, and self-centered Yasha is allowed to travel with Madame Ranevsky, but loyal Firs is left behind altogether, and Barbara's hopes for romance with Lopakhin are dashed. In this way, the ending of the play is mixed, for while some see great opportunities ahead, other characters suffer great losses.

When Madame Ranevsky and her brother leave their family home for the final time, there is a sense that they have come to peace with the loss of the estate. The two of them look forward to the future, and their enthusiasm is contagious even if the audience doubts their abilities. It is another character, a much more minor character, who provides perhaps the most symbolic moment to Act IV: Firs. Act IV ends with Firs unmoving and unconscious, perhaps dead, forgotten, locked in the house where he was born a serf. In some ways it does not even matter whether or not he is dead: he might as well be. His position at the end of the play is symbolic ad can be read as a metaphor for the passing of the old order in Russia. This man was born a serf, and although he lived through the Liberation, he chose to maintain his position in the household because he had no other opportunities. Liberation was meaningless to him, and he stayed loyal to the family his whole life. The family, h
loyal to him; for all his service, no one could even be bothered to confirm whether this sick old man had been sent to the hospital, properly cared for. This negligence provides an extremely sharp criticism of the other characters' priorities: themselves. The fact that Firs has been forgotten demonstrates a lack of respect to Firs as a person, to his long service with the family, and to all the serfs that the Russia of Chekhov's day would not be held responsible for.

It is unclear whether or not Firs has died in the final scene, and while this neglect seems cold, it is not entirely pessimistic. Firs dies symbolically, and his immobility in the last scene indicates the passing of the old order. The class system, after so much upheaval, begins to settle down again with the passing of time, the deaths of the former serfs, and the integration of their children into society. Firs' presumable death is the last phase in a long process of change, beginning with former serfs like Lopakhin gaining power, the aristocracy losing power, and ending with the deaths of those who continued to live by the old system. In some ways, The Cherry Orchard describes nothing more than the growing pains of a society, and the fact that the play ends with a potential death should not be used to label the play a tragedy. The play describes the cycle of life, and it is important that we do not know for certain whether these characters will succeed or fail, live or die, because such an ending would rob the play of its greatest asset: its infinite possibilities. It is the play's ambiguity that provides so many interpretations and so many morals to so many different people.

The Cherry Orchard: A Classic Play by Anton Chekhov

The Cherry Orchard is a classic play written by Anton Chekhov circa 1901 to 1903. There were a variety of characters along with a unique storyline. There were twelve characters in the play that played separate but important roles throughout. The protagonist in the play was Mrs. Lubov Ranevsky; she was about middle aged in the play. She was owned the cherry orchard along with the estate which the story greatly concentrates on. Yermolay Lopakhin was another key character in the play; he was the son of peasants on the estate. His family had long been a part of the Ranevsky estate. He is very worried about his image when he is around Mrs. Ranevsky. He steadily complains about his lack of education and had a very rough childhood in comparison to Ranevsky. Peter Trofimov was a student at a nearby university. He intelligent although quite immature, Lubov had believed it was because of his rough upbringing. He has opposing views with Lopakhin because of Lopakhin's views on life. Next is Leonid Gayev. He is Lubov's biological brother and he is a bit odd and at times childish. At very odd times Gayev describes billiard shots that having nothing to do with the topic. He also behaves quite different when he is not within his own social standard. Varya is yet another character in the play; she was adopted and is in loves Lopakhin but has doubts about Lopakhin's ability to move the relationship a step further. She is works very hard but she is very emotional and cries frequently. Anya is another character introduced. She is the birth daughter of Lubov and she has lived a life of comfort. She is very supportive to her mother when the estate is lost. Boris Simeonov Pischik is another character. He is a landowner like Lubov and is having money problems and continuously borrows money from others. He is known for his optimistic attitude towards life. Another important character is Charlotte. She is a private tutor for Anya's children despite the amusement she provided to the people around her, she is constantly mocked by others behind her back. Firs is a Lubov's manservant. He is elderly and always talks about the "old days" and how it used to be on the estate. He is the only think that shows the past of the estate. Simon Yephikodov is a clerk at the Lubov's estate. He is an amusing suicidal. He amuses all the people around him and he is
a lover and he proposed to Dunyasha who works as a maid in the estate. The final character is Yasha; he is the manservant who follows Lubov in her travels. He has a passion for France and is not afraid to speak his mind. He once told Firs to his face that he is too old and that he should die.

Act I begins with the characters in a nursery despite the fact that no children have been there for quite some time. It was May and Lopakhin was waiting for Lubov, the owner of the estate. Lopakhin is joined by Yephikodov who enters the room and complains about weather and his life. After rude remarks from Lopakhin he is forced to leave. As Dunyasha enters she tells everyone that Yephikodov has proposed to her. As Lubov arrives with Anya, they are met by Varya, Charlotte, Gayev, and Pischik. Dunyasha makes another announcement saying that Trofimov is residing in the estates bathhouse. Anya is rejoiced. As Varya comes in to the estate she meets with Anya and they have a talk about poverty and their financial necessities. Varya tells Anya about how Lopakhin has not proposed to her yet. Anya talks about how Lubov going to Paris was because Lubov's husband and seven year old son dying. Anya goes to sleep.

After Anya goes to sleep, Lopakhin starts talking about the orchard which is going to have to be sold in in order from Lubov to pay off of her debt. The matter is debated and Firs tells about how "back in the day" jam was made out of the cherries and sold, but now this is forgotten about. Lopakhin says that more wealthier and professional people have moved in to the country side. Gayev starts to say bad things about Lopakhin and then leaves himself. Varya then enters and gives Lubov two telegrams that she rips apart. As Lopakhin departs, Pischik asks for a loan from Lubov but the request is rejected. She looks at the cherry orchard and sees what looks like her dead mother walking. It was actually just a tree which looked like a women. Trofimov then enters and has a reunion with Lubov and they talk about all times. Lubov tells her brother that he needs to pay off his 240 rubles that he owes to Pischik and goes to sleep. Once she goes to sleep Gayev talks about of her spending problems and he might have a plan to save the cherry orchard and be able to keep the property. The act ends with Varya telling Anya that the servant quarters are being moved.

Act two begins with Yephikodov, Dunyasha, Charlotte, and Yasha talking, singing, and having a fun time. Charlotte begins to tell about her life story about how her father and mother used to perform tricks and that her mother and father were possibly never married. Yephikodov admits that he can’t figure out what to do with his life in spite of the various books he has read. He says that he can’t decide whether to shoot himself or not. Charlotte is abhorred by his sayings and leaves. After Yephikodov speaks to Dunyasha and Dunyasha begins to worry about Yephikodov's ongoing suicidal behavior. Dunyasha admits her love to Yasha. The scene ends with Yasha admitting that he is embarrassed to be seen with her.

As the next scene begins, Lopakhin attempts to again to convince Lubov to make her estate into cottages. Lubov attempts to change the subject and drops her purse. Yasha picks the purse up and starts laughing when he hears Gayev speak. Gayev becomes infuriated and Lubov makes Yasha go away, he does go away but still laughing. Lopakhin says that a man name Deriganov wants to buy the money. Gayev counters this by saying that a rich lady wants to send money for them; it will only be fifteen thousand though. Lopakhin says that Lubov and Gayev didn’t have any sense in business and that they don’t understand the fact that they are going to lose their property. Lubov goes on telling about how she had an affair with a man before her husband died and that he robbed her for her mo
another woman. She admits that the telegraphs are from him and that he is asking for her to return to France. The scene ends with Lopakhin talking about his childhood and Gayev informing everybody that he has been offered a job at a bank. Lubov tells him to reject the offer.

The final scene of act two comes forth and Firs talks once again about the "good old days", before the freedom of the serfs. Lopakhin gets offended due to the fact that he is the son of a serf and he insults Firs behind his back. As Trofimov enters he and Lopakhin have a conflict and they laugh about it with the others later. Gayev starts to almost recite a poem before Anya suppresses him. Out of nowhere then comes a drunk who asks for direction but is shooed by Lubov who gives him pieces of gold. Anya, Trofimov and Varya leave due to this odd incident. Act two comes to an end with Trofimov giving a speech about hope and Varya is left alone in the woods while Trofimov and Anya go by the river. Varya starts to call for Anya in the pitch black of the night.

As act three begins the date is the 22nd of August. The scene begins with Firs serving the people of the party and Pischik is having a conversation about his poor financial status. Lubov wonders why her brother has not returned home. She also is worried about the auction that is occurring tomorrow. This leads up to Charlotte doing a variety of magic tricks and Lubov talking to Varya in private. Varya admits that she thinks that Lopakhin will never propose to her because cares about his business more than her, and that she thinks that it will be awkward if she proposes to him herself. The scene is ended by Yasha taunting Yephikodov because he has broken a pool stick.

As the second part of act two approaches, Lubov and Trofimov talk and he Trofimov says that he is in love with Anya. About Lubov’s French lover problems, Trofimov advises her to ignore him due to the harm that he has caused her. Lubov responds negatively and insults Trofimov, Trofimov in outraged by her comments and departs. In the hallway he trips over himself and is laughed at by Anya. A dance has been set up at the estate and many people are invited. Firs talks more about the old days and how all these high classed people used to attend. Yasha, somehow offended, tells Firs that the time has come for him to die. Firs responds with an insult. As Pischik enters the dance he asks Lubov for more money to pay his mortgage. The scene is ended with Dunyasha showing how much she likes good compliments and how sensitive she is. Dunyasha becomes irritated with Yasha and decides that she will no longer treat him with seriousness.

As Varya enters it is the final scene of the third act. She demands Dunyasha to leave and starts yelling at Yephikodov telling him he doesn't work and that she is surprised that the estate even has a clerk. Yephikodov is deeply offended by this, though he was more afraid of her at the time than offended. Yephikodov leaves and Varya hears a noise in the hallway, she is afraid that it might be Yephikodov with a stick. It is not. Lubov asks Lopakhin if he bought the orchard and he said that he did. He says that he wants to build cottages and remove the cherry orchard. Lubov and Varya become very upset. Lopakhin lectures on the irony of how his ancestors used to work on this estate and now he owns it. Lopakhin adds salt to the wound and says "My poor dear friend, you can't turn back the clock now." At the end of the third act Lubov is still very upset and Anya tries to cheer her up and says that they will plant another cherry orchard that is better and everything will be better.
The month is now October at the beginning of the final act. All the members of the estate are getting ready to leave. The members can hear the axes hitting the branches of the once beautiful cherry orchard. As Lubov and Gayev say goodbye to the peasants, Yasha insults them under his breath. As Lubov and Gayev approach the nursery, Lubov admits to Gayev that she gave all of the money in her purse to the peasants. Gayev scolds her for the act and Lubov claims that she couldn't resist the urge. Lopakhin and Trofimov have a long conversation. They talk about how they will always have their differences, but they both still cared about each other. Lopakhin tries to give a loan to Trofimov, but he rejects and gives a speech. Anya then appears on behalf of Lubov, she asks Lopakhin to halt the cutting of the orchard until they have left. It is then informed that Firs has fallen ill, Yephikodov says that Firs is just old and that time has come for him to die. He admits that he in a sense looks up to Firs. The scene ends with Lubov and Yasha going back to Paris. Gayev has accepted the job offer at the bank and Varya is going to another estate to become a housekeeper. Finally, Pischik unexpectedly pays back Lubov and says that he leased his property to some Englishmen who found white clay on the land.

The final scene begins with Lubov expressing her concern about Varya and Firs. She worries because Firs is still ill and that Varya is depressed due to the loss of the estate. Lubov manages to convince Lopakhin to propose to Varya and he decides he will. Lopakhin then makes small talk with Varya about the weather and her plans; Varya pretends she doesn't know what it's about. Lopakhin admits that there is no life left in the home. Varya is even sadder, Lopakhin didn't propose to her. When the time arrives for everyone to leave, Gayev gives a speech but both Anya and Varya silence him. There is lots of crying, and Lubov tells the others that she just wants to look at the house a bit longer. Gayev then makes a random referral to billiards and everybody leaves except for Gayev and Lubov. They observe the home, cry a little bit, and then leave the home. Firs then appear on the stage talking about how his life slowly slipped away and he sits on the sofa and never moves again. The curtain closes with the sound of a tree being chopped down in the orchard.

Overall, in The Cherry Orchard there were two dominant themes. One was struggle over memory and the past and wealth was another. Struggle over memory was a dominant theme due to the fact that memory has been keeping the characters of the play from happiness. Lubov wants to forget about the present day and she just wants to go back to her old life. But the house that she lives in contains the memories of her husband that she had an affair with and her seven year old son that had drowned in a nearby river. Even for the character of Lopakhin, his memories are abhorrent also. He had a horrid childhood and was raised by peasants. Firs plays the most important role in this theme. All Firs does in the play is talk about memoirs. He talks about the "old days" before the serfs were freed. Even at the end of the play, all of the other characters had forgotten him. The next dominant theme is wealth. This is an obvious theme due to the fact that the story practically revolved around it. Characters have been trying to make more, borrowing money from others, and some are even begging for it. On page 25 of Act I Gayev said, "My sister hasn't lost the habit of throwing money about." This shows that while the Lubov is doing nothing to earn money she is spending it like crazy. Finally Lopakhin, he plays the most important role in this theme. He shows the value of hard work. He was the son of peasants who worked up to his wealth and ended up buying the orchard when Lubov went into financial trouble.

**Major Themes**
Indirect Action: Indirect Action is a technique Chekhov was most famous for. It involves action important to the play's plot occurring off-stage, not on. Instead of seeing such action happen, the audience learns about it by watching characters react to it onstage. Lopakhin's speech at the end of Act III, recounting the sale of the cherry orchard, is the most important example of indirect action in the play: although the audience does not see the sale, the entire play revolves around this unseen action.

Mixing of Genres: Traditionally, humor and tragedy have been kept separate in dramatic works. Although Chekhov is certainly not the first playwright to mix comic and tragic elements onstage, he develops this tendency by creating a play that defies classification as either one of these two dramatic genres. Works such as The Cherry Orchard, which cannot be subjected to the traditional standards of classification, have helped build new modern literary traditions through their innovation in genre.

Symbolism: There are many symbols in this play. The keys at Barbara's waist symbolize her practicality and her power. Gay's imaginary billiards game symbolizes his desire to escape. The cherry orchard symbolizes the old social order, the aristocratic home, and its destruction symbolizes change. Firs himself is a figure of time; Anya is a figure of hope. The symbols in this play are too numerous to count, but many of them hinge on the idea of the changing social order or the specific circumstance of a given character.

Irony and Blindness: Irony appears in many instances throughout the play, and when it is not used for purely comic effect, it is tightly bound to the theme of blindness. On the one hand, the positions of the character's themselves are ironic. For example, the opposite circumstances of Lopakhin, Firs, and Dunyasha point out the irony in the now supposedly free-moving class system; characters talk about and praise a system of economic mobility. Still, they cannot see the contradiction in the situations of those around them that have no opportunity to improve their standing or are criticized for attempting to do so. In other cases, the play erects ironic moments, where the power in a given scene comes from a combination of two different images. For example, in Act II, Madame Ranevsky complains loudly about how she cannot control her money, while in the same breath she allows Yasha, the most untrustworthy character, to pick up her spilled purse. The fact that she is able to talk about her weakness and neglect the safety of her money in the same breath indicates that, despite her complaints, she is still blind to much of her problem.

Social Change and Progress: Several characters address the potential difference between social change and social progress. Firs and Trophimof are two of them. Both question the utility of the Liberation. As Firs notes, it made everyone happy, but they did not know what they were happy for. Firs himself is living proof of this discrepancy: society has changed, but his life, and the lives of countless others, have not progressed. Both characters insinuate that the Liberation is not enough to constitute progress; while it was a necessary change, it was not enough to bring mankind to the idealized future Trophimof imagines. The play leaves the impression that while change has come, there is more work to be done.

Independence, Liberation, and Freedom: This play deals with the theme of independence in many different ways. Fundamentally, it demands that we ask what it is to be free. What with the Liberation, The Cherry Orchard deals with independence in a very concrete way: shortly before the beginning of the play, much of Russia'
free. The play’s characters demonstrate the different degrees of freedom that result from the Liberation. On opposing ends of this question are Lopakhin and Firs. One man has been able to take advantage of his liberation to make himself independent; the other, although he is technically free, has not changed his position at all and is subject to the whims of the family he serves, as he has always been. The difference in their situation demonstrates the observations of many Russians of the time: officially liberating a group of people is not they same as making them free if you do not also equip them with the tools they need to become independent, i.e, resources such as education and land.

Trophimof, the play's idealist, offers one definition of freedom for the audience to consider when he declines Lopakhin’s offer of money. According to Trophimof, he is a free man because he is beholden to no one and nothing more than his own concept of morality. His observations seem accurate in light of other forms of non-freedom in the play. Madame Ranevsky, for example, is not free in a very different way from Firs. She has enough assets to be able to control her own destiny, but she is a slave to her passions, spending extravagantly and making poor decisions in romance, and therefore cannot follow a higher moral code as Trophimof does. What with the combination of economic circumstances and the bizarre weaknesses of the characters, the play therefore suggests that there are two sources which control freedom and the lack thereof: economics, which comes from without, and control over oneself, which comes from within.

**Conflict in The Cherry Orchard**

Russian dramatist Anton Chekhov wrote The Cherry Orchard in which he chose to focus on the deepest desires and fears of his characters while Henrik Ibsen, considered to be the father of modern drama wrote Ghosts in which he explored and exposed the harsh reality that lay behind the many facades donned by his characters.

Both Chekhov and Ibsen spoke the ‘unspoken’ in their literary works. Through their characters, they explored many subjects that were considered taboo in their day. Many of the actions and reactions of the characters that inhabit their plays are based on the conditions of life at the time.

The central conflict of The Cherry Orchard revolves around Madame Ranevsky’s stubborn refusal to accept the merchant Lopakhin’s plan to save their heavily mortgaged estate by sacrificing their beloved cherry orchard. Ibsen’s Ghosts explores the consequences of building ‘ivory castles in moral ruins’. Helen Alving lives a lie as she hides the evils of her marriage behind a veneer of moral respectability.

Both Madame Ranevsky and Helen Alving behave in a similar way when faced with difficult situations. Their reaction to problematic events is marked by a withdrawal into illusionary worlds that are far removed from the realities of their actual lives. Illusion and self-deception are key elements that characterize the reactions of Madame Ranevsky and Helen Alving. However, Illusion is a stronger force than reality in their lives. In both these plays, the chief protagonists react to events and situations by using the force of illusions to hold their families together only to find that eventually the very fabric of their illusions have been torn apart by reality.
In Ibsen’s Ghosts, illusion and reality are set into a conflict within the story. Helen Alving’s marriage is blighted by infidelity and abuse. However, her reaction to this is to retreat into an illusory world in which she does not need to face reality. She maintains an illusion of a perfect marriage. Mrs. Alving, obsessed with keeping up appearances, tries to protect her late husband’s reputation to shield her son from the truth about Mr. Alving. However, she not only ends up living a lie and building a memorial to her husband’s false reputation, but she also ruins the lives of Oswald and Regina.

The key factor that marks Helen Alving’s reactions to difficult situations is to turn her back on reality and live a life that is in essence a lie. Although she puts up with her husband’s depravity, she sends away their seven year old son, Oswald, in the hope of saving him from his dead father’s decadence. Maintaining the illusion of a happy marriage to a noble man, she doesn't want anyone to doubt that he was a good and honorable man even after his death. As she says, “I had always before me the fear that it was impossible that the truth should not come out and be believed. That is why the Orphanage is to exist, to silence all rumours and clear away all doubt.” [1] Mrs. Alving does this to protect the children from the sin that marks their family’s history. Ultimately, when Mrs. Alving is faced with the incestuous relationship between Oswald and Regina, she has no choice but to finally face the reality she was trying to escape from. She discloses the harsh truths she had concealed to protect the children. Faced with reality at the end of the play, Mrs. Alving bitterly regrets the lies on which she has built her life. As she confesses to the priest Manders, “Yes, I was always swayed by duty and consideration for others; that was why I lied to my son, year in and year out. Oh, what a coward I have been.” [2]

Mrs. Alving tries to protect Oswald from truths that have consequences on his life, as he has got syphilis from his father.

Like Helen Alving, Madame Ranevsky in The Cherry Orchard also inhabits an illusionary world of her own creation. Both react to the changing situations in their lives by staying cocooned in a world of illusions. Like Helen Alving, Madame Ranevsky too lacks the ability to perceive the truth of her situation. Both their reactions are marked by a tendency to shun reality – Helen Alving shuns the reality of her relationship with her husband while Madame Ranevsky shuns the reality of her financial situation. She along with her family returns to the family's estate which includes an extremely large and renowned cherry orchard. Just prior to its auction, Lopakhin suggests and wishes to implement a plan to save the estate by paying the mortgage. However, Madame Ranevsky refuses as this will mean that the cherry orchard will need to be destroyed. For her, the orchard has become a symbol of her youth and childhood and she clings to these symbols of the past instead of living in and facing the reality of her present situation.

Throughout the play, Lophakin tries to make Madame Ranevsky focus on the estate so that they can find a solution to her financial problems. However, Madame Ranevsky constantly dwells in the past. Instead of trying to find a solution to her problem, she acts as if there is no problem on hand. Her energies which should have been focused on preserving the estate are spent on holding a party instead.

This shows that Madame Ranevsky is totally out of touch with reality and is very irresponsible when it comes to financial matters. She spends her money without giving a thought to the consequences of her actions. Madame Ranevsky lives a lavish lifestyle when in reality she hasn’t a dime to spare. She throws parties and hires orchestras she knows she cannot pay
for. It is this type of behavior that put Madame Ranevsky deep into debt and her estate at risk.

Madame Ranevsky’s refusal to accept the truth about her situation in life eventually leads to her downfall. At the end of the play, the estate is sold and the family leaves even as the cherry orchard is being cut down. Madame Ranevsky’s refusal to tackle problems facing her estate and family mean that she eventually loses almost everything.

Even at the end of the play it is not certain if she has completely realized the seriousness of her situation. While Helen Alving in Ghosts is forced to confront reality eventually, Madame Ranevsky remains cooched in her illusions returning to Paris and to her lover who had treated her so badly in the past. Mrs. Alving on the other hand is eventually compelled to recognize the Ghosts from her past that have prevented her from living just for the joy of life.

On seeing the reactions of Mrs. Alving and Madame Ranevsky to the changing situations in their lives, one would realise that many of their actions and behaviors are spurred by the dictates of society. Helen Alving’s self-deceit is the result of the constraints imposed by the social structure of the time. Mrs. Alving’s middle class upbringing forces her to conform to certain pre-defined ideals. These ideals compel her to deceive others around her, and, most importantly, force her to deceive herself. One can see here that the upper and middle classes were very concerned with the issue of reputation. Unlike today, when a divorce is socially accepted, in the past, people involved in such scandals were often shunned by society.

Like Helen Alving, many of Madame Ranevsky’s actions and reactions also spring from social compulsions. She is a victim of social change. Due to this, former serfs gained wealth and status in society. On the other hand, the aristocratic class was impoverished. They could not tend their estates as they could no longer exploit the serfs for cheap labor. Society was still reverberating with the effect of these social reforms when Chekhov wrote forty years after the mass emancipation. Madame Ranevsky’s inability to tackle problems related to her estate and family mean that she loses almost everything. Her fate can be seen as a telling comment on the fading aristocracy who are unwilling to adapt to the changes in Russia.

Anton Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard portrays the social conflict present at the turn of the century in Russia. Many of Madame Ranevsky’s reactions are the result of her social background. She conforms to society’s expectations of how the aristocratic class behaves and cannot change or adapt to changing traditional values.

In the plays, The Cherry Orchard, by Anton Chekhov and Ghosts by Henrik Ibsen, the protagonists’ reactions to changing situations are marked by a combination of illusion and reality and this is responsible for shaping the plot of the respective stories. The ability of the characters to reject or accept illusions, along with the social motifs and compulsions that motivate their decision, leads to their individual downfall.

**The Cherry Orchard as a Comic Masterpiece**

Henri Bergson, the French philosopher, theorized in the essay collection *Comedy*, that laughter springs from our perception of “something mechanical encrusted upon the living.” The comic figure, Bergson maintained, is rigid or inflexible in circumstances that demand a
resiliency of the mind or body. Moreover, laughter increases through a character’s repeated failures to alter a rigid behavior, for it is repetition that transforms mere rigidity into the semblance of something mechanical, like a jack-in-a-box. If Bergson’s ideas have any validity, there is no writer who possessed a greater sense of the comic than Anton Chekhov. Nor is that sense more fully revealed than in his last play, The Cherry Orchard, generally considered his greatest work.

From the outset, Chekhov designed the play as comedy. In a letter to his wife, Olga, quoted in Chekhov in Performance: A Commentary on the Major Plays, he said that it was to “be funny, very funny, at least in conception.” Furthermore, as his later correspondence indicates, he was convinced he had done what he intended. Writing to Lilina, wife to the Moscow Art Theater’s great director, Konstantin Stanislavsky, he claimed that, “in places,” The Cherry Orchard was “even a farce.” Stanislavsky and his co-director, Nemirovich-Danchenko, as they had with other Chekhov plays, chose to interpret the play as much more serious stuff than farce. On stage, they weighed it down as a serious drama, advertising it as such, much to Chekhov’s annoyance. The playwright had never felt that either man had fully understood his plays, and he often bristled at their interpretations—yet he could hardly argue with the acclaim their theater won him. Chekhov’s adherence to realism, his objectivity, made it difficult for his contemporaries to see his characters in the kaleidoscopic light in which he cast them. In The Cherry Orchard, as in all his comedies, he created characters who confront serious, often insoluble problems. From one perspective, they do elicit sympathy, even pity, no matter how passive or inept they may also seem. If their suffering is the main element the audience perceives, the comic impulse is suppressed, for, as Bergson noted, laughter is really only possible when there is an “absence of feeling.” Farce, most particularly, depends on a hardening of the heart, an emotional distance that allows uninhibited laughter, often at the expense of a character’s misfortune or suffering.

Some great comic writers, including William Shakespeare, have used various methods to prevent an audience from feeling too much empathy—comic asides, for example, or mistaken identities arising from the use of disguise. Chekhov, ever true to the limits of realism, uses no such devices. As a result, as J. L. Styan suggested in Chekhov in Performance, he risked misinterpretation: “Farce, which prohibits compassion for human weakness, and tragedy, which demands it, are close kin. The truth is that The Cherry Orchard is a play that treads the tightrope between them, and results in the ultimate form of the special dramatic balance we know as Chekhovian comedy.”

The Cherry Orchard, depicting the passing world of twilight Russia (before the country’s casualty-ridden involvement in both World Wars and its Communist Revolution), certainly has a tragic backdrop. Sometimes, when it cannot be repressed, an anxious awareness of that passing wells up in the characters, but it does not change them. Only Lopakhin really adapts, because to find his place in the new world, he must help destroy the old. He is not mercenary or callous, however, just practical. Although he has only a commercial interest in Mrs. Ranevsky’s property, he is genuinely respectful towards her, partly from habitual reverence that typified the Russian peasant class from which he springs. Initially, he even tries to help her, but her inability to take action finally forces him to buy her land himself. In doing so, he severs the last invisible strings of class deference, ties that bind another character, the old manservant, Firs, until death. The play confirms Lopakhin’s resourcefulness, his adaptability. He is, primarily, a flexible character, and is not therefore comical, except perhaps in his still-born efforts at wooing Varya.
The central symbol of the old Russia is *The Cherry Orchard*. In his way, Peter Trofimov, the perennial student, perceives it as such, but he sees nothing of worth in the ways of the past. The orchard only reminds him of human misery. He speaks of the ghosts of the serfs to Anya: Can’t you see human beings looking at you from every cherry tree in your orchard, from every leaf and every tree trunk? Don’t you hear their voices? His solution is not to cut the orchard down, but rather to run from it, into “ineffable visions of the future.” He is a Utopian dreamer, as impractical and inflexible as Mrs. Ranevsky and her brother, and, therefore, unlike Lopakhin, he is more than slightly ridiculous. *The Cherry Orchard* is not simply an emblem of a Russia that has passed. As Styan suggested, “it represents an inextricable tangle of sentiments, which together comprise a way of life and an attitude to life.” Its white cherry blossoms remind Mrs. Ranevsky and her brother, Gayev, of their youthful purity and innocence. To them, the orchard is a thing of great and enduring beauty, and they find Lopakhin’s proposal to replace it with vacation cottages “vulgar.” For Firs, the orchard is “an inviolable aesthetic symbol of the traditional order.” Anya, on the other hand, drawn by her heart to Trofimov, accepts the student’s dream of a future happiness, despite Trofimov’s inconvenient belief that they must transcend love and practice celibacy to prepare for it.

On a more mundane level, the orchard is simply a white elephant. No one harvests its fruit, and, in fact, no one even enters it, except the anonymous, unseen woodsman who starts felling its trees in the last act. And while the orchard may be glimpsed through the windows of the house, it is the house itself that is the play’s true setting, “the centre and heart of the play,” as J. B. Priestley claimed in his text *Anton Chekhov*. Three of *The Cherry Orchard*’s four acts take place inside the house, and two of them, the first and the last, occur in the same room—the nursery. It is the setting for both the arrival and departure of Mrs. Ranevsky and her entourage. The room at first vibrates with life, brimming with the excitement of the reunited family members, who animate the room with their memories and maudlin but joyous greetings to the furniture. In contrast, at the end, it is stripped of all its furnishings, all signs of life, except some odds and ends; the flotsam of the past, now abandoned, like Firs, who seems indistinguishable from the discarded sofa on which he lies immobilized at the final curtain. Staged, the room has a more immediate impact than the orchard, for it is actually present, unlike *The Cherry Orchard*, which remains indirectly experienced through words alone.

The orchard’s presence is most keenly felt in the last act, in the sound of the axe that has begun its destruction. The most poignant and haunting presence in the play is not even identified with a locale. It comes in the sound of the breaking string, heard first in the second act, and then at the end of the play. Maurice Valency argued in *The Breaking String: The Plays of Anton Chekhov*, that the broken string is “the golden string that connected man with his father on earth and his father in heaven, the age-old bond that tied the present to the past.” In general terms, it represents the passing of a way of life, but it relates, too, to the play’s specific actions, especially Lopakhin’s purchase of Mrs. Ranevsky’s estate. The act gives him an overwhelming sense of emancipation, expressed in his triumphant monologue at the close of Act Three: “I’ve bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren’t even allowed in the kitchen. I must be dreaming. I must be imagining it all. It can’t be true.”

Most of the other characters suffer some anxious and painful moments in their ritual passage into the changing but uncertain world that the play foreshadows. Some, like Yepichodov and Charlotte, experience an identity crisis, while others, like Gayev ar
disoriented and confused. Yet, as Francis Fergusson claimed in *The Idea of a Theater: A Study of Ten Plays*, while *The Cherry Orchard* is “a theater poem of the suffering of change,” it is free “from the mechanical order of the thesis or intrigue” play. The tragic implications of the change drift through the comedy like the ghost of Mrs. Ranevsky’s mother in the orchard, but they are not shaped into a single catastrophe and momentous reversal of fortune. The tragic elements are simply too diffuse and, like the breaking string, too distant to be distinct or fully understood. They are also muted and even subverted by the foreground elements that provide a comic counterpoint to the tragic backdrop. Much of the play’s action remains routine and mundane, even trivial. Behind a facade of politeness, there is a quiet tension between those who fear change and those who welcome it, but when tension surfaces as anger or open aggression, Chekhov releases the pressure through some sort of comic safety valve. For example, in the third act, Trofimov, stung by Mrs. Ranevsky’s attack on his perceptions of man/woman relationships and his childish whining, exits with theatrical indignation, only to fall down some offstage stairs to a chorus of laughter. So, too, in the second act, when the frustrated Lopakhin calls Mrs. Ranevsky “a silly old woman” because she will not agree to his plans for the estate, Gayev defuses the situation with his billiard game prattle and non-sequitur confession to a fruit candy addiction.

Most of the play’s characters are idiosyncratic, and some, like Gayev and Pishchik, are wonderfully eccentric. Most, said Priestley, if “coldly considered,” are also at least slightly contemptible: “Madame Ranevsky is a foolish woman only too anxious to return to a worthless young lover; Gayev is an amiable ass who talks too much; Anya is a goose and her Trofimov a solemn windbag; Lopakhin, the practical self-made man, is confused and unhappy; Epiphodov a clumsy idiot; Dunyasha a foolish girl; Yasha an insufferable jumped-up lad; and Firs far gone in senility.” However, Chekhov never leaves any one of them exposed to such a naked light for very long; he is too congenial for that, too, as Priestley stated, “tender and compassionate.” Each character also seems to have a comic foil or nemesis, Firs and Kashka, for example, or Charlotte and Yepichodov. All also ride some sort of mental hobby horse that sporadically sends them off the track of conversation onto private, incongruous pathways, i.e., amusing non-sequiturs. Most, at the point of self-awareness, behave exactly like a jack-in-the-box, never able to suppress their foolish impulse. For example, in Act Two, Mrs. Ranevsky, berates herself for her careless waste of money, then immediately drops her purse on the ground and a moment later bestows one of her last gold coins on a panhandler. Meanwhile, Yepichodov, ever mindful of his role as an unfortunate clod, stumbles into furniture as if to prove he was not miscast for the part.

It is possible to probe such characters to reveal some darker or more sinister personality traits. Beverly Hahn, for one, argued in *Chekhov: A Study of the Major Stories and Plays* that the weaknesses of Mrs. Ranevsky and Gayev, their lack of will, “amounts to a complex sense of guilt and self-degradation which is both personal and yet obscurely the product of their situation of privilege.” The Moscow Art Theatre audience of 1904 came from and returned to the world depicted in Chekhov’s plays, and they experienced such inner guilt first hand—plus all the pain, sorrow, and pathos that Stanislavsky felt was in *The Cherry Orchard* and that scholars can still expose. But a reader or viewer of the play need not be quite so myopic. There is sufficient distance from Chekhov’s world to free laughter from inhibition, restoring the comic balance that Chekhov felt was somehow missed in his own time.

**“The Cherry Orchard” : Major Themes/ Main Conflicts**

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Change is the law of the cosmos. The clock of time moves on persons, and things come into existence, grow up, mature, decline and go to their resting place. So is the schedule with the socio-political orders and systems. Clash between feudalism and capitalism, tradition and modernity as well as aesthetic beauty and commercialism is central to “The Cherry Orchard.”

“The Cherry Orchard” turned over its new leaf as a debut on the stage in 1904. At that time Russia was ruled over by the Tsar dynasty. Only thirteen years later, the Tsar was overthrown through a putsch.

The process of socio-political U-turns in Russia, as in the rest of the world, had kicked off showing conspicuous indications of great vicissitude in keeping with the times. The old order of feudal supremacy was on its last breaths. Agro-based economy amalgamated the Business or Agro-based economy commingled with the industrialism. The balance of power was shifting from feudal sway to industrialism/commercialism. Huge estates and plazas were selling out and were being put to commercial use.

In “The Cherry Orchard”, the change has been symbolized in the sale of Gaye family’s cherished and renowned cherry orchard. With the passage of time, when Chekhov started jotting down this play unlike his contemporaries, he gave this theme a hilarious twist by highlighting the ludicrous facet of the ongoing process of socio-political change in Russia. Speaking of the social custom, Firs, the old servant of Lyubov laments:

“That’s it! The peasants belonged to the masters and masters belonged to the peasants. You knew where you were. Now, its all topsy-turvy can’t make any sense of it.”

The revolution and the war metamorphosed everything. The post war Russia was an innovative Russia with a new political and social setup. Symptoms of the imminent revolution make “The Cherry Orchard” a political play.

Lopakhin, who comes of a serf family, represents the whole plebeian who was emerging into an industrialist class. Lyubov and her family with all its pages represent the feudal class that is, at recent times, eradicated in Russia and is not struggling for its survival on its own.

Lyubov’s ménage and clan is under the obligation of their creditors. They are to pay their debt, which they cannot so their sole asset “The Cherry Orchard” is going to be sold under the law Gayev says that they are expecting some funds from Yeroslav. On Lopakhin’s enquiry, he reveals that the money is in the region of ten or fifteen thousand roubles. The amount is evidently like a drop in the bucket, which have now run into seven digits. This exasperates Lopakhin as he cries out,

“......With all due respect, you are the most frivolous, unbusiness like people I have ever met in my life.”

Lopakhin’s statement makes his sharp sagacity apparent in business field and impotence of the feudalism that was prevailing at that time.

In the present case, the renunciation is the penalty, Gayev’s clan ought to reimburse for their reckless and lavish spending. It would not unjust to say that in the present case, the loss of tradition and estates came as a blessing, otherwise they would be soon p
Chekhov wants to convey the moral persuasion through his theme that sacrifice of aesthetic value is a necessary evil for the gratification in the recent world. "The Cherry Orchard" is a superb source of aesthetic enjoyment that is going to be put to havoc for purely materialistic interests. It is to be hewed down for building dachas. This gloomy transition reflects the on-going socio-political transition in Russia that is the striking theme of "The Cherry Orchard."

"The Cherry Orchard“ : Genre of the Play

A Comedy or Tragedy

Anton Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard serves as a glimpse into the lives of upper middle-class Russians at the turn of the century. The play at times seems to be a regretful account of past mistakes, but at other times it seems very comedic. The final outcome tends to classify it primarily as a tragedy with no shortage of light hearted moments. It invokes many feelings within the reader: joy, regret, pity, and anger are all expressed among the interactions of several characters with rich and complicated personalities. The reader finds some parts of the characters appealing and some parts disgraceful. This complexity enhances the authenticity of the roles and in turn augments the reader’s emotional involvement.

Whether “The Cherry Orchard” is a comedy or tragedy, is a serious and a bit ambiguous question about this play. Notwithstanding, some lavishly humorous situations, characters and dialogues, “The Cherry Orchard” is barely like a comedy in the known sense. And yet Chekhov exhorted that it was a comedy and in places even a farce.

If it is a tragedy, a comparison with Aristotle’s concept of tragedy will make this ambiguity beyond question. Aristotle defined tragedy in a universal way. According to him,

“Tragedy is a representation of an action, which is serious, complete in itself and of a certain length, it is expressed in speech, made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play, it is acted not narrated and by exciting pity and fear, it gives a healthy relief to such emotions.”

During the course of 18th century, the view of tragedy made a U-turn. The realistic vogue gripped the theatres of Europe. The audience did not favour the false exploitation of the princes in tragic plots. In the Elizabethan age, the playwrights had maintained, with a few exceptions, the outlook of social theories prevalent in the society. In the recent times, endeavours are made for composing tragedies. To the Greeks, Fate or Chance was the dominating factor, to the modern world, power of the society is overwhelming. Ergo, a tragedy of today can be wrought out of the conflict between a single human being and his surroundings.

In the light of above mentioned tragedies of different ages, "The Cherry Orchard“ is not up to them. The play, in the point of fact, conforms entirely to Aristotle’s definition of comedy;

“As an imitation of characters of a lower stratum, which are not internally inferior, but whose faults and shortcomings possess something ludicrous.”
The symbolism of the sale of the cherry orchard can be sent as comical; it turns out to be a seminal icon for the memories of the family. This play is generated on seminal values of this family. No one in the family wants to see the cherry orchard go but it is ludicrous that the family does not see that the cherry orchard is going either by sale or development. Since this is a fact, it is only risible that the family should profit from the loss of the cherry orchard. The importance of seminal values should be overrun by the importance of survival. Ranyevskaya does not seem to be concerned with survival and can only see the cherry orchard as a seminal object. This is completely ridiculous and demonstrates the comical actions of Ranyevskaya. The view of the cherry orchard as seminal object also effects the true objective of the cherry orchard. Firs says:

“In the old days, forty, fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries, they used to soak them, they used to pickle them, they used to make jam out of them, and year after year.”

This caption informs the reader that the original purpose for the land was for profit. Ranyevskaya memories of the orchard as a fantastic playground disallows her to see the truth that the cherry orchard was just her parents business and it is time to change the business because times have changed. Every one of the many characters was carefully planned out to show some purpose in the message conveyed in The Cherry Orchard.

Chekhov is able to illustrate that the core of humanity is full of ludicrous emotions and ideas. The importance of the use of comedy in the play conveys with the importance of comedy in our lives. It shows the reader how the most ridiculous moments and decisions are probably the most important ones. The decisions of the characters are full of “faults that possess something ludicrous in them” which allows this to be considered a comedy. Apart from the elusive humour in “The Cherry Orchard”, Chekhov was a top-Notch humourist in his own right. He came to be known early for his divergent humour. In this play, he puts the sense of humour in on lookers and readers to a trial. As a critic proposes, “Throughout, The Cherry Orchard, Chekhov places the action on a knife edge between laughter and tears. But he intends to weigh on the side of the comic, not against it.” Another critic writes about Russians, “Russians very frequently laugh where one ought to weep.” The play, it is true, has plenty of emotional undercurrents but they are all of hilarious nature. Some of the critics have come up with sound reasons for labelling this play a comedy. To wind up the discussion, it may be concluded that there are arguments on either side. But the writer’s word counts more than what the critics say. Since Chekhov called the play on comedy, the conclusion should certainly weigh that way.

“**The Cherry Orchard**” : **Role of Mrs. Lyubov Ranevsky**

Mrs. Lyubov Ranevsky is the protagonist figure of Chekhov’s “The Cherry Orchard”. She is quinquagenarian Russian lady, the owner of the estate and the Cherry Orchard around which the story revolves. Lyubov’s life as well as her nature has alleviation of multi shades. She has stood in the way of hard realities of life many times and rather endeavoured to avert them.

A keen study of “The Cherry Orchard” denudes many facets of her personality. Anton Chekhov presents her before us as a representative of Feudal order. By the last breaths of 19th century, feudalism was dwindling and was replaced by commercialism. So, being a
representative of feudalism, she must have to face penury, melancholy and misery. As the
descendant of landlords, the current miseries are no less than an ordeal for her.

Her first name “Lyubov” means “Love” in Russian. She seems to personify love with her
generosity, magnanimity, corporeal attractiveness and hedonistic nature. She is the only
character in the play with suitor. But her amorous feelings waver her judgment frequently.
She is sanctimoniously kind hearted and genteel as well as affectionate and sincere to all. She
even adores her adopted daughter Varya and courteously behaves eve with her servants.

She has to support a large family that proves her a generous lady by nature. Her family
includes her brother Leonid Gayev who has several intriguing verbal habits. Varya, her
adopted daughter who is at the apex of her youth, her biological daughter who is a teenager,
Charlotte, Anya the governess girls an old servants, Yasha, a young man servant and
Dunyasha, a maid servant. She also splurges money on the beggars munificently. She was
thrown from the sky to the earth due to her lavish habits. In act IV, Gayer advises her,

“There was no need to give them your purse Lyubov. You should not have done that you
really should not”.

Lyubov replies,

“I could not help myself! I could not help it!”

ntle, beautiful orchard!...... my life ...... my you ...... My happiness... goodbye .... Farewell!”

Her love for aesthetic beauty has been manifested through her love for cheery orchard. To
wind up her character, we can assert her with veracious representative figure of feudalism in
Russia in the last breaths of 19th century. The most touching figure in a comedy also
stimulates the reader's commiseration. Lyubov’s character is the one and only character that
fabricates the play as “A blend of smiles and tears.”

“The Cherry Orchard” : The Title of the Play

Relationship between Lyubov and Cherry Orchard

Anton Chekhov’s play The Cherry Orchard introduces readers to a pre-Revolution Russian
family faced with the impending sale of their estate, the cherry orchard. The major character
Lyubov Andreyev in the play is the possessor of the cherry orchard. It is in the play that
Lyubov must ultimately decide whether to allow her cherry orchard to be cut down to make
room for villas or to sell the entire estate to pay off her debts. It is her unconditional love for
both the cherry orchard and what it symbolizes to her that allows her to put the estate up for
sale rather than have the cherry orchard cut down.

Although she is a constituent of the Russian upper class, Lyubov is hopelessly out of touch
with reality and very irresponsible when it comes to finances. She often throws money around
as though there are no consequences to her actions. After her husband died and her boy was
tragically drowned at the cherry orchard, s

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actuality she hasn’t a dime to spare. She throws parties and hires orchestras she knows she cannot pay for. It is this type of behaviour that put Lyubov deep enough into debt to where her beloved estate has been put at risk.

To Lyubov the cherry orchard means so much more than the acres and acres of beautiful cherry trees and rivers; so much more than the piece of land that was featured in the encyclopaedia. To her it represents her sense of nostalgia, a longing for the past. It is the place where her grandparents lived. Her mother and father lived there as well. It reminds Lyubov of her youth. When she looks at the cherry trees she does not just see branches and blossoms, she sees a time when she walked through the orchard with her mother as a young girl. She says “I used to sleep here when I was little...and here I am like a child again.” Lyubov’s innocence also remains a part of the cherry orchard, for as a child she did not own serfs or squander her family’s money. Even though the cherry orchard invokes thoughts of her lost husband and son, she still treasures it. The cherry orchard a piece of Lyubov’s heart.

Because the cherry orchard means so much to Lyubov, it is especially hard for hero come to grips with the fact that she has two options neither of which suits her liking. Because of all the debt that she acquired so irresponsibly, it has become inevitable thither relationship with the cherry orchard will never be the same. Lyubov will only be able to maintain ownership of the cherry orchard if she has the cherry trees cut down and builds summer villas in their place. Her other option would be to sell the cherry orchard. Since she has lived on the estate all her life and loves it so dearly, Lyubov never even considers cutting down the cherry orchard. In fact she believes that to be a “vulgar” notion. Not only would the land that belonged to her family be trodden on by hundreds of visitors every summer, but also the orchard that held her childhood memories as well as those of the rest of her family would exist no longer. Because Lyubov refuses to insult the integrity of the estate by means of summer villas, the cherry Orchard ultimately goes up for sale. Lyubov can live with this only because she assures herself that the condition of the estate will be maintained. In essence, Lyubov cares more about the cherry orchard than herself and her family. If she were more concerned for herself and her family then she would have built the villas.

Unfortunately for Lyubov, her hopes to keep the cherry orchard intact were dashed when she found out that Lopakhin bought it and planned to have the villas built anyway. She was so crushed when she learned of this that she could barely stand up. She wept bitterly, consoled only by the fact that she could return to Paris and that she and her daughter, Anya, would be able to begin a new life together. Had Lyubov not loved the cherry orchard so dearly, she would have allowed the cherry trees to be cut down and the villas built, but because she did love it so, she risked her own welfare to keep it intact. Although the cherry orchard ultimately came down anyway, where it not for Lyubov’s love it would have never even had a chance.

**The cherry orchard : An epitome of modern theatrical technicalities**

Chekhov is one of Russia’s many important literary figures, and one of the greatest playwrights of modern times. He won the Pushkin Prize and he is known for his short stories and his plays, works that often combine elements of both comedy and tragedy. While works reflect the frequently turbulent developments specific to his homeland, their lasting appeal
lies in Chekhov's talent for exploring universally human situations with such grace and
dexterity.

Traditionally, humour and tragedy have been kept separate in dramatic works. Although
Chekhov is certainly not the first playwright to mix comic and tragic elements on stage, he
develops this tendency by creating a play that defies classification as either one of these two
dramatic genres. Works such as The Cherry Orchard, which cannot be subjected to the
traditional standards of classification, have helped build new modern literary traditions
through their innovation in genre.

Chekhov changed the theatrical world with his plays. He was often disappointed when his
plays were performed as tragedies; although each work has sad elements in it, Chekhov
believed that this darker side of the plays should in no way undercut the immensely funny
comic elements, which pervade even in the seemingly darkest moments. This confusion of the
comic and tragic genres is one of Chekhov's important contributions not only to theatre, but
also to literature in general.

Indirect Action is a technique Chekhov was most famous for. It involves action important to
the play's plot occurring off-stage, not on. Instead of seeing such action happens, the
audience learns about it by watching characters react to it on the stage. Lopakhin's speech at
the end of Act III, recounting the sale of the cherry orchard, is the most important example of
indirect action in the play: although the audience does not see the sale, the entire play
revolves around this unseen action.

Anya's criticism of her mother's overspending in France is one of The Cherry Orchard's many
examples of indirect action. The action described in the speech has not taken place on the
stage, and is therefore indirect; the play revolves around the character's on-stage reactions
to such off-stage action, for although this sort of action is not seen, it actually drives the plot.
Lopakhin's opening speech is another example of indirect action, which both informs the
audience of the past and manoeuvres the development of the action.

Irony appears in many instances throughout the play, and when it is not used for purely
comic effect, it is tightly bound to the theme of blindness. On the one hand, the positions of
the character's themselves are ironic. For example, the opposite circumstances of Lopakhin,
Firs, and Dunyasha point out the irony in the now supposedly free-moving class system;
characters talk about and praise a system of economic mobility. Still, they cannot see the
contradiction in the situations of those around them that have no opportunity to improve their
standing or are criticized for attempting to do so. In other cases, the play erects ironic
moments, where the power in a given scene comes from a combination of two different
images. For example, in Act II, Madame Ranevsky complains loudly about how she cannot
control her money, while in the same breath she allows Yasha, the most untrustworthy
character, to pick up her spilled purse. The fact that she is able to talk about her weakness
and neglect the safety of her money in the same breath indicates that, despite her
complaints, she is still blind to much of her problem.

Symbolism is also a major tool in the hands of the playwright. In "The Cherry Orchard" many
symbols are employed for thematic clarification. The keys at Barbara’s waist symbolize her
practicality and her power. Gay's imaginary billiards game symbolizes his desire to escape.
The cherry orchard symbolizes the old social order, the aristocratic hom
symbolizes change. Firs himself is a figure of time; Anya is a figure of hope. The symbols in this play are too numerous to count, but many of them hinge on the idea of the changing social order or the specific circumstance of a given character.

Chekhov is also known for the emphasis he places on dialogue and off-stage action, otherwise known as "indirect action." The most important events in Chekhov's plays do not necessarily occur on Chekhov's stage; often, the audience experiences some of the most pivotal and dramatic action not by seeing it, but by hearing about it from the characters. In this concept of indirect action is an innovation on the part of Chekhov, whose impact on theatre and literature continues even today.

"The Cherry Orchard": The Use of Symbolism

"We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are." This citation by Anais Nin articulates an essential point of view for debate about the symbolic connotation of inanimate bits and pieces, since it is our personality and our memories, which determine our character and meanings. Our feelings towards certain objects are individual, as everyone associates different things in a different manner. Insofar, "we see them as we are", since they can mirror our past, pains, hopes and our ideals. Thus they become more than just an object, but a symbol for a certain part of someone's feelings and life.

This is also the case in "The Cherry Orchard": objects as the 'nursery room', 'the bookcase' and 'the cherry orchard' take on their own symbolic life. They all share one thing in common: each one reveals something of the characters' personalities, feelings and ideals. These inanimate objects are a reflection of the characters' inner states of being. The meanings of these inanimate objects are changing analogously with the characters' change of mood, perspective and state of mind. Thus one gets the inkling that the objects are more like persons, since it is only the characters' life, which makes and keeps them alive. 'The nursery room' may be for a stupendous person without any implicit significance, but for Lopakhin and Lyubov it is a symbol for their childhood, background and past.

The nursery room reminds Lopakhin of his origins. It makes him aware that he is "just a peasant"; no matter how rich he has become or how elegant he might be dressed, his social background still remains visible for other people. After all, one "can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear", as his origins will be for good a part of his identity. For Lyubov the nursery room symbolizes her "innocent childhood". Being in this room, in which "she used to sleep when she was little" seems to bring her back to feel a part of that secure, carefree life and makes her feel "little again".

The bookcase has the same effect on her; all her troubles seem to be far away and she feels pure "happiness". Gayev's 'relationship' to the bookcase is less personal, as he doesn't associate a particular personal memory with it. He considers it rather as an object, which has its own personality; hence, though it is "an inanimate object, true, but still -- a bookcase"! The way he sees it is reminiscent of a hero, as it has for already hundred years "devoted itself to the highest ideals of goodness and justice" and has never deceived anyone. Being constantly and unshakably true to its 'principles', it was a source, from which "several generations of their family" have drawn courage and hope "in a better future". In the course of time a lot of things have changed: some people are dead, Gayev and Lyubov not...
adolescent, and the estate is probably going to be sold. However, the bookcase not being subject to any rules or changes thus becomes for Gayev a symbol of consistency and security.

The central symbol of "The Cherry Orchard", as the title might suggest, is the cherry orchard itself. The cherry orchard does not only represent an inanimate object, but it is the centre of the characters' world. Their lives could be divided into the era "before the cherry orchard was sold" and into the era after it. With this change the symbolic meaning of the cherry orchard before and after the sale also changes. The cherry orchard 'before the sale' plays a part in each of the characters' past; but it seems foremost to be part of Lyubov mind, through which the cherry orchard takes on his own symbolic life, as its symbolic meaning changes with the changes in her mind. She "can't conceive to live without the cherry orchard", as almost her whole past and memories are connected to it. Looking at it seems to revive the memories of her "happy childhood" and makes time stand still, as if "nothing has changed" in her life. In those days her attitude towards life was innocent and "bold", as she wasn't yet "able to foresee or expect anything dreadful". She felt like the cherry orchard, "after the dark, stormy autumn and the cold winter, young and joyous again"; but now, she seems to have lost this "power of vision" and her naive view of life. That's might be the reason for her to see the cherry orchard in such an illusory light. It had become a refugee place, where she hides to escape from reality, her "problems" and "sins". The cherry orchard for her embodies a kind of paradise, into which her 'unhappy past' does not enter, but only her 'happy past'. She doesn't want to let go the cherry orchard, because she doesn't want to let go her 'happy past'. As long as the cherry orchard exists, her childhood feelings seem to continue to still exist for real. To sale the cherry orchard would mean to erase that beloved part of her life and thus sell her, too.

However, the irony is that she escapes from her 'unhappy past' to a place just like the cherry orchard, which magic only lives through the past itself. In as much as the cherry orchard represents a kind of 'Garden Eden' for her, it at the same time also is a "burden", which rests on her shoulders. As long as she continues to stick to the orchard, she won't "forget her past" and won't thus be able to create a new future.

"To begin to live in the present, one must first atone for his past and be finished with it". Unlike Lyubov, her daughter, Anya, already reached that conclusion and is willing to "leave" this burden behind her; her "love" for the cherry orchard has vanished, as it is part of her past life and has therefore nothing to do any longer with her present and future.

'The cherry orchard after the sale' thus becomes a symbol for renewal and a new beginning for the life of each character in the play: Lopakhin purchasing the estate go table to get rid of his origins. "Gay with life and wealth", he has freed himself from being only the grandson and son of serfs, who used to work on this estate. Now he has become the owner of that place and with the cutting down of the cherry orchard, he is going to leave his past and origins behind him, creating a "new living world". Also Lyubov's "burden" of the past seems now to have become lighter; "her nerves are better" and she is going to leave for Paris, since she might have recognized that it's finished long ago and that there is no turning back".

Gayev has finally "calmed down", too and is going to be an employee of a bank. Varya is going to leave for a new job, and Anya and Trofimov are gladly stepping towards their "new life". Also the rest of the characters have to start a new life in a new place. When they leave there won't be a soul in this place" anymore. May be not in this place, thi
in another place, since there are in the world "many, many wonderful places", on which one can "plant a new orchard".

**The characters in the cherry orchard do not learn, why?**

**The cherry orchard is a struggle between the characters’ incompatibility. Make a convincing case.**

**The world of the cherry orchard is consisting of people with difference in their behaviours, comment.**

The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov is a dramatic play set at a cherry orchard in Russia. Some of the characters that help set the dramatic setting of the play are Lyubov, Lopakhin, and Pishchik. These characters find life difficult because they fail to understand each other and because they passively submit to their environmental situations without making an effort to rise above them.

Lyubov is the owner of the cherry orchard, and has lived there her whole life. The estate has been handed down through the generations, and Lyubov has been left to take care of it. Since Lyubov has grown up wealthy, she has not learned to manage her money wisely. She wastefully spends and hands out money: "I haven't any money, my dove...oh, very well...give it to him, Leonid." She does not know how to work in order to regain the money she has spent. She finds herself going into debt and not being able to pay the mortgage. These problems grow so severe that she is forced to sell the orchard.

Lopakhin offers to help Lyubov and her family to get them out of debt. He suggests several ideas such as tearing down buildings and the house, and renting homes on the land that the cherry orchard now grows. He cares not about the sentimental value the orchard holds, but the money that could be made selling it. When told the personal value of the orchard, Lopakhin replies: "The only remarkable thing about this cherry orchard is that it's very big." He also says: "There's a crop of cherries once every two years...that's hard to get rid of...nobody buys them." Though this does not make Lopakhin a greedy or uncaring person, one might think this is quite awkward.

Pishchik on the other hand is only out for himself. He too was once wealthy, but had problems spending his money. He begs for money instead of working or earning it, creating even larger debts. When he asks Lyubov for 240 roubles to pay for his mortgage, she agrees, but is turned away by Gayev's. Pishchik then relies on luck and a lottery ticket his wife gave him. Throughout the story, he refers to gimmicks in order to make money: "Well-a horse is a fine animal-You can sell a horse." He also talks about counterfeiting money in order to repay his debts. It is not until the end of the story when his luck pays off by finding a large sum of money, which he is able to pay all his debts.

The Cherry Orchard shows several examples of characters that do not learn or react to their mistakes and surroundings. Lyubov and Pishchik both have problems spending and managing their money. Pishchik, though, relies on luck. Lopakhin, on the other hand, is not sympathetic to people's feelings and is out to make money. These characters find life
fail to understand each other and because they passively submit to their environmental situations without making an effort to rise above them.

**Describe the cultural conflict, independence and social changes as the basic themes of the play.**

Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* projects the cultural conflict of the turn of the twentieth century of Russia. With a historical allusion, Chekhov exhibited the changing Russia with "slice of life" in his play. *The Cherry Orchard* is not only a depiction of Russian life but also an understatement of changing traditional value. Cultural conflict itself is an abstraction. To explain it, it is the traditional culture that is unable to resist the invading one.

In the play, each character has his or her own personality, which symbolizes the individual social levels of Russian society. But these characters distinguish themselves into two sides, which are conservators and investors; therefore, they conflict each other in opinion. The following developments will begin with an outlook of *The Cherry Orchard* to acknowledge the basic concept of the play. The second part is culture in change that explains historical background of modern Russia. Third by a contrasting method, the main idea of this part is an illustration of conflict.

The play deals with the theme of independence in many different ways. Fundamentally, it demands that we ask what it is to be free. What with the Liberation, *The Cherry Orchard* deals with independence in a very concrete way: shortly before the beginning of the play, much of Russia's population was not free. The play's characters demonstrate the different degrees of freedom that result from the Liberation. On opposing ends of this question are Lopakhin and Firs. One man has been able to take advantage of his liberation to make himself independent; the other, although he is technically free, has not changed his position at all and is subject to the whims of the family he serves, as he has always been. The difference in their situation demonstrates the observations of many Russians of the time: officially liberating a group of people is not the same as making them free if you do not also equip them with the tools they need to become independent, i.e., resources such as education and land.

Trofimov, the play's idealist, offers one definition of freedom for the audience to consider when he declines Lopakhin's offer of money. According to Trofimov, he is a free man because he is beholden to no one and nothing more than his own concept of morality. His observations seem accurate in light of other forms of non-freedom in the play. Madame Ranevsky, for example, is not free in a very different way from Firs. She has enough assets to be able to control her own destiny, but she is a slave to her passions, spending extravagantly and making poor decisions in romance, and therefore cannot follow a higher moral code as Trofimov does. What with the combination of economic circumstances and the bizarre weaknesses of the characters, the play therefore suggests that there are two sources which control freedom and the lack thereof: economics, which comes from without, and control over oneself, which comes from within.

Several characters address the potential difference between social change and social progress. Firs and Trofimov are two of them. Both question the utility of the Liberation. As Firs notes, it made everyone happy, but they did not know what they were happy for. Firs himself is living proof of this discrepancy: society has changed, but his...
countless others, have not progressed. Both characters insinuate that the Liberation is not enough to constitute progress; while it was a necessary change; it was not enough to bring mankind to the idealized future Trofimov imagines. The play leaves the impression that while change has come, there is more work to be done.

“**The Cherry Orchard**” : **Social Realism**

The history of the early twentieth century Russian society is the history of social transition, transformation. The late 19th century Russian society was struggling to be free from the shibboleth of the dying feudal aristocracy. In parallel to this struggle there was also progressive change which hastened the dawn of a mercantile middle class. At every time in the chapter of social history, a single class can’t maintain its supremacy and privileged status. With a passage of time the old social order has to die yielding place to the new emerging social order. No society remains unchanged. Every society has to transform. Each society is bound to undergo change as time passes by. It is the very nature of society to undergo change. This law of social change is applicable universally in the world.

The late 19th century Russian society witnessed the soaring success of the capitalistic middle class. At very step the middle class was on the rise. At all point this class was successful. The progressive march of this class was so strong that no obstacle was going to disturb it. Furthermore the old feudal aristocracy was not only on the immediate decline, but on the verge of extinction without levelling any remnant of it. The old feudal social order was no longer in a tenable position to dictate its ethos and to impose its ideals and norms. Surprisingly enough, this class was totally ignorant and un-habituated to adaptive evolution. A new emerging class was head over heel in love with change, with progressive social transformation. But the old dying aristocratic class was allergic to change, antipathetic to change, and unprepared to embrace the costly social transformation.

In the play The Cherry Orchard Lyubov and Gayev represent the dying aristocracy. Their heavy debt forced them to put their Orchard in auction. Their orchard was sure to be lost. However, there was a route to save it by letting it on lease for the construction of summer cottage. There was a chance for the virtually dying class to live a life of adaptation and compromise. But this class was too proud to let their orchard on lease. Lyubov and Gayev were rather ready to leave the place that to see others possessing it. They fought their last battle in their hopeless and unsuccessful attempt to save the orchard. Finally they failed. The orchard fell into the much more practical and sensible man, Lopakhin.

Lopakhin represents the victoriously emerging middle-class. A man of action he believes in the necessity to take quick action man of vision he is far busier in the plan to rise above the underprivileged class through financial and practical success. Once he belonged to the working class. He was a servant in Lyubov’s house when he was a child. Through hard-work and practical line of thinking he succeeded in earning money. With the huge amount of money he earned, he succeeded in changing himself from the working class to the middle class. Economically he became so strong that he bought the Cherry Orchard of Lyubov in auction on the highest purchase. Even the aristocratic was attracted towards him. Lyubov offered her daughter Varya’s hand to him but Lopakhin hesitated. If Lopakhin represents the practical middle class, Trofimov represents the theoretical and visionary ideals of the class committed to embrace.
Thus, the play The Cherry Orchard presents a social phenomenon which exemplifies the old decent feudal order giving way to the rapidly expanding capitalistic and mercantile middle class. As a mode of social realism the play represents the Russian society by the end of the 19th century. At that time the society was moving towards the threshold to change. Chekhov captured the reality concerning the social transformation. The displacement of Lyubov and Gayev on account of their failure to stand in the lives of compromise and adaptation illustrates a golden fact that the early 20th century Russian society bade final adieu to the last remnant of decaying feudal structure. In most of Chekhov's plays the feudal aristocrat are presented as bored, passive, dreamy and ridiculously ideal. This mode of characterization also reveals that this class has no right to occupy foreground in the social hierarchy of Russia. The middle class people are depicted as practical, sensible, painstaking, hard-working and radical as well. This line of characterization displays the fact that the playwright is in favour for the emergence of this class.

**Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard as a Comedy**

Some people have called Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard a tragedy, but there's a case to be made for it being a comedy. Anton Chekhov called The Cherry Orchard "a comedy in four acts." Of course he called The Seagull a comedy, too, even though one of the main characters commits suicide at the end. I think The Cherry Orchard really is a comedy however. It's a comedy in two senses of the word, the classical and modern senses.

It's a comedy in the classical sense that, even though things look bad for a while, they all work out in the end. Some of Shakespeare's comedies are not very funny, for example Measure for Measure, in which a corrupt judge demands relations with a novice nun in order to save her brother's life. But it's a comedy because no one dies and the characters who've tried to do what's right finally get justice. A callous fate doesn't get to wipe everybody out in a classical comedy.

No one dies tragically in The Cherry Orchard, either, although Firs, the ancient servant, dies peacefully in the home that he loves. The owners of the cherry orchard and the rest of the estate, the generous Mrs. Ranevsky and her brother Gayev, are faced with having the property sold to pay their debts. They cling to happy memories of their childhood home, and hatch all kinds of plans to save it. "Oh, my orchard!" Mrs. Ranevsky cries, "after the dark autumns and the cold winters, you're young again, full of happiness!" But once they know the property is gone for good, they soon reconcile themselves to the idea. Mrs. Ranevsky returns to Paris to take care of her hapless lover, and Gayev quickly secures a job at a bank.

Mrs. Ranevsky and Gayev even pass up the chance to save the estate by selling it for summer cottages. It's a plan proposed by their friend Lopakhin, who will even loan them the money to clear the land. Lopakhin is a wealthy businessman whose father was a serf under Mrs. Ranevsky's father. But the brother and sister refuse even to consider the scheme. "Villas and villa residents--it's so vulgar, excuse me." Mrs. Ranevsky says.

So Lopakhin ends up buying the estate at auction. How times have changed. Lopakhin can't help pointing it out, although he's a kind man. "I've bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed in the kitchen," he declares triumphantly.
And, although Mrs. Ranevsky and Gayev mourn the loss of their childhood home with all its beauty and happy memories, they know its time is gone. Former serfs have become rich by commerce. The children of past gentry must now get by as best they can. Mrs. Ranevsky asks her daughter, "Are you very pleased? You are, aren't you?" and Anya answers, "Oh, yes, I am. This is the start of a new life, Mother." Gayev adds, "It's quite true, everything's all right now."

The Cherry Orchard is also a comedy in the modern sense that it's funny. It's full of wonderful, wacky Chekhov characters. There's Yepikhodov the clerk who complains constantly, always adding, "not that I complain." There's Pischik, a neighbor, who has a great penchant for borrowing money and swallows a whole bottle of Mrs. Ranevsky's pills as a joke. "I've swallowed the lot!" he laughs. There's Yasha, the servant who fancies himself educated, and pronounces that the old servant Firs has a case of "anno domini."

Best of all there's Gayev, a good-natured man who loves to make speeches as much as everyone else hates to hear them. He congratulates a bookcase on being a hundred years old, and "educating us up to ideals of goodness and to the knowledge of a common consciousness." Later he begins, "Nature, glorious nature, glowing with everlasting radiance, so beautiful, so cold--" His nieces quickly cut him off, saying, "Uncle, you're doing it again!"

The Cherry Orchard is about how hard it can be to accept changes. It's also about how resilient people can be in the face of change. And, although a thread of sadness runs through the play, its characters are drawn with Chekhov's gentle humor. It gives us an optimistic view of humanity, which is a good thing for a comedy to do. We're left with the comforting thought that everything really is going to be all right.

**Naturalism in Search of a Genre**

Look! In the sky! It's a tragedy! No, it's a comedy! No, it's...both? This is the dilemma directors, actors, readers, and audiences alike have experienced throughout the years when reading, watching, or performing Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's final work, The Cherry Orchard. Originally written as a comedy, it was first produced as a tragedy by Konstantin Stanislavsky and The Moscow Art Theatre in 1904. The Cherry Orchard tells the story of Madame Ranevskaya, her brother Gayev, and her two daughters Varya and Anya, the family that owns the old estate and the orchard after which it is named. The family is nearly bankrupt and their estate is set to be sold at auction soon. Try as they might, they cannot earn, borrow, or even find the money they need to save their precious estate. The wealthy businessman and son of former serfs on the estate, Lopakhin, suggests that the family cut down the orchard, divide it into lots, and build rental property on the expanse. This, however, would destroy the very thing that they love the most: the orchard. In the end, the family cannot find the means to save the orchard, and so it is sold at auction to—ironically—Lopakhin, who intends to do with the land just what he suggested the family do. Insult is added to injury as his men begin chopping down the orchard even before the family has left the premises. While it cannot be denied that humor is found throughout The Cherry Orchard, neither can the underlying feeling of tragedy. Many scholars have questioned the ultimate genre of Chekhov's play, and found their answer, whether or not it was the one they expected to find.
Barricelli makes much of the “sound of a snapped string mournfully dying away” found both near the end of Act II and at the very end of Act IV (348, 380). He does not hold his opinion back and firmly resolves that “regardless of Chekhov’s own paradoxal assertions about his plays being comedies and not tragedies, is that the play in not an “undramatic drama” but indeed a tragic drama.” (115) He implores his readers to “be able to say how [the sound] got to have this meaning [of tragedy], and how it reveals it structurally within the play.” (116) Barricelli looks to Russian folklore at the time, and finds his answer.

In folklore, a player may leave his instrument behind as a “life token,” an extension of himself, and if during his absence a string breaks, this is considered evil portent. The chord that snaps involves the idea of a separable soul. One may come upon several such examples of a breaking string: “If an instrument breaks for no special reason, then there will soon be a wedding, or, according to a more widespread superstition, one must expect death.” (117)

While Barricelli goes on to state that only the latter part of the superstition applies, I believe that both are relevant. The symbolism of the heron and the owl, of which Gayev and Trofimov, the former tutor to Madame Ranevskaya’s late son, speak, can be linked to Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the Egyptian systems, the owl symbolizes death, night, cold, and passivity, while the heron symbolizes morning and the generation of life. (118) Both meanings exemplify the very balance of comedy and tragedy in The Cherry Orchard: a simple sound that forebodes of new beginnings and endings, of life and death.

Fergusson explores the poetic aspect of The Cherry Orchard. He finds that “the larger elements of the composition—the scenes or episodes, the setting, and the developing story—are composed in such a way as to make a poetry of the theatre; but the “text”, as we read it literally, is not.” (386) He never addresses the question of comedy or tragedy, but merely accepts the presence of both. He describes it as “a realistic ensemble pathos,” (383) explaining his standpoint by asserting that “the characters all suffer the passing of the estate in different ways, thus adumbrating this change at a deeper and more generally significant level than that of any individual’s experience.” (383) He takes questions the sound of the snapped string as well, calling it a “sharp, almost warning signal,” but says nothing else about it. (389) Fergusson does address the irony of the play in another way, noting that in the last act “all the characters feel, and the audience sees in a thousand way, that the wish to save the Orchard has amounted in fact to destroying it; the gatherer of its denizens to separation; the homecoming to departure.” (384) This statement is ultimately the same as the question between comedy and tragedy. Are these ironies amusing or heart-breaking? Once again we find that they are both.

Remaley questions: “Is it indeed a comedy as Chekhov claimed, or a tragedy as so many producers and critics have chosen to interpret it?” (16) This can be answered once more in the final scene of Act IV, as they are leaving the orchard forever, Madame Ranevskaya and Gayev hold each other, sobbing. Gayev is unable to say anything other than, “My sister, my sister...” (379) while Madame Ranevskaya exclaims in despair, “Oh, my dear, sweet, lovely orchard!...My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye!...Good-bye!” (379) Furthermore, in the last moment, we find that Firs, the aged and ailing valet, has been forgotten. He speaks the finals words of the play, muttering,

“They have gone...They’ve forgotten me...I’ll lie down awhile...I expect Leonid Andreich hasn’t put on his fur coat and has gone off in his overcoat.[Sig
didn’t see to it...When they’re young, they’re green!...There’s no strength left in you, nothing’s left, nothing...Ach, you...addlepate! [Lies motionless.] (380).

The audience is left with this searing and symbolic image. At this moment of solitude and death, the "sound of a snapped string" of which Barricelli spoke is heard once more, combined with the “thud of the ax far away in the orchard” (380). These concluding scenes are anything but comic. Remaley does, however, cite many instances of humor found in The Cherry Orchard. He uses the example of Yasha, Madame Ranevskaya’s manservant, who is deeply offended by Lopakhin’s champagne, yet drinks the entire bottle himself (17). Another example Remaley uses is Gayev’s rather long apostrophe to the antique bookcase:

Dear and most honoured book-case. In you I salute as existence devoted for over a hundred years to the glorious ideals of virtue and justice. In the course of the century your silent summons to creative work has never faltered, upholding through tears in several generations of our line confidence and faith in a better future and fostering in us the ideals of virtue and social consciousness. (18)

To drive his point home, Remaley quotes Ionesco, who comments that “it all comes to the same thing anyway; comic and tragic are merely two aspects of the same situation” (20). The tragic story is not made a comedy, or even neutralized, by its comedic elements, but rather it is made more tragic. It causes the reader to feel that much more for the characters, for in this they become that much more realistic. Life is ups and downs, highs and lows, tears and laughter.

In the end, all debate can be settled simply by going to Chekhov’s personal writings. Chekhov “insists that the reader understands that his play is a description of life, and the single, all-important fact which screams for attention is that life contains both the comic and the tragic, both the ludicrous and the serious, both the painless and the painful.” (Remaley, 19) He further insists that “the critic commits a serious error when he emphasizes either the sombre, pessimistic dimension or the lighter, comic dimension in his dramatic creations, for both dimensions are equally evident in life and must be equally evident in any artistic endeavour which hopes to achieve verisimilitude with life.” (Remaley, 20) Chekhov intended The Cherry Orchard to be a comedic play, which it is, yet in his naturalism it became tragic as well. In fact, he struck the very heart and soul of man existence: that happiness is pain, that sorrow can be joyful, that life is found in death, and that endings lead to beginnings.

**Genre-Bending in The Cherry Orchard**

The following genres have all had The Cherry Orchard ascribed to them by some influential critic or playwright: Comedy, Drama, Tragedy, pastoral comedy, “Chekhovian comedy.” The last genre was created specifically for the play, by Donald R. Styran; the term "pastoral" is a literary term usually denoting poems that are about shepherds, but according to Beverly Hahn, a "pastoral comedy" is the closest fit in terms of genre that The Cherry Orchard can manage. The first genre on the list is what Chekhov himself considered the play to be, as reflected in the play's subtitle: A Comedy in Four Acts. But Stanislavsky, the great director of the Moscow Arts Performing Theatre where the play was first produced, disagreed. He thought the play was a drama, and directed it as such. This annoyed Chekhov to no end. Especially irksome to the playwright was the way Stanislavsky stretched out the fourth Act to
forty minutes in length, in order to heighten the emotional impact of Ranevsky's final departure. According to Chekhov, the Act should have lasted no more than twelve.

There is a fine line between pathos and comedy; as Richard Peace notes, they both involve the build-up and then release of emotional tension. The difference between is often dependent upon whether we closely sympathize with a given character's predicament or whether we maintain a certain distance from that predicament. The Cherry Orchard walks a fine line between the two. Where Chekhov may cross the line from comedy to pathos is in the amount of attention he gives to Ranevsky in terms of character development. She is, next to the orchard itself, the largest presence in the play, and thus draws the attention of readers. She is a sympathetic character, and furthermore is the one character who seems to escape the irony which distances us from the rest of the characters in the play. This has prompted some critics and readers have seen Ranevsky as a tragic hero. The play's structuring of time supports this interpretation, as well; it flows from the beginning towards a fixed end-point in the future; this fixed time frame is typical of tragedy.

Others, however, have taken Chekhov's side in the debate. And even though the subject matter of the play may appear serious, we can see that Chekhov mixes both comic elements and tragic elements in the play. First of all, though the end of the play is far from upbeat, the central character Ranevsky is alive, healthy, and perhaps better off than she was before, having the chance to leave her past behind her. Secondly, there is an element of vaudeville in the play; Yephikodov is a buffoon, and when Varya hitting Lopakhin is pure slapstick. Also, it must be noted much of the humor in The Cherry Orchard does not translate nearly as well as the symbolism. Russian culture, like any culture, has its own unique sense of humor; the challenge of translating Chekhov's jokes into the English idiom may be the main reason why there have been so many translations (90), not one of which has proven to be perfectly satisfactory. And no matter how good a translation is, it will never catch, for example, the pun on Yephikodov's words when he hands his bouquet of flowers to Dunyasha in Act One; he intends to say," allow me to communicate to you," but the word he uses in the original Russian, prisovokupit, which is a little too close to sovokupit, which means "to copulate," especially when directed towards the woman he wants to marry.
Bertolt Brecht was born on February 10, 1898, in the medieval city of Augsburg, part of the Bavarian section of the German Empire. Married in 1897, his father was a Catholic and his mother a Protestant. Brecht was their first child, baptized as Eugen Bertolt Friedrich Brecht. His father, Bertolt Friedrich Brecht, worked in a paper factory. His mother, Wilhelmine Friederike Sophie Brezing, was ill with breast cancer most of his young life. He had one brother, Walter, who was born in 1900.

Brecht was a sickly child, having a congenital heart condition and a facial tic. As a result, he was sent to a sanitarium to relax. At age six he attended a Protestant elementary school (Volksschule) and at age ten a private school, The Royal Bavarian Realgymnasium (Koeniglich-Bayerisches Realgymnasium). Like most students, he was educated in Latin and the humanities, later being exposed to Nietzsche and other thinkers. He suffered a heart attack at the age of twelve but soon recovered and continued his education.

Significantly, Brecht was exposed at a young age to Luther's German translation of the Bible, a text considered instrumental in the development of the modern German language. Quotes from and references to the Bible abound throughout Brecht's work and can be found most particularly in Mother Courage and Her Children in the mouth of the chaplain.

While in school he began writing, and he ended up co-founding and co-editing a school magazine called The Harvest. By age sixteen, he was writing for a local newspaper and had written his first play, The Bible, about a girl who must choose between living and dying but saving many others. He was later almost expelled at age eighteen for dissenting about it being necessary to defend his country in time of war. By nineteen, he had left school and started doing clerical work for the war, prevented from more active duty due to health problems.

In 1917, he resumed his education, this time attending Ludwig Maximilian Universitaet in Munich, where he matriculated as a medical student. By this time, his mother was heavily drugged with morphine because of her progressing cancer. He started to write Baal at this time, a play concerned with suffering caused by excessive sexual pleasures. It sensationaly depicted what were considered immoral attitudes at the time.

Brecht's own sex life is fascinating in many ways. He is thought to have had no fewer than three mistresses at any time throughout his adult life. When he was a child, the family's second servant, Marie Miller, would hide objects in her undergarments for Brecht and his brother to find. Through Brecht's poetry, we understand that his mother used to smell his clothes to determine the extent of his sexual activities. By the age of sixteen, he began to frequent a brothel as part of a conscientious effort to broaden his experiences. Between sixteen and twenty, he apparently pursued eight girls simultaneously, including Paula Banholzer, the woman who gave birth to his illegitimate child in 1919. He is known to have experimented with homosexuality, often inviting literary and musically...
his room on weekends in order for them to read erotic compositions. His diaries, although vague, mention his need for both males and females to fulfil his sexual desires. Brecht's desire for experience was, throughout his life, all-consuming.

In 1921, he took his second trip to Berlin and attended the rehearsals of Max Reinhardt and other major directors. In 1922, his play Drums in the Night opened in Munich at the Kammerspiele and later at the Deutsches Theatre in Berlin. He received the prestigious Kleist prize for young dramatists as a result. Brecht also entered into his first committed relationship, his marriage with the opera singer Marianne Zoff, at the age of twenty-four. Their daughter Hanne was born the following year. Despite being married, Brecht had extramarital affairs and spent very little time with his wife or daughter. In 1923, his two plays Jungle of Cities and Baal were performed.

After moving to Berlin in 1924, he met a communist Viennese actress, Helene Weigel. His wife Marianne moved in with her parents after the birth of Hanne, and soon she stopped responding to Brecht's letters. At age twenty-six Brecht fathered his second illegitimate child, with Weigel. Their son was named Stefan. Brecht divorced Marianne Zoff and in 1929 married Helene Weigel. At this point, he was just thirty-one.

Helene Weigel gave birth to their second child, Barbara, in 1930. During this time, Brecht was by no means monogamous. He was obsessed with the idea of abandonment, and as a result, he abhorred ending relationships. The women in his life were important for his writing career, and modern feminist detractors often try to claim that his mistresses in fact wrote much of what was accredited to him. The allegation is largely untrue, but women such as Elisabeth Hauptmann did write significant parts of The Threepenny Opera. In addition, other mistresses included Margarete Steffin, who helped him write The Good Woman of Setzuan and Mother Courage and Her Children; Hella Wuolijoki, who allowed him to transform her comedy The Sawdust Princess into Herr Puntila and His Man Matti; and Ruth Berlau, who bore him a short-lived, third illegitimate child in 1944. Weigel was tolerant of his affairs, and she even warned other men to stay away from his mistresses because it upset him when they made their moves.

Brecht's writings show the profound influence of many varied sources during this time and the remaining years of his life. He studied Chinese, Japanese, and Indian theatre, focused heavily on Shakespeare (adapting, among other plays, Shakespeare's Coriolanus) and other Elizabethans, and was fascinated by Greek tragedy. He found inspiration in other German playwrights, notably Buchner and Wedekind, and he enjoyed the Bavarian folk play. Mother Courage and Her Children arguably owes much to Schiller's Wallenstein trilogy. Brecht had a phenomenal ability to take elements from these seemingly incompatible sources, combine them, and convert them into his own works.

In 1933, Brecht took his family and fled to Zurich after the burning of the Reichstag, later moving around the world to escape Nazi rule. In October 1947, during the McCarthy years, Brecht was called to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Although not an official member of America's Communist party, Brecht left the United States for Switzerland the next day. He soon reunited with Helene Weigel, and they traveled to East Berlin in 1948 and set up the Berliner Ensemble with full support from the Communist regime. Mother Courage and Her Children was the Berliner Ensemble’s inaugural production. In 1950, Brecht and Weigel were granted Austrian citizenship.
Brecht's four great plays were written between 1938 and 1945. These included, for one, The Life of Galileo, which followed history slavishly. It dealt with the protagonist's self-hatred for giving up his convictions in the face of the Inquisition. The others were Mother Courage and Her Children; The Good Woman of Setzuan, which in some ways follows from Mother Courage in examining the compatibility of virtue and a capitalist world; and The Caucasian Chalk Circle, which introduces questions about power and who is entitled to own things. After this period, Brecht worked on his famous adaptation of Antigone and spent much of his energy recording his theoretical ideas.

Brecht experimented with Dadaism and expressionism in his early plays, but he soon developed a unique style that suited his own vision. He detested "Aristotelian" drama and the manner in which it (at least from his point of view) made the audience identify with the hero without enough analysis of the hero's flaws. To him, when such drama produced feelings of terror and pity and led to an emotional catharsis, the process prevented audience members from thinking. (It is the ancient quarrel between philosophers and poets once again, with another thinker trying to reform poetry.) Determined to destroy what he considered theatrical illusions, Brecht made his dreams into realities when he took over the Berliner Ensemble. In one of his early productions, he famously put up signs which said, "Glotzt nicht so romantisch!" ("Don't stare so romantically!").

Brecht received the National Prize, first class, in 1951. In 1954, he won the international Lenin Peace Prize. Brecht died of a heart attack on August 14, 1956, while working on a response to Samuel Beckett's absurdist play Waiting for Godot, written the year before. Even at the end, Brecht was very much interested in the modern drama of the day. He provided instructions that a stiletto be placed in his heart and that he be buried in a steel coffin so that his corpse would not be riddled with worms. He also left a will giving the proceeds of his various works to particular mistresses, including Elisabeth Hauptmann and Ruth Berlau. Unfortunately, the will lacked the necessary witness signatures and was therefore considered void. His widow, Helene Weigel, generously gave small amounts of money to the specified women. Brecht is buried in the Dorotheenfriedhof in Berlin.

**Brecht-The Playwright**

By 1936 a wide range of experimentation and innovation had established the parameters of the contemporary theatre. The training of actors in the Western theatre has since become more organized to take in concepts and programs from the earlier innovators. There are few schools today that do not acknowledge the work of Stanislavski in their training. Less obvious but equally pervasive is the influence of Reinhardt and Copeau, largely by way of their pupils in teaching. And towering above all others (save perhaps Stanislavski) is the figure of Brecht. It is reasonable to argue that Brecht absorbed, and in turn perpetuated, more influences than any other individual in the modern theatre.

Of central importance in establishing this argument is Brecht’s essay "On Experimental Theatre" (1940) in which he reviews the work of Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, Antoine, Reinhardt, Okhlopkov, Stanislavski, Jessner, and other Expressionists. Brechet traces through the modern theatre the two lines running from Naturalism and Expressionism. Naturalism he sees as the "assimilation of art to science," which gave the Naturalistic theatre great social influence, but at the expense of its capacity to arouse aesthetic pleasure.
Expressionism (and by implication the other anti-illusionist theatres), he acknowledges, “vastly enriched the theatre’s means of expression and brought Aesthetic gains that still remain to be exploited.” But it proved incapable of shedding any light on the world as an object of human activity, and the theatre’s educational value collapsed. Brecht recognized the great achievements of Piscator’s work, in which he himself played a significant role, but proposed a further advance in the development of so-called epic theatre.

Brecht’s Marxist political convictions led him to propose an alternative direction for the theatre that would fuse the two functions of instruction and entertainment. In this way the theatre could project a picture of the world by artistic means and offer models of life that could help the spectators to understand their social environment and to master it both rationally and emotionally. The main concept of Brecht’s program was that of Verfremdungseffekt (“alienation”). In order to induce a critical frame of mind in the spectator, Brecht considered it necessary to dispense with the empathetic involvement with the stage that the illusionary theatre sought to induce. Generally, this has been understood as a deadening coldness in the productions, but such an interpretation proceeds from a general ignorance of Brecht’s own writings on the subject. Rather, he insisted, as Appia, Craig, and the Symbolists did before him, that the audience must be reminded that it is watching a play.

Brecht’s ideas can be approached through the image presented by the theatre he chose to work in on his return to East Germany in 1947. The auditorium of the Theatre am Schiffbauerdamm is lavish to the point of fantasy, decorated with ornate plaster figures. The stage, by complete contrast, is a vast mechanized scenic space in which everything is clearly exposed to view as theatrical and man-made. In the contrast between the comfort of the auditorium and the science of the stage lies the condition of Brecht’s theatre the audience was there to be entertained but also to think scientifically.

Many of the techniques of Brecht’s staging were developments of earlier work. The use of three-dimensional set pieces in a large volume of space clearly derived from Jessner. His delight in the use of machinery and in particular the revolving stage came from Piscator. The insistence on the actors’ demonstrating through the physical disposition of the body their gestus (“attitude”) toward what is happening derived from Meyerhold, though with Brecht the gestus was always socially based. The clearest of his alienation devices, the projection of captions preceding the scene so that the audience knows in advance what will happen and, therefore, can concentrate on how it happens, derived from Piscator’s jotter screens and film captions.

Brecht acknowledged in his work the need for the actor to undergo a process of identification with the part, and he paid tribute to Stanislavski as the first person to produce a systematic account of the actor’s technique. Brecht required his actors to go beyond Stanislavski and to incorporate a social attitude or judgment into their portrayal. Characterization without a critical judgment was in Brecht’s view seductive artifice; conversely, social judgment without the characterization of a rounded human being was arid dogmatism. The theatre of mixed styles and means that Meyerhold and others constructed to cope with the grotesque experience of modern living was transformed by Brecht into a political principle. He used mixed means and styles to expose the contradictions, inconsistencies, and dialectics of situations and characters.
theatrical effects were created through the juxtaposition of inconsistent attitudes in a character. Although the settings in Brechet’s productions were clearly theatrical, the costumes and properties were not. Great care was taken to make each property and its use authentic for the period or character. In Brechet’s theatre, if a chicken were to be plucked the actor did not mime or roughly approximate the action—the chicken was plucked. Costumes had to make clear the social class of the persons wearing them. This places Brechet directly in the line with the Meiningen Players, though again the gestus is particularly social rather than historical.

Brechet’s methods of rehearsal were especially innovative. The methods worked out in his own company, the Berliner Ensemble, established a directing collective well advanced beyond those of Reinhardt and Piscator. In Brechet’s theatre, the director, dramaturge, designer and composer had equal authority in the production. The designer had a special function; in addition to designing the sets and costumes, he also produced, for early rehearsal purposes, a series of sketches of key moments in the action. The rehearsals became a process of testing hypotheses about the play and its production. What held the collective together and made the method workable was the story, or fable. All the elements of production were synthesized for telling this story in public. At some points the music conveyed the meaning, at other times the setting, or the actors, or the words did. Brechet often invited observers to the rehearsals in order to test the clarity of the story. The process of testing could continue into the performance period. When the company was satisfied that the staging was correct, the production was photographed and a Modellbuch was prepared with photographs set against the text to show the disposition of the stage at all times and to mark significant changes of position on the part of the actors. The Modellbuch was then available (in a more advanced form than the designer’s sketches) as the basis for any subsequent productions.

The Modellbuch has aroused resentment on the part of directors who prefer to respond freely to the text. Brechet’s intention was not to limit but to provide a document as scientific evidence of an experiment that could be used in further research. Since the finished text was, in any case, only one facet of the fable, the model book gave evidence of other aspects of the story and it’s telling.

Brechet’s influence on the contemporary theatre has been both considerable and problematic. His Marxist views have proved a real stumbling block to his assimilation in the West, and his use of formalist techniques in the service of entertainment has presented difficulties in the socialist countries. There is no doubt that the settings and costumes of his productions are the features that have most influenced the contemporary theatre. Contemporary design exhibits in many ways the influences of his staging.

**Brechet’s Dramatic Theories**

Brechet’s special lexicon (theatrical jargon) may be confusing. He invented a complex language to describe essentially straightforward ideas, this lexicon includes such terms as epic-theatre, non-Aristotelian drama, alienation effect (Verfremdungseffekt) and so on. While his plays are mostly very clear and fluent, Brechet’s own theorizing is not so simple. Brechet is less novel than he is supposed to be, his drama owes much to a wide range of theatrical conventions: Elizabethan, Chinese,
Japanese, Indian, Greek idea of Chorus, Austrian and Bavarian folk-plays, techniques of clowns and fairground entertainers.

Brechet’s theory never arrived at a fixed and final view. His ideas changed, developed, mellowed, especially because of practice in real works on stage. Much of his theory was explanation after the writing of the plays, not the bases on which these were written. And, in the writing of plays for real performance, Brechet’s sense of what works is always paramount.

In part, it was the things against which he reached at the determined Brechet’s theories (and his overstatements). Among these were: • Bourgeois theatre and the fourth wall. • Anything which precludes thought, excites emotion or reinforces capitalist values. Brechet disliked the twin clichés of heavily bombastic classics (Shakespeare, Schiller, and Goethe) and of naturalism in melodrama or drawing room. (This is a 19th century development, which had ossified into an invariant norm.) Naturalism was developed and perfected by such as Stanislavski and Harley Granville-Barker. Against this, reaction had already begun by the 1920s. Naturalism could go no farther; so new types of theatre arose: • Poetic drama • Satire • Expressionism (types not people) • Political theatre

Brechet had been influenced by expressionism and had collaborated with Erwin Piscator, father of political theatre and himself ready to experiment with new technique. Convinced that theatre must be an agent of social and political change, he sought a suitable form of theatre. Having found it he described it as "Epic theatre":

"Today when human character must be understood as the 'totality of all social conditions' the epic from is the only one that can comprehend all the processes, which could serve the drama as materials for a fully representative picture of the world." (Brechet’s comment, 1931, in The Threepenny Opera)

The Epic Theatre

"...the epic poet presents the event as totally past, while the dramatic poet presents it as totally present."

The epic invites calm, detached contemplation and judgement; the dramatic overwhelsm reason with passion and emotion, the spectator sharing the actor’s experiences. Brechet’s objection to "Aristotelian" theatre was an objection to Goethe’s and Schiller’s interpretation of it - an objection to: • Catharsis by terror and pity • Identification with the actors • Illusion - the attempt to represent the present event. Brechet’s idea of epic is informed by the ideas of Goethe and Schiller regarding the mood and character of epic poetry. This is a rational, calm detachment, to which Brechet aspires as a playwright.

Brechet criticises what he calls "Culinary theatre". This is theatre, which merely gives an experience, mental refreshment, as a meal is a bodily restorative. Brechet despises theatre, which provides mental foodstuffs but makes no difference to audience. He believes that the audience should be made not to feel, but to think. (Note that Brechet supposes these two to be in opposition to each other- but this need not be so
best can challenge the head and heart). Dramatic theatre presents events: from the hero’s viewpoint (distorting judgement,) and as happening now (preventing calm detachment).

To counter this, the illusion must be broken. Theatre must do this continually. And, therefore, the audience must be made aware that events are not present events (happening now), but past events being represented as narrative, with commentary provided to encourage our own reflection. ‘This is not’ unlike the experience of reading a book with critical notes in the margin, or as if a novelist supplied his own comment on a page facing that bearing the narrative. Some modern anti-novelists have done this.

The audience is intended to sit back, relax (hence Brechet’s wish for smoking!) and reflect, as did hearers of bards in classical Greece or Anglo-Saxon England. The theatre of illusion creates a spurious present, pretending things are happening now. But the epic theatre is historical: the audience is continually reminded that epic theatre gives a report of events.

The VERFREMDEUNGEFFEKT (V-Effekt)

To discourage audience from identifying with character and so losing detachment, the action must continually be made strange, alien, remote, and separate. To do this, the director must use any devices that preserve or establish this distancing.

While the general use of these is called the V-effekt, when any such device is employed successfully Brechet calls the result a V-effekt. This is Brechet’s explanation of how the device works. A child whose mother remarries, seeing her as wife not just mother, or whose teacher is prosecuted, seeing him in relation to criminal law, experiences a V-effekt. These are examples from Brechet’s own plays:

In Life of Galileo a long and profound speech by the unheroic protagonist is followed by the bathetic observation: “Now I must eat”. This shows the weakness of the man against the strength of the inventor. • In The Caucasian Chalk Circle when Grusche ponders whether or not to take the abandoned baby her dilemma is voiced by the Chorus while she enacts a dumb show. In the Good Person of Sezuan the frequent asides to the audience also achieve a V-effekt.

The Construction of the Plays

In order to achieve unity of action, to build suspense and sustain its naturalistic illusion the dramatic play must be taut, well made and leading to a climax of catharsis. The epic play is freer. Suspense is not needed, and the whole can be loosely knit and episodic - each part making sense on its own.

The later, mature plays do lead to some definite end: Mother Courage’s loss of all her children, Azdak’s judgement in favour of Grusche or the non-solution of the gods to Shante’s problem. But we can isolate episodes that stand alone - Mother Courage being the most simply episodic of the later plays.

In an earlier piece, Fear and Misery of the Third Reich (Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches, 1934-37), this episodic structure is much more marked. The “play” is, in fact, a series of related sketches on the theme suggested by the play’s title.
off as five playlets, became eight, then nineteen, grew to twenty-seven and was. At last, cut to twenty-four. In performance one could (and, perhaps, should) present a selection from the total without harm to the work’s integrity.

**Brechet’s Theory of Acting**

Brechet’s view is that actor should not impersonate, but narrate actions of another person, as it quoting facial gesture and movement.

"The Brechetian style of acting is acting in quotation marks,"

Brechet uses the example of an accident-eyewitness. To show bystanders what happened, he may imitate, say, the victim’s gait but will only quote what is relevant and necessary to his explanation. Moreover, the actor remains free to comment on what he shows.

One of modern critic and teacher tested this idea with other students:

"I wanted to let you know that I used the demonstrating of an accident as a rehearsal technique during my peer teaching episode and it worked very well. I started off with an overview of Brechet and his theories and then moved on to the rehearsal technique. I had prepared all example of an accident for people to demonstrate if not enough people had witnessed one. However, lots of people had witnessed accidents and they split into groups to demonstrate them. The discussion at the end showed that they understood its relevance...Afterwards I had many people say that they had never understood Brechet before and now felt much clearer about his theories ...

"(Georgie Sugg)

As the audience is not to be allowed to identify with character, 50, too, the actor is not to identify with him or her. Brechet agrees with Stanislavski that; if the actor believes he is Lear, the audience will also believe it, and share his emotions. But. Unlike Stanislavski, he does not wish this to happen. As he does not wish to put the audience into a trance, just so the actor must keep Himself free from this state: he must be relaxed, not letting muscles be tense. Even if playing someone who is possessed, the actor must not appear possessed. Brecht is opposed to frenetic and convulsive intensity on the stage. The Brechetian actor must always be in control of his emotions. Brecht sees the actor's task as greater than Stanislavsky's merging of character and actor.

This is one important element but it must be complemented by implied comment on the character’s actions. The actor must show how these are wise or foolish and express, say, pity or disdain. The actor must show that he foresees where a character’s actions will lead, and that his course of action is only one among many possibilities.

Since the actor should show the audience that he has chosen one action, as opposed to another, he must be aware of the presence of the audience, not, as in Stanislavsky's ideal, wrapped up in himself and oblivious of audience.

Finally, there is to be nothing improvised in his delivery: the actor’s performance should be the "delivery of as finished product"
This theory is not as complicated as it appears: in the Victorian melodrama, the actor plays the villain in just such a critical way. The audience sees that the actor disapproves of the character, there is no identification of one with the other; there is awareness and enjoyment of the skill in showing villainy; the actor shows that the villain could choose an alternative course of action and that he will come to a bad end.

In the theatre of illusion the actor explores the character, trying to merge with him. Only then does he react to other characters. In the Brechetian theatre the character’s inner life is of no importance, save in its effect on outward action. Brechet does not portray human nature in the individual, but human relations. The story is the point of interest, not the characters. The story is the sequence of events that is the social experiment, allowing the interplay of social forces, from which the play’s lesson emerges.

**The Gestus**

This is Brechet's term for that which expresses basic human attitudes - not merely "gesture" but all signs of social relations: department, intonation, facial expression. The Stanislavskian actor is to work at identifying with the character he or she portrays. The Brechetian actor is to work at expressing social attitudes in clear and stylized ways, So, when Shen-Te becomes Shui-Ta, she moves in a different manner, Brechet wished to embody the "Cestus" in the dialogue- as if to compel the right stance, movement and intonation. By subtle use of rhythm pause, parallelism and counterpointing, Brechet creates a "gestic" language.

The songs are yet more clearly "gestic", As street singers make clear their attitudes with overt, grand but simple gestures, so, in delivering songs, the Brechetian actor aims to produce clarity in expressing a basic attitude, such as despair, defiance or submission.

Instead of the seamless continuity of the naturalistic theatre, the illusion of natural disorder, Brechet wishes to break up the story into distinct episodes, each of which presents, in a clear and ordered manner, a central basic action. All that appears in the scene is designed to show the significance of the basic "Gestus". We see how this works in Mother Courage, Each scene is prefaced by a caption telling the audience what is to be the important event; in such a way as to suggest the proper attitude for the audience to adapt to it - for instance (Scene 3):

"She manages to save her daughter, likewise her covered cart, but her honest son is killed."

**Non-Literary Elements** : **Decor, Music and Choreography**

These are no longer auxiliaries to text, reinforcing it - they stand alone or in opposition. Songs are not used to heighten emotion at moments of climax; they serve as commentaries, generally leading to a V-effekt thus lyrics may be wry and humorous, melodies may be jazz-influenced, jerky and unromantic, or songs may satirize popular sentiment (There is great irony in the way the public at large missed the satire in The Three penny Opera, and the songs - such as Mackie Messer/ Mack the Knife - became popular classics, though Brechet had intended them as send-ups.)
Stage designers, no longer tied to illusion, can supply non-realistic extra decor to provide background material: • In Galileo projections of maps, documents and Renaissance art works • In Mother Courage and Her Children captions of celebrated events of the Thirty Years War and a statement of what is to happen next, on stage, to Mother Courage.

In the first production of Mahagonny a scene in which a glutton eats himself to death was enacted before a backdrop showing a portrait of him in the act of eating-so the episode is shown twice! The visual and musical V-effekt has an anti-hypnotic quality - music is not, as in Wagner, a narcotic, reinforcing the stage illusion, For Brechet the music and the action should each make the other appear strange. (It may be that Brechet's dislike of Wagnerian opera is not wholly rational, but made on political grounds- Wagner being associated with German nationalism and the myths of Germany's heroic origin and of Germanic racial purity.)

The result of the V-effekt is a contrast: in dramatic theatre the spectator is moved but has a crushing sense of inevitability and of his own helplessness; in the epic theatre one sees things as if different and so one man try to make things different in the real world. If things can be seen to be changed, then one can attempt to bring about change.

Brechet’s Belief is that theatre can show how the suffering of those on stage could be avoided. His illogically consistent Marxism leads him to believe all (not some) human evil to result from unjust social institutions. The plays show how society could be different, if attitudes regarded as sound and unalterable could be changed. This is usually done obliquely by parallels, which are:

• Historical as in II/I other Courage and Galileo,
• Allegorical as in Mahagonny, or
• Pseudo-foreign, as in the Good Person of Sezuan.

So, the clear inadequacy of the final words of the gods in The Good Person of Sezuan makes it clear that to be good and poor (all the time) is impossible. The real solution is not for Shen Te to become Shui Ta, but for wealth to be shared so that the poor are not forced to destroy each other to survive.

**Sit and Lighting**

Brechet believed the stage should be brightly lit at all times; special effects to create mood were not allowed. (Logically, he could have allowed it, if accompanied by some device to draw attention to it - such as a statement from a character.) The sources of light should be plainly visible - just as those over a boxing-ring (Brechet's comparison).

The curtain is to be used for the display of titles, captions or comments. Placards may be placed in the auditorium, bearing instructions, such as "Don't stare so romantically" (from Drums in the ::::right). The set behind the curtain...
realistic; that is to say, while very authentic props may be used, (as, say, Mother Courage's handcart) there will be no elaborate arrangement of these in a naturalistic stage set.

The music, too, must have a visible source - musicians may even be on the stage. Interruptions for song are announced or indicated by projection of a title, or flags and

**Rehearsal**

Brechet made actor's tum their lines into third person narrative. Actions given in stage directions are narrated: "Then X entered. After a few silent compliments he sat down on the sofa."

Dialogue, spoken (in performance) in the present tense, becomes reported speech. For example: "*Has your excellency seen the new dancing-master?*" Becomes: "*He asked whether Madame had seen the new dancing-master.*"

Brechet would include in the text spoken in rehearsal, all stage directions. He went so far as to write what he called "practice scenes". These were meant to cast new light on well-known scenes by use of ironic parallels. He wrote, too, what he called "bridge scenes" to be interpolated in the text in rehearsal but omitted in performance. But as these were written for classics that he never produced, their value is questionable.

Oddly, for one who wrote copious theoretical explanations, Brechet rarely referred to his theory during rehearsal, though some of his resulting practice was obviously familiar to the actors (say, the translation into narrative). Brechet claimed that fun application of his theory was impossible in the present state of the theatre. As a result, many of the actors of the Berliner Ensemble when questioned, seemed uncertain what Brechet’s preferred style of acting was.

**The Survival of Empathy**

Brechet wrongly equated empathy, without which no audience will be interested in the stage action, with illusion, which is not at all necessary and comparatively novel, being a feature of naturalistic drama. For feelings that overwhelm the audience Brechet wished to substitute reason. Because naturalistic theatre aroused excessive emotion and ignored reason Brechet supposed these two, reason and empathy, to be mutually exclusive. Yet in Greek tragedy or the plays of Shakespeare both are active. The problem is not empathy as such, but the degree and kind of empathy aroused.

As a playwright Brechet’s sense of what works led to the writing of scenes where the audience's empathy for the characters on stage is considerable: the heroic self-sacrifice of the dumb Katrina in Mother Courage is a notorious instance. Martin Esslin points out the psychological flaw in Brechet’s reasoning:

"*Without identification and empathy, each person would be irrevocably imprisoned within himself.*"
Esslin duly points out that his use of the V-effekt shows how conscious Brechet was of the audience’s tendency to identification. He did not eliminate it, but modified and weakened it.

Esslin suggests that this is the particular genius of Brechet’s theatre, the partial failure of Verfremdungs: this creates a tension between the author’s intention and our tendency to identification. We are at the same time able to feel sympathy for a character, while our reason leads us to condemn him or her roundly. In his theoretical attack upon romanticism and emotion Brechet claims to be the advocate of reason. Yet in his writing of plays, Brechet time and again creates scenes that move the audience, in spite of the distancing devices.

Because he seems genuinely to believe that his work is free of strong emotion, Brechet makes no effort to suppress or conceal this element. And because our sympathy is continually rebuffed, when emotion manages to take hold of the audience, it may be all the stronger for that.

**The Failed Revolutionary**

Brechet hoped in his plays to show the utter rottenness of bourgeois, capitalist society. His belief was that the audience would see that a new society must replace the old and that only Marxist society could deliver justice (and that this social change was inevitable, but that his task was to help usher it in). Brechet, for all his insistence on reason, was here quite irrational in his theory. His plays could lead audiences to many other kinds of conclusion. And, to Brechet’s great dismay, they did.

The masses were not roused to revolutionary fervour; indeed, the masses did not flock to any of Brechet's plays, save the Three penny Opera, the irony of which was wholly missed and which was accepted as a happy, sentimental musical of the kind. Brechet was hoping to parody. The political allegory was undetected by the audience.

While Germany descended into Nazism, Brechet fled to the west. The would-be man of the people became the favourite of western liberal intellectuals. After the war Brechet was able to work freely in East Germany, to which he returned. But the communist establishment, which saw, betters than he did, that his work might provoke thoughts dangerous to Marxism, never wholly accepted him. Moreover as the Russian establishment had fostered the Stanislavskian tradition after Lenin came to power, it had become the dominant form of theatre in the Eastern Bloc. Non-naturalistic theatre might, therefore, be seen as the work of a dissident, and subversive of the new revolutionary establishment.

**Brechet’s Success**

Brechet’s break with naturalism was not so much a novelty as a return to earlier conventions. Bamber Gascoigne (Twentieth-Century Drama, p.124) notes the use of "alienation" in Greek Tragedy, Medieval Mystery plays, Japanese Noh plays and Jacobean drama. Characters address the audience and introduce themselves in Shakespeare, as do Trinculo in The Tempest or the porter in Macbeth. Brechet’s perhaps exaggerated denunciation of empathy was an understandable reaction to bourgeois na
tragedy where empathy is evoked but reason can be exercised, or the neo-classical drama of Corneille and Racine in which decorum is always preserved are not so far from Brechet's drama. Racine, in his preface to Beazer also stresses the importance of distancing.

Brechet’s success was in freeing theatre from the limitations of naturalist drama. What Brechet has called "fourth-wall" theatre was confined to a narrow range of subjects and a" one play, to remain naturalistic, could not range widely in the scenes depicted. While some playwrights have accepted particular Brechetian techniques, his general effect, to cause writers to seek new conventions of representing human experience, is more important.

Some writers (such as Robert Bolt in A Man for All Seasons) are openly Brechetian while others may use some of Brechet’s techniques without being aware of their provenance. We find the use of narrator or commentator as go-between for audience and characters, and creator of distancing effects in work by many playwrights, such as; • Peter Shaffer (Martin Cruz in the Royal Hunt of the Sun), • Arthur Miller (Alfieri in A View from the Bridge) and • Robert Bolt (the Common Man in a Man for All Seasons).

A less successful Brechetian device in the latter play appears when Thomas Cromwell sings an ironical song about the ship of state, but this jars with the otherwise un-ironic manner of the play and the main characters' archaic-naturalistic speech.

Presumably writer/directors like those of the National Theatre of Brent, (whose two actors change roles to enact or "show" the Zulu War and use their audience to help with crowd scenes), could also claim Brechet as their theatrical father. Shaffer’s The Royal Hunt of the Sun is close to Brechet’s own Epic Theatre: •Like Galileo it is set in a historical period in which the church exercised great power; • It is a series of episodes; • It is narrated, and so shown to be in the past, by a character who stands beside his younger self, • It uses music and song, though the singer remains in character.

The play also shows the injustice of the social system and the need for change: imperialism, love of money and the evils of institutional theocracy are all laid bare. Curiously enough, towards the end of his life, Brechet accepted that his theory of Epic theatre was too formal and inadequate to show society’s productivity and capacity for change - but Brechet felt unable to replace the theory with a better one.

In effect, he was conceding that the theory is often less adequate than the practice (the plays as interpreted by Brechet’s company). In such cases, the practice must stand until a better theory emerges. In a sense, Brechet’s critics have so refined the theory.

**Brechet’s Epic Theatre**

Although Bertolt Brechet’s first plays were written in Germany during the 1920s, he was not widely known until much later. Eventually his theories of stage presentation exerted more influence on the course of mid-century theatre in the West than did those of any other individual. This was largely because he proposed the major alternative to the Stanislavski-oriented realism that dominated acting and the "well-made play" construction to dominated playwriting.
Brechet’s earliest work was heavily influenced by German Expressionism, but it was his preoccupation with Marxism and the idea that man and society could be intellectually analysed that led him to develop his theory of "epic theatre: Brechet believed that theatre should appeal not to the spectator’s feelings but to his reason. While still providing entertainment, it should be strongly didactic and capable of provoking social change.

In the Realistic theatre of illusion, he argued, the spectator tended to identify with the characters on stage and become emotionally involved with them rather than being stirred to think about his own life. To encourage the audience to adopt a more critical attitude to what was happening on stage, Brechet developed his Verfremdungs-effekt ("alienation effect")—i.e., the use of anti-illusive techniques to remind the spectators that they are in a theatre watching an enactment of reality instead of reality itself.

Such techniques included flooding the stage with harsh white light, regardless of where the action was taking place, and leaving the stage lamps in full view of the audience; making use of minimal props and "indicative" scenery; intentionally interrupting the action at key junctures with songs in order to drive home an important point or message; and projecting explanatory captions onto a screen or employing placards.

In the Epic theatre the sources of light should be visible at all times, as they are, say, in a boxing ring (Brechet's comparison). Lighting would be uniformly bright; effects of colour and dimming are not to be allowed. This is partly explicable in terms of Brechet's taste for simplicity and austerity, partly in terms of his desire to avoid creating emotional effects.

Brechet’s plays make extensive use of music in a tremendous variety of styles. He secured the services of distinguished composers, such as Weill, Hindernith, Eisler and Dessau. Music, at first, was used to break the illusion of reality merely by bringing

Variety. Later Brechet evolved the theory that whereas conventionally (as in Wagner) music was a narcotic, reinforcing emotion, in the Epic theatre it should provoke thought, dispel illusion and drive out emotion. This led to the idea of "gestic" music - music, which would inform the audience about the right intellectual response to events depicted in the drama.

In the epic theatre, rehearsal might require presenting a scene from a play other than that to be produced, in order to understand a relationship. Speeches were also, in rehearsal, delivered in the third person with narrative links, or transformed into reported speech, with stage directions also converted into description or narrative. This was supposed to help the actor relax, be aware of the audience - not lost in his character, have muscular control and, eventually deliver a perfect product. From his actors Brechet demanded not realism and identification with the role but an objective style of playing, to become in a sense detached observers.

Brechet’s most important plays, which included Leben des Galilei (The life of Galileo), Mutter Courage und rue Kinder (Mother Courage and Her Children), and Der gute Mensch von Sezuan (The Good Person of Szechwan, or The Good Woman of Setzwan), were written between 1937 and 1945 when he was in
regime, first in Scandinavia and then in the United States. At the invitation of the newly formed East German government, he returned to found the Berliner Ensemble in 1949 with his wife, Helene Weigel, as leading actress. It was only at this point, through his own productions of his plays, that Brechet earned his reputation as one of the most important figures of 20th-century theatre.

Certainly Brechet’s attack on the illusive theatre influenced, directly or indirectly, the theatre of every Western country. In Britain the effect became evident in the work of such playwrights as John Arden and Edward Bond and in some of the bare-stage productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Western theatre in the 20th century, however, has proved to be a cross-fertilization of many styles (Brechet himself acknowledged a debt to traditional Oriental theatre), and by the 1950s other approaches were gaining influence.

The Invention of Scientific Method

Scientific Method, the term denoting the principles, guides scientific research and experimentation and also the philosophic bases of those principles. Philosophy in general is concerned with the why as well as how of things but science occupies itself with the latter question in a very rigorous manner. The era of modern science is generally considered to have begun with the Renaissance but scientific approach to knowledge can be observed throughout the human history.

Three Characteristics of science

(1) **Objectivity:** Objectivity indicates the attempt to observe things as they are, without falsifying observation in accordance with the preoccupied world view. They (scientists) do not let their feelings get in the way of their observations of real things. They often work in laboratories or in other areas where they can carefully control what they are working on. They always try to report their findings so others can check them out and then utilize them in their own work. They do not clean more than they can prove. They always concern about what is rather than 'What should be' so as to derive objective reality of the things.

(2) **Dealing with things not emotion:** Science deals almost exclusively with things, not ideas or feeling, and with the external world and its workings, not inner states and their workings, the human body is considered to be a part of the external world, the soul is not. So, scientists work to understand the body but not the soul. Most scientists doubt whether soul exists or not. The solar system and the universe are also part of the external world, so scientists also go through them.

(3) **Dealing with special way:** Science deals with in a special way, employing special methods and a language for reporting results that is unique to it. At first, they make hypothesis that hypothesis is put under a test in a controlled environment to find out whether it is valid or not. The environment must be carefully controlled so that extraneous elements do not intrude to invalidate the experiment. Scientific method also involves the interplay of inductive reasoning (reasoning from specific observation and experiments to move general hypothesis and theories) and deductive reasoning (reasoning from theories to account for specific experimental results). By such reasoning processes, science attempts to develop the
broad law—such as Newton's law of gravitation that has become part of our understanding of the natural world.

**Aristotelian Science: Matter**

To invent scientific method, thinkers of the 17th century first had to deal with the world view of the greatest scientist having influence until that time, Aristotle. Two aspects of the world, in particular, concern us: matter and motion.

**(1) Theory of Matter:** According to Aristotle, every material thing has both a material and a formal aspect. Matter is a thing's potentiality and form is what gives shape to matter. Aristotle found quite different between the world below the moon and the world above the Moon. In the world below the moon which he called sublunary world, there are four kinds of stuff out of which things are made. These elements are fire, water, earth and air. Aristotle said that a man has a good amount of earth in him which makes him heavy, a good amount of water which produce his blood and other internal fluids, a good amount of air which he breathes in and out, a good amount of fire which gives him heat and is in a sense the essence of the life in him. But in the world above the Moon, the planets and Moon are made out of fifth element that he called Quintessence. They are also fusion of formal and maternal aspects but their matter is quite different from that of below the Moon as the Quintessence exists in them in pure form unlike in the sublunary world.

**(2) Theory of motion:** Regarding the theory of motion, Aristotle had different view about the motion in sublunary world and the world above the moon. The motion of material and immaterial things in the sublunary world is rest. The motion may be natural or violent, but it is seeking for a place to get rest. If the thing moves without external force that is natural state whereas if external force is applied to move the thing that is violent state. When a stone is thrown it drops to stop somewhere though the motion is violent, anyway it searches for place having got rest. Earth, water and to a certain extent air naturally seek a place that is downward, toward the centre of the earth. Fire goes up, yet it is below the sphere of moon. Air, being mixture of fire and water, sometimes goes down and sometime up. But these elements or sublunary world seek a place for getting rest. In the world above the moon, everything is made out of Quintessence so the natural motion of celestial bodies is circular. They move in circle around the earth in every twenty-four hours. Aristotelian theory of motion gives a geocentric world picture which had lasting impact up to the seventeenth century.

**The Revolt against Aristotle**

During 17th century, Aristotelian, Theory was dismantled by so many scientists and thinkers. He was of the operation that all heavenly bodies move in circular motion around the earth. But Nicholas Copernicus dismantled that view by saying that it is not the sun that moves around the earth. But Nicholas Copernicus dismantled that view by saying that it is the earth that moves around the sun. But at that time he did not say it defying as it meant going against the contemporary belief of the society. Another Danish astronomer Tyco Brace is famous for discovering a new star, having no existence in Aristotelian theory. He discovered that new star in 1572 and observed that over a period of months and in 1573 published a monograph on it that made him instantly famous and instantly controversial. Actually, new starts were not supposed to come into being in the Aristotelian and Christian universe. The world below the moon was chaotic, imperfect and unpredictably change
above the moon nothing is changed all the celestial or heavenly bodies' continued to reflect
God's immutable love for the world and mankind. The contemporary theologians criticized
Tycho Brache's monograph but Tycho did not believe that. William Gilbert by studying about
lodestones produced the theory of magnetism. He asserted that due to the magnetic quality,
planetary bodied come together the found the presence of magnetic force both above and
below the moon. But as for Aristotle, in the world above the moon everything is made out of
Quintessence, not anything like magnetic force. But for Gilbert, earth itself is big magnet.
Gilbert also facilitates the heliocentric world view. Again Kepler brought great change in
Aristotelian science. Facilitating the heliocentric world view, he said that heavenly bodies do
not move in circular motion as Aristotle asserted but they move in elliptical motion. He also
asserted defying Aristotelian concept that when planets are near the sun, they move quickly
and vice versa. He also found the mathematical relation between the planets and the distance
from the sun. He also believed in the concept of inertia. Galileo also opposed the Aristotelian
concept that the surface of the moon is made out of Quintessence. When he saw the moon
with the telescope then he found the surface of the moon as that of the earth having rock,
mountains, and valleys etc, so, the moon itself is destructible, he said. He also put forward
his argument by saying that it is the sun in the center and all planets, move round the sun.
Though he dismantled the Aristotelian science, he was accused of being a Bible killer by
contemporary theologians. At last he recanted whatever he said before.

Rene Descartes, 17th century philosopher did not believe upon Quintessence as such, he
always searched for certainty in everything. His concept was that everything must be doubted
so as to derive truth. His famous dictum is: "I doubt therefore I think, I think therefore I am." He
also believed that the material universe can be described in mathematical terms. He also
believed that human mind always should free from any preoccupied notion and we should also
reduce anything mathematically to reach in the heart of the thing. Newton also challenged
Aristotelian view of the world. He got influence from Gilbert's magnetism, heliocentric
worldview of Copernicus and Descartes' view about doubting. He proposed three laws of
motion unlike Aristotle:

1. Everything remains in rest or in motion unless the external force is used upon it. There
   is no natural state of rest as such as asserted by Aristotle. It is also called the law of inertia.
   This law discards the so-called Quintessence.

2. The change of motion is directly proportional to the change of force.

3. Each action has an equal but opposite reaction.

These above mentioned laws by opposing Aristotelian science paved way for development of
modern science.

**Marxism and Literature**

Literature is one of the major constituents of consciousness, and should be studied within the
framework of history. As much as literature can be used as an oppressive tool to maintain and
enforce the master-capitalist hegemony, it can also be used to undermine this hegemony. For
Marxism, literature can be viewed in two main ways, regardless of the difference in opinion
and practice among various Marxist thinkers and critics such as Lucaks, Brecht, Adorno,
Raymond, Jameson and others:
As reactionary narrative that aims at marketing, devoting and enforcing the ruling classes’ ideology; yet not without contradictions, that can undermine its basic thematic assumption(s). As a progressive narrative that champions the oppressed in their long and bitter struggle against the decadent bourgeois order. Some traditional Marxist critics including Lukacs stressed the importance of realism in writing and denigrated other modes of narrative like naturalism, post/modernism as less, if at all, representative of class struggle. In defense of their theoretical position, they claim that modernist writers, like Eliot, Joyce, Wolf among others dwell usually in their writings on the personal experiences of demented characters that can hardly be taken to represent the suffering and struggle of the oppressed at large. Traditional Marxists favoured realism because of its total representation of people in real situations trying to improve their social conditions by engaging with the repressive forces in the bourgeois world. They favoured narratives that compromise inherited bourgeois obsolete ethics and values. Other thinkers and writers like Brecht, Adorno, and Althusser among others considered all forms and schools of narratively suitable for exposing human suffering, class conflict and the various ideologies that dominate the world of the text and shape consciousness of the generations.

**Marxism: History and Economy**

Marxism regards history as a series of conflicts between the dominated majority and the dominating minority to gain power over the means and excess of production. After people have exited from their first state of nature, where they have been equal by default; they have found themselves cast into two main categories. The category of those who spend all their lives laboring in the fields and other places of production; and the category of those who usurp the labour of the working class to increase their capital. If we examine history carefully, we see how the economies of ancient and modern societies are based on slavery and exploitation.

All through human history, the masters made their wealth on the expense of the labour of their subjects. The subject works hard in the field or in the factory. The subject, whether aided by machinery or not, generates commodities through his labour. These commodities are valued according to their market price and not according to any intrinsic value in them. Their value is automatically turned into money in the hands of the master. The master gives little money to cover the minimum basic needs of the subjects; and the rest of the money turns into capital. By doing so, the capitalists ensure that their capital grows bigger and bigger, while their subjects conditions remain at the minimal level possible.

To keep this state of affairs current, the capitalists rely on a network of oppressive tools. And they die hard to keep their tools live and constantly upgraded. Religion, traditions, rigid patriarchal order, high culture, literature, philosophy are among these tools. However, Marxism sees that the capitalist culture is inherently unstable because of the insidious contradictions and conflicts it generates between the classes. Therefore, capitalist culture will come to an end altogether once the workers and the oppressed realize their potential and begin the struggle to own the means of production. Then a new phase in history, without contradictions, will begin and bring everlasting peace.

**A Critique of Life of Galileo**
It is a volatile point in history: the intersection of science and religion at the height of the Inquisition; it is a time when the Church reigns and a man, a physicist. Must choose life or death, himself or science. Galileo Galilei’s legendary dilemma and the circumstances surrounding it are presented in Bertolt Brecht’s Life of Galileo from a perspective that is clearly criticizing institutions with such control in this case, the Catholic church while reminding us that men are simply men, no matter how heroic their actions appear. These issues are expounded throughout the play; however, Scene 11 has the most significant role in Galileo’s development. As it simultaneously reveals the extent of the Church’s control and humanizes Galileo in just a few lines.

Despite his courage to venture into unexplored realms of science and thought, Galileo is not a hero. He is only a man. Scene 11 is the shortest scene in the play and one of only three scenes in which the title character does not appear. Yet it is here that Galileo is made completely human. In the quest for a hero, one might ignore his almost hedonistic desire for food, thought, and fine wine and the sacrifices that he makes to acquire money. These characteristics of Galileo are revealed early in the play, when he plagiarizes another man’s telescope invention in order to get a salary raise from the dry (Scenes 1 and 2), and then again in Scene II when the Pope says,

"He has more enjoyment in him than any other man I ever saw. He loves eating and drinking and thinking, to excess. He indulges in thinking bouts! He cannot say 110 to an old wine or a new thought".

However, one cannot ignore a hero’s cowardice in the face of the physical pain. In this light, he reduced from hero to ordinary man. In this scene, the Pope and the Inquisitor are in the midst of an argument over the pending examination of Galileo by the Inquisition and the torturous methods that may be involved. The scene subtly reveals the evil at the heart of the Inquisition: the Church, which should be Godly in practice, partakes in torturing individuals capable of testing the power of the institution, forcing them to conform to the Church’s will and thereby eliminating any danger of upheaval. The Inquisitor states:

"He is a man of the flesh. He would soften at once"

This describes the basic human instinct to shrink from pain. Every man has his breaking point, the point at which the pain and the fear and the shame are so great that he cannot withstand one moment more. Galileo is no different. Also, Galileo is a man of science; he knows more of how pain can be inflicted than most men. As the Inquisitor later adds,

"Mr. Galilei understands machinery."

With this knowledge added to the fear of physical discomfort, Galileo later does what most men would do under the circumstances: he recants. Because this scene reveals the negative side of the Church and the human-ness of Galileo, the audience is not distracted from the criticism of the institution. If Galileo had been portrayed as a hero, that aspect of the story would have taken precedence over the theme of institutional control; the heroics would linger and the criticism would be forgotten. Brechet is also reminding us
that heroes are unnecessary man is capable of anything if he opens his mind, just as Galileo does.

Brechet clearly disagrees with institutions that hold complete control over the common man. Scene 11 illustrates just how broad and deep the control of the church is at this point in Galileo’s life. Here we see only two characters, both officers of the Catholic Church, each on separate sides of the issue. Oddly enough, the individual who relents is the higher in rank, the Pope. He should have complete control because he is second only to God in the Catholic hierarchy; he is a man of science, but he is also a tool of religion, as the Inquisitor reminds him:

"Ah, that is what these people say, that it is the multiplication. Table. Their cry is, 'The figures compel us,' but where do these figures come from? Plainly they come from doubt. These men doubt everything. Can society stand on doubt and not on faith? ‘Thou are my master, but I doubt whether it is for the best.’ 'This is my neighbour’s house and my neighbour’s wife, but why shouldn’t they belong to me?’ After the plague, after the new war, after the unparalleled disaster of the Reformation, your dwindling flock look to their shepherd and now the mathematics turn their tubes on the sky and announce to the world that you have not the best advice about the heavens either up to your only uncontested sphere of influence."

The Pope's duty is to serve God and tend his flock on earth, and he, like any shepherd, cannot allow God’s people to wander from their faith. He must have obedience and loyalty in the name of God, and therefore must censor anything of detriment to the greater cause; despite his personal beliefs, he must do whatever is necessary to uphold the Church and it's control over the people. Thus, even the Pope falls under the cloak of the Church. He is a slave to duty and must answer first to his position and second to his personal feelings. As the Inquisitor tells him, the fate of faith is in his hands:

"Doctors of all chairs from the universities, representatives of special orders of the Church, representatives of the clergy as a whole, who have come believing with childlike faith in the word of God as set forth in the Scriptures, who have come to Your Holiness confirm their faith: and Your Holiness us really going to tell them that the Bible can no longer be regarded as the alphabet of truth?"

He is under tremendous pressure to save the faith of the people, thereby preserving the foundations of society. The Pope must choose between duty and conscience he is adamantly against Galileo's condemnation, but so many lives would be shattered if the common people were told that there was more to the universe than they could find in the Bible. Like the little monk’s parents, they would feel very alone.

"There is no eye watching over us, after all: they would say. ‘We have to start out on our own, at our time of life. Nobody has planned II part for us beyond this wretched one on a worthless star. There is no meaning in our misery’".
The people rely on the Church to lead them to a better life in heaven; their faith is all that they know. It is the Pope’s duty to preserve the unity that comes from shared faith, and because he is controlled by that which he governs, he cannot refuse to punish Galileo for fear of social collapse.

Brechet cleverly uses Scene 11 to plant seeds of thought in the minds of his audience members. Through the controversy of Galileo’s life and the circumstances surrounding his session with the Inquisition, Galileo explores both the dangers of institutional control and the folly of elevating men to a heroic status. One will only be disappointed when both prove fallible.

**Major Features of Brechetian Drama**

Brechet called his theatre work by a variety of names, including Epic Theatre, the term now generally used to describe Brechet’s plays. His plays tend to be episodic, written as a seemingly disconnected, open-ended montage of scenes presented in a non-naturalistic, non-chronological way. The audience needs to arrive at its own conclusion of how the events are linked together. Epic Theatre presents a sequence of incidents or events that are narrated on a grand scale without the restrictions of time, place or formal plot.

Verfremdungseffekt, translated (badly) as “Alienation-effect” and (awkwardly) as “Distantation-effect”. More accurately it is “the effect that makes things seem strange or different”. The term refers to the use of various devices to make things appear in a new light, so we consider them with intellectual objectively, robbed of their conventional outward appearance. When something is presented in a strange or surprising manner and we see it afresh, a Verfremdungseffekt has been achieved. Brechet gives the example of a child whose widowed mother remarries, seeing her, for the first time, as a wife. In the plays a V-effekt may be produced by the comment of a chorus figure (the Singer or Wang) or in ordinary dialogue (as in Galileo’s “now I must eat”: suddenly he is seen not as the great scientific innovator but an ordinary, hungry man).

Brechet usually left the stage bare in his productions as a means of preventing the audience from experiencing a detailed illusion of reality, of some fictional dramatic location. He exposed stage machinery, opened up the physical staging to the wings and often exposed the back wall. He also exposed the lighting grid above the stage so the audience could see how lights influence the mood of the scene and influence the audience’s judgement. In the Epic theatre the sources of light should be visible at all times, as they are, say, in a boxing ring (Brechet’s comparison). Lighting should be uniformly bright; effects of colour and dimming are not to be allowed. This is partly explicable in terms of Brechet’s taste for simplicity and austerity, partly in terms of his desire to avoid creating emotional effects.

The German theatre director, Erwin Piscator, greatly influenced Brechet because he advocated the use of new technologies in the theatre as a means of developing a kind of performance more like the mechanised and accelerated routines of modern life. Brechet used technological effects to fragment the realistic unity of the setting. For instance, he projected films and text on screens above the stage, forcing the audience to relate the action onstage to recent or other historical or social events. (This technique is called
historification. He also used placards that announced the action to take place before the scene began, discordant music, songs, and constructivist scenery such as scaffolding, projected images and films.

Brechet’s plays make extensive use of music in a tremendous variety of styles, he secured the services of distinguished composers, such as Weill, Hindernith, Eisler and Dessau. Music, at first, was used to break the illusion of reality merely by bringing variety. Later Brechet evolved the theory that whereas conventionally (as in Wagner) music was a narcotic, reinforcing emotion, in the Epic theatre it should provoke thought, dispel illusion and drive out emotion. This led to the idea of U gestic” music - music which would inform the audience about the right intellectual response to events depicted in the drama.

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Brechet’s actors were asked to go beyond the Stanislavski system of acting where the actor identifies entirely with their character and represents the character entirely from his or her point of view. Rather Brecht encouraged a more demonstrative acting method, one that enables the actor to present the character from a number of perspectives.

The term gestus or grandgestus as used by Brecht, referred to everything an actor did in terms of gesture, stance, body language, facial expressions and intonations in order to show the significance of a scene. The ideal would be: that the storyline could be: broken down so that each scene can appear as one single action that can be translated into one simple sentence, so that the gestus, (the most important message of the scene)’

He was also influenced by the theatre of Asia with its use of mime and gesture, clear precise vocal work, symbolic characters and graceful, rhythmic movement. He encouraged his actors to be physically fit and flexible, as his plays sometimes required dance, mime and even acrobatics.

Brechet’s theatre poems demonstrate his ideas of adopting a new acting style. In “On Everyday Theatre” in Poems of the Crisis Years 1929-1933, Brecht advises actors to observe:

"That theatre whose setting is the street. The everyday, thousand fold, fameless but vivid, earthy theatre fed by the daily human contact Which takes place in the street, Here the woman from next door imitates the landlord: Demonstrating his flood of talk she makes it clear How he tried to turn the conversation From the burst water pipe. ..A drunk gives us the preacher at his sermon, referring the poor to the rich pastures of paradise. How useful such theatre is though, serious and funny and how dignified! They do flat, like parrot or ape Imitate just for the sake of imitation, unco
imitate, just to show that they can imitate; no, they have a point to put across."

Galileo is Not a Hero but a Common Man

Tragedy of a common man who succumbs to the extreme pressures of society.

It is a volatile point in history: the intersection of science and religion at the height of the Inquisition; it is a time when the Church reigns and a man, a physicist must choose life or death, himself or science. Galilei Galilei’s legendary dilemma and the circumstances surrounding it are presented in Bertolt Brechet’s Life of Galilei from a perspective that is clearly criticizing institutions with such control in this case, the Catholic Church while reminding us that men are simply men, no matter how heroic their actions appear. These issues are expounded throughout the play; however, Scene II has the most significant role in Galileo’s development, as it simultaneously reveals the extent of the Church’s control and humanizes Galileo in just a few lines.

Despite his courage to venture into unexplored realms of science and thought, Galileo is not a hero. He is only a man. Scene 11 is the shortest scene in the play and one of only three scenes in, which the title character does not appear. Yet it is here that Galileo is made completely human. In the quest for a hero, one might ignore his almost hedonistic desire for food, thought, and fine wine and the sacrifices that he makes to acquire money. These characteristics of Galileo are revealed early in the play, when he plagiarizes another man’s telescope invention in order to get a salary raise from the city (Scenes 1 and 2), and then again in Scene 11 when the Pope says,

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"Mr, Galilei understands machinery"
With this knowledge added to the fear of physical discomfort, Galileo later does what most men would do under the circumstances: he recants. Because this scene reveals the negative side of the Church and the human-ness of Galileo, the audience is not distracted from the criticism of the institution. If Galileo had been portrayed as a hero, that aspect of the story would have taken precedence over the theme of institutional control; the heroics would linger and the criticism would be forgotten. Brecht is also reminding us that heroes are unnecessary: man is capable of anything if he opens his mind, just as Galileo does.

Brecht clearly disagrees with institutions that hold complete control over the common man. Scene 11 illustrates just how broad and deep the control of the church is at this point in Galileo’s life. Here we see only two characters, both officers of the Catholic Church, each on separate sides of the issue. Oddly enough, the individual who relents is the higher in rank, the Pope. He should have complete control because he is second only to God in the Catholic hierarchy; he is a man of science, but he is also a tool of religion, as the Inquisitor reminds him:

"Ah, that is what these people say, that it is tile multiplication table. Their cry is, 'The figures compel us,' but where do these figures come from? Plainly they come from doubt, these men doubt everything, Can society stand on doubt and not on faith? 'Thou are my master, but I doubt whether it is for the best,' 'This is my neighbour’s house and my neighbour’s wife, but why shouldn’t they belong to me?' After the plague, after the new war, after the unparalleled disaster of the Reformation; your dwindling flock look to their shepherd and now the mathematicians turn their tubes on the sky and announce to the world that you have not the best advice about the heavens either up to now your only uncontested sphere of influence"

The Pope’s duty is to serve God and tend his flock on earth, and he, like any shepherd, cannot allow God’s people to wander from their faith. He must have obedience and loyalty in the name of God, and therefore, must censor anything of detriment to the greater cause; this despite his personal beliefs, he must do whatever is necessary to uphold the Church and its control over the people. Thus, even the Pope falls under the cloak of the Church. He is a slave to duty and must answer first to his position and second to his personal feelings. As the Inquisitor tells him, the fate of faith is in his hands:

"Doctors of all chairs from the universities, representatives of special orders of the Church, representatives of the clergy as a whole, who have come believing with childlike faith in the word of God as set forth in the Scriptures, who have come to hear Your Holiness confirm their faith: and Your Holiness is really going to tell them that the Bible can no longer be regarded as the alphabet of truth?"

He is under tremendous pressure to save the faith of the people, thereby preserving the foundations of society. The Pope must choose between duty and conscience he is adamantly against Galileo’s condemnation, but so many lives would be shattered if the common people were told that there was more to the universe than they could find in the Bible. Like the little monk’s parents, they would feel very alone.
"There is no eye watching over us, after all,' they would say, 'we have to start out our own, at our time of life. Nobody has planned a part for us beyond this wretched one on a worthless star. There is no meaning in our misery"

The people rely on the Church to lead them to a better life in heaven; their faith is all that they know. It is the Pope's duty to preserve the unity that comes from shared faith, and because he is controlled by that which he governs, he cannot refuse to punish Galileo for fear of social collapse.

Brechet cleverly uses Scene 11 to plant seeds of thought in the minds of his audience members. Through the controversy of Galileo's life and the circumstances surrounding his session with the Inquisition, Galileo explores both the dangers of institutional control and the folly of elevating men to a heroic status. One "will only be disappointed when both prove fallible.

**Life of Galileo: Main Conflicts of the Play**

*Life of Galileo is mainly concerned with age long conflict between science and theology.*

The figure of Galileo, whose 'heretical' discoveries about the solar system brought him to the attention of the inquisition, is one of the Brechet's most humane and complex creations. Brechet's presentation of the phenomenon is not only one of vindictive rather it deals with lasting contention between authority and originality, science and theology, and tradition and modernity. The Life of Galileo expounds this thesis persuasively, and makes us realize some of the basic truths that rise from the interaction human being with society.

It is as clear as daylight from the history, that when, on earth, science digs up a prospect to make headway, the holy orders always situate obstructions in its way. Whosoever ventured to denude the lechery of the Church like Wycliffe and Gower, he had to face the music. Only a decade before Galileo, Guordano was burnt by the third degree for the same scepticism about the macrocosm as that of Galileo.

Spar between science and theology is the quintessence of the "Life of Galileo". This play manifests the innovative theories and discoveries about solar system of a paramount scientist and then his apostasy from his ideas as they do not accord with the Holy Writ and Aristotle's pre-set ideas. Galileo is proclaimed to be a blasphemer and heterodox by the papacy, so, as a result, he has to recant.

In the times of Galileo, The Lord's house was the most influential authority. The clergymen were more curious in sitting on the throne than performing their religious obligations. The religious order was so outrageous and anxious to be at the helm that Barberini a representative of clergy remarks candidly.

"*It is my own mask that permits me certain freedoms today. Dressed like this. I might be heard to murmur. If God did not exist, we should have to invent him.*"

The slate of the art scientific hypotheses of Galileo were turned over in our minds as:
"Vandalising the Holy Scriptures, the bus mess of the holy church and the men of the cloth".

The life of Galileo, every inch, highlights the Brechet's life and his own tight corner as he also had to suffer the same fate. That seems to help Brechet in capturing the innermost feelings and reactions of a man who is on the opposite pole of the authoritative, monarchs. His expatriation from Germany by the Nazi militia after the World War II put him out of the circulation so that he could only carry on his opposition from abroad in a roundabout way. He and Galileo face the same quandary, though Galileo was much nearer the centre of the storm.

Brechet was fascinated to the subject by the clash of ideologies which it represented with Galileo as the champion of a new spirit on empiricism and untrammelled scientific enquiry and the house of the Lord as the defender of faith. The church acceded to the scholastic or Aristotelian view of the world and to the Ptolemaic system, both of which employed to reconcile the Biblical and the conspicuous universe.

The church, however, is by and large treated here as a lay establishment. It specific dogma is being examined in the light of its functions as a probe to practical rule. Galileo a compassionate scientist, not only feels assertive, but also becomes high and mighty for his modern theories about the rotation of the earth. It looks like that his faith in science is firm to the end. He arrogantly declares to his pupil, Andrea:

"Earth is rolling cheerfully around the sun and the fishwives, merchants, princes, cardinals and even the pope are rolling with it."

And his assertion here formulates him more a man of scientific sighting and its upholder than a man of flesh, his proclamation is that of a rational being whose basic education is that of science, he remarks:

"The universe has strayed from its centre overnight and waken up to find, it has countless centres so that one call now be seen as the centre or none at all, suddenly there is a lot of room."

Galileo also satirizes the men of the cloth for laying down the law by saying:

"This has created a draught which is blowing up gold embroidered skirts of the prelates and princes revealing the fat and skinny logs underneath, legs like our own. The heavens, it turns out, are empty."

Neither Galileo nor divinity goes against each other but it is the rigidity of the religious order, which only wants to safeguard the law of the jungle. They are not absorbed in their religion; they only employ the ruse to screen their perks. With the succour of science, new horizons of progress of mankind and of reason mar open. Galileo makes a supposition to wear the crown by outdoing others in Florence through his science. One of the several boo boos, he makes in the play, is on the strength of his newly acquired hard evidence.
Galileo gives an emphasis on the original of his thesis and as well as refuses Aristotelian and Biblical belief about the centre of the universe as sun. Consequently, he is taken to task by the inquisition of the court of Pope.

The clergy falsifies his theories. The grand inquisitor recognises in him a man of flesh with no resistance to torture and Pope discerns a direct connection between Galileo's physical and intellectual appetites.

"His thinking springs from sensuality. Give him an old wine or a new idea and he cat! Not say no."

As Homo-sapiens, he has brown trousers corporeal torment by the instruments which are shown to him in the court. After being a gaol bird for twenty four days, he is in a fit state to abjure. Galileo’s recantation is a trespass in Brechet’s eyes as “an inferior cunning for survival. Recantation astonishes his pupil, Andrea yells at him:

"Wine pump! Snail eater! Did you save your precious skin?"

Brechet’s introductory canto insinuates that Galileo’s apostasy put the age of reason on the back burner, but authentically, it is true that Galileo is a milestone in the chronicles of science and not a comer stone as Brechet implies.

To put our discussion in a nutshell, we can conclude that Galileo has been presented as a scientist in the first version of the play who falls foul of a tight ship and under the menace of torture, counterfeits his scientific findings. This flabbergasts his apprentices and assistants and perplexes the world of science but it is brought to light at tile end of tile play to be a strategy for survival,

**Life of Galileo: As an Epic Drama**

The literary term ‘Epic Theatre’ is customarily applied to a form of opus in which the author recounts a story, using as many episodes and characters as a comprehensive account of his subject cries out for. "Life of Galileo" by Brechet is a play pregnant with all the stipulations of an epic drama. The play is a beauteous addition in the world of Epic Theatre with narrative idiosyncrasies, storyline ins and outs, high-principled theme and the term “Epic Theatre” which was first manipulated in Germany in the 1920's and has become implicitly associated with the name of Brechet. From the beginning of his Brechet had to be skirmish in the face of battle against the prevalent theatre of his day which he dismissed as ‘culinary’ since like connoisseur, it delighted tile sense of taste without encroaching on the mind.

For Brechet, the traditional or dramatic theatre was a place where the audience were absorbed into a comforting fallacy which played on their emotions and left them haggard, but with a sense of satisfaction whim biased them to accept the world as they found if what he himself was looking for, was a theatre that would help to metamorphose tile world.
So, Life of Galileo is an interpretation of Brecht’s Thespian thought. Narration has been given before starting any scene that is a major characteristic of an epic drama. In this play, the author relates an account in a way that invites the onlookers to consider the events involved and then to make their own evaluation of them.

The epic drama has been fabricated as a montage of independent incidents, which shows a process taking place. It moves from scene to scene by curves and jumps which keeps the audience on the ball to the way in which things are happening. So that, they may, at length, be capable to judge whether that is in right way. For an instance, in the first scene, Galileo succinctly hints at telescope but in fourth and fifth scene, it is described point by point. Moreover, role of monks proceed scene to scene.

Change for the amelioration lies at the centre of Brechet’s thinking. It shows his ripened sagacity. This propounds that the hero of the play should not be a fixed character. Galileo in the play has been presented as a round character. He, in the first version of the play, appears to be an ardent satirist and a supercilious scientist who is fully assertive of his new theories that will change the entire world, but in due course, he himself declares his scientific verdicts to be null and void under the menace of torture.

Another characteristic of “Life of Galileo” as an epic drama is that man’s thinking is insured by his social situation and will change if that changes. When Sagredo puts Galileo on the alert that his discovery is theological dynamite, Galileo insists jubilantly, "Humanity will accept rational proof." But in the end of the play, the state of affairs and situations changes his outlook. It makes us feel that hero is forced to be decisive.

As an epic play, "Life of Galileo” is ample with arguments. Galileo, as well as men of the cloth make arguments on their behalf to substantiate their ideas right. Galileo gives arguments to a mathematician,

"Gentleman to believe in the authority of Aristotle is one thing, tangible facts are another. You are saying that according to Aristotle, there are crystal spheres up there, so certain motion just cannot take place because the stars would penetrate then~ But suppose, these motions could be established? Might not that suggest to you that those crystal spheres do not exist? Gentleman, in all humility, I ask you to go by the evidence of your eyes."

Unlike traditional drama, in his play, arguments have been given with ratiocination in lieu of experiences and feelings. In this play, Brechet portrays a world that is tangible, limitless and in the strength of reality that is adaptable and able to alter. It turns the spectator into an observer and instigates him for actions.

At the end of the play, the discrepancy between the scientific and other developments of Galileo's time and the straight local social structures that prevented them from being taken for a ride, for the general benefit would have left the audience with unequivocal questions about the nature of society. Like a masterpiece epic drama language in "Life of Galileo" varies with character.

Galileo strikes a scientific and logical tone. He uses aphoristic and figurative language; it is intentionally made striking to lend force to his damnation. By contri
language is occasionally fairy while that of the Florentine Mathematician and
philosopher is in fun chichi and double-edged. Galileo's change with Andrea and Mrs.
Sarti are direct and laconic as well as taciturn. Vanni introduces the vocabulary of
manufacturing industry into the play. The Life of Galileo is replete with a number of
literary, Biblical allusions and quotations from Dante, V Roe and Einstein. This stylistic
choosing of the references also lend colours to its recognition as an epic drama.

In epic theatre the stage setting of the play was always a general, traditional and historical.
Props (including doors) and furniture were to be purely realistic and above all of social
and historical interest, costumes were to be individualised and to look threadbare. The props and pieces of scenery for "Life of Galileo" were portable and easy to assemble and remove. The bareness of the stage brings the action to light in a cool atmospheric space which was intended to counter-balance the relative lack of Epic form in the writing.

Lastly, "Life of Galileo" is an above board effort of Brechet in writing an Epic in which he goes through with flying colours. Epic theatre cuts across the traditional divisions completely and brings the people to the point of recognition

**Life of Galileo : Plot Construction**

Plot is the combination of incidents in a play or narrative. In the "Poetics" Aristotle puts into words that a good plot has desirable alpha and omega and he further says that it should be so constructed that no incident can be displaced or omitted, without destroying the unity of the whole. Whatever are fundamental arrangements, a plot by and large comprises of a conflict yields a base for the action. Thus, characters are exorted to move from incident to incident. Thus, a plot is a story or play in which incident comes first than character and assigns the vital grounds to the play.

Bertolt Brechet's Epic Drama "Life of Galileo" possesses a convincing, dynamic and emergent plot. The plot makes its way sequentially and never lets even a single incident loose during its progression till the end. The plot of the play is in the region of flush with all the degrees of excellence that a powerful and successful play should have.

Brechet has split the play into scene in lieu of acts as an epic drama weight. The plot of the play turns over a new leaf with the chronicle of the motives of the protagonist of the play. As an epic drama, its theme has been narrated at first scene as Galileo; the eminent scientist of the age is on duty to throw light on his thesis of the rotation of the earth round the sun to his pupil Andrea. Beginning of the plot is already elevated and lends a helping hand to the plot to go onward.

"Life of Galileo" contains fifteen acts of un-identical prolixity. In first two acts, Galileo's Copernican theory has been explained, Introduction of Galileo's relevant has been made over. Next four scenes are from the top to bottom developed. Galileo's theories come out of the four walls to the higher jurisdiction of the country. The inquisition puts Copernican doctrine on the index:
These scenes make Galileo’s character more apparent. He is so fervent about his teachings. He is a “great but restless man.” So I am enforced to fill the gaps in my knowledge.” The authorities come into sight as critics and put the obstacles in hero’s way. Author’s style is adamant in these scenes and plot is still going on towards climax.

From seventh to ninth scene, a conflict and clash between science and theology has been described in the shape of Galileo’s and clergy’s logger heads. Galileo’s character becomes more distinct. Author presents him in these scenes as wholehearted scientist who is committed to corroborate his hypothesis. He presents strong argument in his favour. He has also been presented as quick witted, haughty and fully assertive. He suggests,

"People will accept rational proof someone who turns a deaf ear to the truth is just thick headed. But someone who does not have familiarity with it and calls it a crook."

Role of the men of God becomes as solid as rock in these scenes. Their real objectives and rigidity have been brought to light Bellarmin, a man of cloth, conceitedly lays the black sheep of the order bare by saying.

"It is my own mask that permits me certain freedoms today: If God does not exist we should have to invent him"

The ornate and grandiose language lends beauty and originality to the play. Poignant arguments are offered from both sides. Music and melody is also an essence of Epic Drama. The tenth scene is pregnant with poetic beauties that are every inch pungent and sarcastic and it adds to the elaboration of the situation.

In eleventh and twelfth scene, plot gains its acme with the ardour of the situation. The inquisition summons the world’s famous scientist at Rome. Here plot’s form is not sombre and it moves by looking sharp. Controversies from protagonist and antagonist put them forward in their boon. Galileo says to Virginia,

"Every Local Tom, Dick and Harry with a grind wants to be his spokesman, particularly in places where it is not exactly helpful to me. I have written a book about the mechanics of the universe that, all what people make of it or do not make of it is not my business. The inquisitor also insists on his own creed. It is the restlessness of their own brain which these people have conveyed to the unmoving earth."

Scene of clash and cross-examination from both sides is going on and Galileo is overwhelmed by that.

The plot of the play ebbs when Galileo subdues the opposite party. He is dressed on to abjure from his theories that are absolutely on the strength of true hypotheses. Galileo is set forth torture instruments, so being a man of flash and blood, he declares after deviating from his way.

"I Galileo Galilei, teacher of mathematics and physics in Florence, abjure what I have taught, namely that the Slur is the centre
static and earth is not a centre and not motionless. I foreswear, detest and curse with sincere heart and unfeigned faith, all these errors and any further opinion repugnant to Holy Church."

After recantation, the author himself condemns Galilee's "low cunning for survival" and considers it a sin that has perplexed all the world of science and has delayed many of the scientific discoveries.

To sum up or discussion, we can confidently conclude that the plot of "Life of Galileo" is logical, powerful and developing though it ends at tragic feelings.

**Brechet’s Long-Winded Themes as a Dramatist**

Bertolt Brechet is one of leading epic dramatists of twentieth century. The term "epic theatre" which was first manipulated in Germany in the 1920's and since then it has become implicitly associated with the name of Brechet. From the beginning of his career, Brechet had to be skirmish in the face of battle against the prevalent types and forms of theatre of his day, which he booted out as 'culinary' since like connoisseur, it delighted the sense of taste without impinging on the mind.

Bertolt Brechet was born on 10th of February 1898 at Augsburg where his father was a blue-collar worker and later director of a paper mill. Brechet's life falls into three distinct phases demarcated by his involuntary banishment from his native Germany during the Hitler's murderous period. From 1898 to 1933, he is in Germany, and then he is in expatriation in various parts of the world. In 1947, he comes round again to Europe, first in Switzerland then to the heart of Germany (Bertley). The first performance of the "The Rise and fall of the city of Mahogany" by Brechet led to a revolt against Nazi, Hitler's Army and he was urged by force to take to his heels with his family to Prague.

The aftermaths of his exile can be manifestly seen in his literary compositions. There is a kind of clash between individual and society or authorities, mutinies, thinking. Turbulence sublimity of character and theme of deportation are central to his work as he himself led his life in iron-fisted conditions.

His famous literary compositions are: "The Measures Taken", "The Rise and fall of the City of Mahogany", "Life of Galileo Galilei", "The Private Life of the Master Race", "The Mother", and "Trumpets and Drums". All these plays are composed in the style of Epic Theatre. These Epic plays set a new epoch in the world drama.

For Brechet, the conventional, Thespian theatre was all abode where the onlookers were absorbed into a comforting fallacy which played on their motions and left them haggard, but with a sense of contentment which biased them to accept the world as they found it. What he himself was looking for, was a theatre that would lend a helping hand to metamorphose the world. U-turn for the amelioration lies at the centre of Brechet's thinking. His plays are the interpretations of his suppositions.

While discussing, his dramatic style of approach, narration comes first of all. He elucidates before starting any scene of his every play, about situation and characters that is
going to be performed on the stage. He narrates a story in a way that leads the spectators to consider the events involved and then to make their own assessment of them.

Brechet’s play has been fabricated as a montage of independent incidents, which shows a process-taking place. It moves from scene to scene by curve and jumps which keeps the audience on the ball to the way in which things are happening. So that they may at length be capable indeed, be compelled to judge whether that is in the right way. For an instance, Galileo in “Life of Galileo” succinctly hints at a telescope and religious orders. In forthcoming scene, the man of letters brings them to light point by point Elucidation of situation and them in curves and jumps is also a major technique of Brechet’s work.

Brechet does not bear down his heroes with sensations and feelings. Entirely, unlike traditional heroes, his hero is not an inevitable character, rather a round one. In “Life of Galileo”, in the very first version of the play, the hero is an enthusiastic satirist and a toffee-nosed scientist who is fully assured of his new theories that will change the world but in due course, he himself declares his scientific verdicts to be null and void under the menace of torture.

Another technique of Brechet’s plays is that his plays have been divided into ‘scenes’ in lieu of acts. He does not segregate his plays into three or four acts as traditional dramatists do, but Brechet recounts a story, using many episodes and characters as a comprehensive account of his subject cries out for.

Brechet’s every scene is unabridged in itself. He does not make his observers wait till end. With its consummation, every scene sows the seeds of the capacity of onlookers for action; it is a mutable and able to be altered and so spectators’ eye are fixed at the course. They also brought the observers to the point of recognition.

Irony is also found in Brechet’s play “Life of Galileo”. With the use of this technique, Galileo was fully confident that his thesis would be held in esteem by the religious authorities of his day.

I understand that Collegium Romanum had given his blessing to my observation “So that each one can now be seen as the centre or none at all. Suddenly, there is a lot of room.” It is ironical to his part that in the end of the play, he had to back out of his ideas.”

Brechet’s plays have eloquent and developing as well as persuasive plot. His plots have appropriate alpha and omega. They never slacken their stability for a moment. If there is any trifling or piddling matters discussed, it is demand of the subject. Brechet’s culmination of his plots is sublime but its declining points are not without grandeur and verisimilitude. The observers become a part of the plot and want to act themselves on the stage because of its fascinating power.

Brechet’s art of characterisation and dialogues are also in a class by itself. He does not give any unnecessary details about lineament, robes and appearances. It is the dialogue that exposes his characters. Galileo always talks about science. Mrs. Sarfi is a household lady who treads the boards like the housewives. Andrea authenticates
strenuous and fervid through his holy dialogues, ecclesiastical order speaks the language related to their incentives.

"The inquisitor: It is the restlessness of their own brain which these people have transferred to the unmoving earth."

For the Epic Dramas, Brechet sets stages quite historical as the story demands. For the American production, Brechet and Loughton established certain parameters for the design.

Forming an opinion of the discussions, we can remark that Brechet is a beacon in the world of "Epic Theatre", He set an up to date epoch in drama, He denounces the traits of traditional dramatic theatre and introduces entirely a unique and new mannerism and techniques that are abreast 10 cause and reason and rationality, So, consequently, Bertolt Brechet is the fabulous dramatist.

**Galileo as a Scientist**

Galileo Galilei, a top and high-ranking historical figure was born with zealous soul and marvellous human seat of intellect with restless nature. His oeuvre opened a new epoch in the world of science. He was a maverick who shattered the predominant ideas prevailed about the rotation of the earth. He pioneered the Copernican system as an element in the new thinking that is about to revolutionise science and society.

With the Dutch invention, telescope, Venetian Galileo explored the extra-terrestrial phases and corroborated that Copernican theory was bang on. He migrated to Florence in search of more cure and scope, For research as he had no means to aggrandise his wherewithal and research in Ptolemaic system in Venice.

*Galilee was "great but discontented man. Dissatisfaction is a necessary evil for a scientist who always looks around the prevailing universal phenomena sharply"."

Galileo's brainy research on a mere hypothesis turned the table of ever set idea about the revolution of the sun and centre of the earth that had the kosher favours of theology. Galileo said;

"Yes, I felt that first time I saw one of those, we are not the only ones to feel it. Walls and spheres and immobility! For two thousand years, people have been believing that the sun and all the stays of heaven rotate around mankind, but, now we are breaking out of it, Andrea at full speed, Because the old days are over and this is a new time."

Galileo had the calibre and zealot to metamorphose the whole world overnight. Like a first rate intellectual or philosopher denounced and despised the sloth and inefficacy to explore the universal truth of the layman, He handed out brickbats the society in these words,
"Our cities are cramped and so are men's minds, superstitions and the plague. The universe has lost its centre overnight and woken up to find it has countless centres. Suddenly, there is a lot of room."

Galileo’s heretical discoveries about the solar system brought him to the attention of the inquisition. When the Vatican Research Institute, the Collegium Romanum proves Galileo's explorations, the theological gentry immediately react against him and he is summoned up in total court for inquisition. In the court, he experiences an excruciating trial and is compelled to apostatize his theories and inventions. -'

Here a debility of his spunk comes to our knowledge that only "to save his skin" he comprises with the prevailing circumstances and perpetrate recantation. His apprentices were dumb founded by his reaction, Andrea said,

"Like a man in the street, we said he will die but he will never recant! You came back."

Galillee replies, "I have recanted but I am going to live. Your hands are stained"

In reality, this illustrious man was forced to abjure his theories publicly in papal court. Everyone, Tom, Dick and Harry, treated him as a blasphemer who exchanged theological beliefs, Because of this astronomy, they were left two millenniums behind.

After backing out of his theories, this great man carried on his work privately, eventually, smuggling his work out of his country by his pupil, Andrea, but he could never be recognised by the society.

**Brecht's Dramatic Technique in Galileo**

Brecht’s theory of theatre known as ‘Epic Theatre’ is an anti-illusionist theatre that runs counter to Aristotelian ‘Theatre of Illusion’. It is in the light of this ‘Epic Theatre’ that we need to understand his dramatic technique. By using long pauses, harsh lightening, empty stages, episodic plot, placards announcing the change of scenes, concept of anti-hero, alienation effect or estrange3ment, narrative form and violation imposed by traditional dramatic form.

Brecht’s dramatic technique is intended to create an effect of estrangement among the audience by making the characters declare boldly that whatever the audience is watching is only play-an illusion not reality. The audience is urged to remain intellectually vigilant and not identify with the characters of the play. The audience will have to maintain a critical stance. The long pauses in the play obstruct the smooth flow of the plot. Use of harsh lighting won’t allow anything to be hidden so that the façade of illusion is dismantled. Empty stage makes the audience stop and think curiously about what is to follow. Unity of plot is not emphasized. The play cannot be seen as a whole where the parts serve to create an organic whole. Parts can stand on their own self. Their significance is judged in isolation and their existence doesn’t depend on their contribution to the whole. This idea of the episodic plot gives against Aristotelian idea of unity of plot. Use of placards to announce the change of scene helps to remind the audience of the illusion of theatrical performance. Galileo is an anti-hero because
he acts like a coward fearing the instruments of torture. He doesn’t fulfill our expectations from a hero as we have traditionally understood him. He doesn’t have the courage and the power to prove himself as a great figure. Rather he acts like a person who runs away from the threats and dangers. He, in short, is very anti-heroic.

Aristotelian theory of theatre laid a great emphasis on the adherence to unities of time, place and action. In Galileo, there is violation of these unities. The events of the plot cover decades and are shown to have taken place in places that are far away from one another. The hero is not a person pursuing a single action with commitment. The play talks about many actions that do not coalesce into a single uniform action. Galileo uses narrative form in that it takes past events as a material for dramatization. The play is a dramatization of past events and thus carries a sense of historical facts being narrated. It is opposed to the idea of imaginary present of drama which unfolds before us as if it were happening in front of us for the first time. The play Galileo demands the special relation between the characters and the audience. The audience are not demanded to show empathy towards the characters and be lost in sentimentality. They are urged to maintain a distance between themselves and what happens on the stage. A greater sense of detachment and critical response is demanded of them.

**Significance of telescope in Galileo**

Galileo, the character who has been given a central role in the play with the same name is a scientist credited with the invention of telescope and the instrument stands for the spirit of science. Telescope is a tool used by astronomers to find out the facts about the heavenly bodies and their movement. It is the window through which scientists can get the objective knowledge of the world. It is opposed to religions orthodoxy which stands for superstition, blind faith and ignorance as well as status quo. What Galileo does with the telescope is the key to understand the conflict in the play. The tension is between science represented by Galileo and telescope and the orthodoxy of religion represented by church and the different people of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The play refers to a time in European history when the church was the caretaker of truth. Scientific truth or the spirit of scientific inquiry was suppressed. The role of religion was very great. The scientists had to fact danger to life and were kept under observation. The church was the arbiter of truth in all areas of knowledge. However the fervour for scientific inquiry was gaining ground. If religion doesn’t test established truths and holds fast to them science examines established truth. The role of telescope is very great but it was seen with suspicion by the popes and other church men. It had to be used secretly because of the hostile religious environment. Telescope in the play Galileo poses threat to religious faith and the authority by challenging earlier scientific theories and the belief held by church. In the conflict between science and the religion science has suffered. However when ‘Discourse’ is smuggled out of Italy into Holland, it reaches the masses and they finally know what truth. In a way it is the victory of Telescope. Thus, telescope occupies a great place in the play Galileo.

**Brecht’s Galileo: Hero or Anti-Hero?**

“Unhappy is the land that breeds no hero.”

No, Andrea: “Unhappy is the land that needs a hero.”
The lines, Galileo responding to the parting words of his pupil, Andrea Sarti, who is furious and betrayed by his teacher's recantation, are from the American version of Bertolt Brecht's monumental biographical play about the great astronomer, currently onstage at the Classic Stage Company in New York, in a lean and sober production starring F. Murray Abraham. It's a production very worth seeing, both as an introduction to a rarely-staged modern classic and as a demonstration of how even the most principled of artistic visions can turn back upon themselves, if pursued with honesty.

Brecht wrote the first draft of his play in 1938, at a moment when Nazi ascendancy justified a deep pessimism about progressivism and rationality's ability to triumph in the world, when the world really did seem to need heroes for the cause of reason more than cold-eyed rationalists. He wrote the American version (in collaboration with Charles Laughton) shortly after the Americans dropped the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a moment that justified apprehension at a minimum about whether the progress of science as such was good for the progress of human flourishing. In different ways, each was a moment when the themes that Galileo represented—progress, science, reason—could be questioned. Would they triumph? Should they triumph?

A critical questioning of principles by examining the historical forces that underlie them is central to Brechtian theatre. But in this case, the principles being questioned are the very ones that Brechtian theatre aims to promote.

Brecht's notion of the epic theatre was founded on the concept of the Verfremdungseffekt, usually translated as alienation or distancing effect. This was Brecht's rebuke to Aristotle's theory of drama, founded on the concept of catharsis, an emotional purging that takes place through identification with a character when he comes to a full understanding of the tragic inevitability of his fate. Brecht rejected this identification because he rejected tragic inevitability. His was to be a progressive theatre, a theatre that liberated the audience by alienating them from apparently familiar characters and situations, forcing them to confront the oppressive social structures that are, in his view, the real cause of what appears to be inevitable tragedy.

This alienation is sometimes achieved by means of what one could call theatrical tricks—direct address to the audience, for example, which reminds the audience that it is at a play, not watching real people. The use of song to comment on, rather than advance, the action has a similar purpose. But alienation is also the product of the ironic spirit that animates Brecht's greatest characters and stories.

Galileo provides an excellent illustration of this ironic spirit. The title character is a heroic figure, and would seem tailor-made for boulevard-theatre treatment, the kind of play in which a principal character struggles toward some great accomplishment and we, identifying with her, come to believe that it is we who have gone through the struggle, and leave the theatre feeling very proud of ourselves for what we've done. (The Miracle Worker is an archetypal example of the genre.) He'd be a hero in the Mosaic or Christological mold, who doesn't reach the promised land/usher in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth—but, you know, he blazed the trail, those who come after will carry the torch further, etc. etc. But Brecht complicates this picture. His Galileo is a notably selfish hero—willing to steal other people's inventions, indifferent to his daughter (who he never teaches), seeking after glory and constantly talking about how he likes to eat well—but this isn't the main thing; that co
single-minded determination to advance the cause of science, his indifference to any other ethical concern. The heart of the matter is that his recantation is an act, Brecht makes clear, of cowardice—from the perspective of his pupils, but also from his own perspective.

But what does this mean, that this is the heart of the matter? It means that the heart of the matter is a question of virtues. At that moment in history, Brecht is suggesting, the world needed a hero—a hero for science, for the idea of a truth that is not determined by social and political constraints, a truth whose liberation is, in Brecht’s view, actually a precondition to any real improvement in those constraints. (In the play, the Church opposes the new science because it would lead to social disorder, as poor people realize that their suffering has no transcendent purpose, whereas the advance of science and technology offers the only practical means to end that suffering.) The world needed a hero because it needed inspiration, a figure for progressive forces to identify with and rally around. It needed an Antigone to stand up to the Church’s Creon, even in the face of death.

But isn’t this exactly what Brechtian theatrical principles say is an impediment to political consciousness? Isn’t identification with a virtuous but tragic hero exactly what Brecht wants to deny us in the theatre?

It’s worth comparing “Galileo” with another play about a solitary intellectual hero being crushed by the political establishment for holding to the truth as he sees is: Robert Bolt’s “A Man For All Seasons.” Bolt’s Thomas More is, apparently, not a hero of science but a hero of the Church—a man whose religious convictions would not let him assent to Henry VIII’s divorce, much less his Reformation, who tried to thread the needle of remaining loyal to his sovereign and to his conscience, and who was killed for it precisely because the sovereign couldn’t bear being reminded that there was a needle to be threaded in this matter. But precisely because Bolt makes More’s convictions a matter of his private conscience, he becomes an existential hero. As More himself says in the play, “what matters is that I believe it—or rather, no, not that I believe it, but that I believe.” Bolt was not writing a brief for fidelity to the Church—indeed, the Church was supposed to be an allegorical stand-in for the Comintern, the play a parable about the persecution of Communists in the West. It didn’t matter to Bolt’s play that the institutional commitments of the Church and the Comintern were radically opposed—it didn’t matter because he was making a play about a hero of conscience as such—and for that purpose, it doesn’t really matter what his conscience actually held. At the end of the play, we see More as a hero—defeated by forces smaller than himself, but cosmically the victor precisely because in his martyrdom he showed them to be small. This is why, for all the Brechtian touches of Bolt’s play—most notably, the Common Man character who is the audience stand-in, and who addresses the audience directly to comment on the action—the play is fundamentally acting contrary to the Brechtian spirit of alienation.

“Galileo,” meanwhile, is a play that turns Brecht back upon himself. The play indeed shows us the social forces that drove the tragic outcome. There’s a marvellous scene of the Pope getting dressed that is a synecdoche for the whole play—the new Pope is himself a scientist, and Galileo is counting on this bit of biography to ensure his personal safety as he pursues his forbidden research. Well, before he gets dressed, when he’s just himself, the Pope demands that Galileo be left alone. But as vestment layers on vestment, and the man is buried in the office, institutional imperatives overwhelm conscience, and the Pope agrees to threaten
Galileo with torture to achieve the necessary recantation. We see all this—but we long for Galileo to stand against this. We long for a hero—as do Galileo’s pupils. And we don’t get it.

And then Brecht gives himself an out. Galileo, after his recantation, continues to work in secret on his Discorsi. When his now-hostile old pupil Andrea visits him, Galileo passes him the secret book, and Andrea repents of his hostility. He gets it—his longing for a hero was just silly pre-scientific un-progressieve thinking. Galileo preserved his life—and therefore was able to continue his work. And the work is all that matters. We don’t need heroes—we need progress.

But Brecht won’t take the out he gives himself. Galileo says: he didn’t recant out of calculation that he’d be more good to progress alive than dead. He was just a coward. And Andrea’s political calculation is wrong: the world did indeed need a hero, and Galileo wasn’t one.

True to Brecht’s goals, watching the play is an alienating, not a cathartic experience. F. Murray Abraham isn’t the physical type of Brecht’s Galileo—it’s strange to hear this lean and hungry actor go on about feeding his belly—but he has the requisite frigid aloofness, particularly from his daughter. His early expressions of hope for progress, confidence that man will always believe the direct evidence of his senses, come off not so much as naïve as dismissive of alternative possibilities. He doesn’t actually have faith in human reason, because he doesn’t really have any profound human relationships that would ground faith in any aspect of the human character. Rather, he has faith in his own reason—not in his omniscience, but in the clarity of his own mind. Irrationality, whether perverse or interest-driven, isn’t a concern of his, because it’s just plain wrong. (Murray’s Galileo bears some resemblance to our contemporary “New Atheists” in this.) But when he returns home after the recantation, he’s poleaxed by fear, clutching his groin as if he’d been threatened with castration—or as if the recantation was exactly that. And after that, his one note is bitterness and self-reproach.

But all of these emotions are understated in performance; Abraham never really lets us identify with his Galileo emotionally. The supporting cast paints in bolder colors (with the exception of Amanda Quaid, who is very nearly emotionally invisible as Galileo’s daughter, Virginia), with moving moments from in particular from Galileo’s pupils: Aaron Himelstein as the Little Monk, Jon Devries as Federzoni, and Andy Phelan as Andrea. And the set is understated as well, except for a vast circular screen upstage on which we see depicted the objects of Galileo’s study: the sun, the moon, the stars of the universe. These, not the human drama below, inspire awe. We, with Galileo’s pupils, are left wanting more from our hero. Which may well be how Brecht wanted us to feel.

How far do you think Brecht is successful in applying his theories about drama in Galileo Galilei? (P.U. 2007) OR Do you think the play, Galileo Galilei, presents a conflict between the authority and free scientific inquiry, both on the institutional level and within Galileo’s own character? (P.U. 2006)
Europe in the early 1930’s was a cauldron of social and political unrest. Literature sought not to provide accurate images but instead provoked change and encouraged thought and evaluation. Bertolt Brecht, a renowned German playwright, attempted to highlight the undeniable triumph of reason and knowledge and emphasised victory over authoritarian oppression.

*The Life of Galileo* is a play that, although being set in the past, concentrates on presenting contemporary implications and consequences of the remarkable account of the struggle between Galileo’s scientific discoveries and the extraordinary power and influence of the Catholic Church. The foundations of world literature have always been based on the attitudes and values of society. Authors, playwrights and poets are influenced fundamentally by the ideologies around them. All of Brecht’s plays were a form of social and political instruction. He did not consider drama to be a form of entertainment, and instead portrayed important images to the people of Europe, showing them the potential for social, political and economic change. Being a Marxist, having grown up in an ordinary German family and having seen the progress of several regimes of European history, including the ascendance of Adolf Hitler and the effects of government ideology on people, Brecht became a respected social commentator. He seldom conformed with the views of the government, and many of the ideologies the that playwright questions in *The Life of Galileo* were prevalent in governments in Europe at the time. It’s not difficult to realize why his texts were banned from Germany not long after they became widely read. His support for the empowerment of the common man and those marginalized in society is clear, and his endorsement of socialism is outright.

In the mid 1930’s, Europe was undergoing significant change. Legal, social and political traditions were being swept away by the onslaught of totalitarianism. Governments were introducing policies of restricting individual freedom and seeking to subordinate all aspects of the individual’s life to the political ideology of the time. The, promises that the industrial revolution proclaimed, were unfulfilled and people were disillusioned. Fascist and totalitarian governments were taking over most of Europe, particularly in Italy, under Benito Mussolini, in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin and in Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler. Each government pursued its own special goal, and anything that could foil the goal would be rejected, often at significant social and humanitarian cost. In Germany, the Nazi government sought to purify the German race and champion the common man.

In order to ensure their political longevity, governments in Europe at the time of Brecht influenced the people into believing that they were perched on the dawn of a new age. Through shocking reforms and proclamations of a bright future for all, rulers in several parts of the continent led everyone in their country to believe they were on the verge of huge changes and reforms for the better. The Nazi government successfully indoctrinated its people. The chant “Now a new age is dawning” was repeated throughout Germany. By ensuring that citizens were dazed and remained dreaming of the endless possibilities that the new age would bring, successive governments could do as they pleased in the name of change. The very first sentence of Brecht’s notes on *The Life of Galileo* express the importance of this ideology in the text.

“It is well known how felicitously people can be influenced by the conviction that they are poised on the threshold of a new age.”
Undoubtedly Brecht was aware of this policy of the Nazi planned to use his theatre to question it. Use of the words ‘felicitously’ and ‘influenced’ show that the new age of which Brecht was speaking was artificial and induced only by the evils of politics. In *The Life of Galileo*, however, he chooses to present a historical situation where there was potential for a new age to dawn, an age brought about by the convictions of the people, not false claims by the government. Brecht presents the character of Galileo not as a hero, but as a real and flawed human being.

Galileo’s recantation put on hold for years the progress he had made and allowed the Catholic Church’s teachings and values to continue unquestioned. The silent message from Brecht is that we should put society before ourselves, just as Galileo should not have recanted to continue the momentum of thought and evaluation set against the 15th century social system. It is human nature to change and progress – in very few societies in the modern world has equilibrium been maintained. Brecht was telling those seated in the theatre to strive to change and question what they saw around them in the way that they wanted by not conforming with the views of others and not simply accepting what is set down by the government. He also pointed out the catalysts for further, genuine change in society – after all, the influence of several great reformists was spreading in the mid-1930’s – Marx, Freud and Einstein, among others. Even though Galileo was presented as far from perfect, he was a man who desired change and progress. Despite Sagredo’s warning that man is not ‘amenable to commonsense’ and predictions of Galileo being burnt at the stake; despite the onslaught of the Plague; despite Bellamarin claiming that Galileo’s teachings are ‘foolish and heretical’; despite all possible adversity, Galileo proclaims a new age.

“Andrea and I have made discoveries which we can no longer withhold from the world. A new era has dawned, a great age in which it is a joy to be alive.”

In addition to Brecht presenting his audience with images of the Dawn of a New Age in *The Life of Galileo*, he similarly questions a core political ideology of the time. In 1933, Adolf Hitler came into power in Germany, Brecht’s homeland. He began a campaign that included suppressing all literature that in any way questioned the beliefs of the government. He had all of Brecht’s plays, poetry and books burnt in an attempt to keep the public uninformed about the potential for change in their government. Subsequently, Brecht was deported from Germany and had his passport removed. These events in the playwright’s life undoubtedly had an affect on his writing and impelled him to write plays that questioned the creed of the government. *The Life of Galileo*, particularly the initial version written in 1939, presents the genius scientist Galileo as a man who, despite blindness, outsmarts the inquisition and ensures that his life’s workings are not suppressed. In doing so, Brecht was subtly pointing out that suppressing knowledge will always be futile.

Throughout the play, Galileo sustained his belief in mankind’s sense of reason. He perceived that our innate curiosity and desire to explain the universe must prevail over everything else. He remarks, “Knowledge will become a passion and research an ecstasy”. The final scene of the play is particularly significant in understanding Brecht’s stance on the suppression of knowledge and discovery. As Andrea, Galileo’s student, heads off beyond Catholicism and into new areas, he takes with him Galileo’s Discorsi, the product of a lifetime of research and experimentation. He crosses a border post with the manuscript hidden under his coat, prepared to spread Galileo’s teachings throughout the world. Despite the inquisition putting Galileo under guarded house arrest and despite the Catholic Church’s
maintain its dominance, knowledge and reason won. Brecht saw in Galileo’s case a historical precedent for successfully spreading the truth despite the adversity of the Gestapo and secret police in Germany. With every step outside of Italy, Andrea enacts how new ideas are irrepressible. The final line of the play demonstrates the implications of the new discoveries and an optimistic view of the future with Galileo’s knowledge changing the face of the earth.

“We are really only at the beginning.”

Brecht had strong Marxist convictions. Living in a time when the industrial revolution had taken its toll – working and living conditions were poor for millions of Europeans, Marxism offered the promise of improvements for the working class. A socialist system was particularly attractive for the masses in Germany – instead of their lives being controlled by a totalitarian government as a result of which they felt like pawns, socialism offered the potential for everyone to contribute to the country. In *The Life of Galileo*, Brecht conveyed several strong Marxist ideals. Galileo was portrayed not only as a scientist, but a humanitarian who could change the face of not only science, but society too. This is most abundantly clear towards the end of the play, where Ludovico points out that Galileo’s discoveries could incite a revolution among the peasants, not because of scientific fact, but because the well-established social and political system could finally be questioned and changed.

“... your treatise on the satellites of Jupiter in no way disturb our peasants. Their work in the fields is too arduous. Yet it could disturb them to learn that frivolous attacks on the sacred doctrines of the Church now go unpunished.”

In the 15th century, the wealthy and advantaged had dominance over their servants and workers. The peasants worked freely, but they led a limited, unenlightened life. This was mainly due to the fact that they were intellectually cut off from the rest of the world – all major publications were in Latin, which they were not able to read. Galileo insisted that all of his findings be published in the Vulgate so that everyone would have access to them. People believed that this could have disastrous consequences for the equilibrium in Italy. Not only would Galileo’s teachings undermine the main ruling body, the Catholic Church, but each person previously suppressed would realise that the world was undergoing both scientific and social change, and that they need not be treated differently to their masters. All of the peasants were born into their role, the upper class intentionally keeping them focused only on their work and ensuring that they were kept illiterate, uneducated and totally dependant on those in control.

Until Galileo’s time, the study of science and philosophy was combined. Science was not interpreted objectively, but the workings of the world were analysed according to the philosophical beliefs of the time. Ever since Aristotle had handed down the Ptolemaic system, its supremacy was unquestioned because it was protected by the combined entity of science, religion and philosophy. The Catholic Church adopted Aristotle’s philosophy, and for decades it reigned unchallenged. Bellarmin remarks, ‘Science is the legitimate and dearly beloved daughter of the Church, Signor Galilei’. Galileo questioned this age-old system, maintaining that science should not be related to philosophy. A group consisting of both scientists and philosophers visited Galileo in Florence to discuss his new discoveries. They refused to look into the telescope to evaluate Galileo’s work, despite his constant pleading, ‘But really, you
gentlemen need only look through the instrument!’. In a famous quote from the play, Galileo challenges the obstinate outlook of the scholars.

“The world of knowledge takes a crazy turn
When teachers themselves are taught to learn.”

Instead of supporting new developments and change, the philosophers and scientists are completely unconcerned with scientific truth. As the philosopher remarks furiously to Galileo, ‘The truth may lead us absolutely anything!’. Even Cardinal Barberini, the man who subsequently becomes Pope must uphold the status quo despite being a scientist and appreciating Galileo’s discovery. Brecht naturalizes the upper class’ inconsiderate outlook towards the working class. In the first scene, Ludovico remarks:

“My mother thinks that a little science is necessary. All the world takes a drop of science in their wine nowadays, you know”

Ludovico, an upper class gentleman, was sent to Galileo to ‘take a drop of science’ his position in society dictated that he should have a basic understanding of the workings of the world. Galileo made a miraculous change to Europe’s approach to science. Instead of science being something handed out to only the upper class with their wine, by the end of the play, everyone in Italy and Europe had access to science through a language they could read and even through entertainers on the street! Galileo transformed expensive wine to water affordable to all, Brecht drawing clear parallels with Marxism which endorsed a classless system.

The gulf between the quest for knowledge and absolute religious faith can be very wide, and has caused problems at many points in history. Galileo’s doctrines which proclaimed that the sun, rather than the earth, is at the centre of the universe displaced the accepted position of the heavens and the supremacy of the Catholic Church. When his trusted friend Sagredo asks him, “where is God In your cosmography?”, Galileo responds, “Within ourselves or nowhere”. In the early 20th century, when Darwin’s theory of natural selection and evolution became widely studied, science once again came in conflict with the Catholic Church. The conflict between such ideologies is unmistakable in The Life of Galileo. Just as the political ideologies of Germany deported Brecht and had his literature burned, the ideologies entrenched in the Catholic Church destroyed the brilliant scientist Galileo. The similarities between the lives of Galileo and Brecht run deep in the text and were a prime motivation for Brecht writing the play. Just as he continued reforming theatre long after he was deported from his homeland, Galileo continued to secretly compose his Discorsi despite blindness and being under heavily guarded house arrest.

“We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.”

Brecht rose to the occasion of transforming the social field in Europe. Change around him and his strong political convictions unquestionably had an impact on his writings. In a single performance, Brecht manages to succinctly yet powerfully challenge the belief that knowledge can be suppressed and simultaneously endorse the belief of a
society. In combination with his strong Marxist ideals, Brecht produced a performance that had extensive social and political significance. The ideologies of the people, the ideologies of the government and the ideologies of some of the world’s greatest thinkers come together in Brecht’s The Life of Galileo to provide an astonishing insight into our social reality.

“...It is a play what contains very little element of caricature. This does not turn his Galileo into the self-portrait it is sometimes alleged to be...” What is your opinion? (P.U. 2004)

The conflict between Galileo and the Church took place within a densely charged political atmosphere. The new science threatened both the Church’s traditional role as arbiter of doctrinal truth and its position as a great European power. What were the political issues at stake in the debate over Copernicanism? We can approach this question from two directions, asking (a) what political interests did the Church have vested in the traditional worldview; and (b) what interests did the Galileans stake in Copernican worldview. Given the profoundly human dimension of this conflict, we should also ask: what were Galileo’s choices?

The first question, the Church’s political investment in the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology, is about Counter-Reformation politics. In the century-and-a-half prior to Galileo’s trial, Italy and the Church suffered a succession of severe setbacks. The French invasion left Italy in a state of political wreckage and set the stage for a poisonous rivalry between the Holy Roman Emperor, the Papacy, and the King of France. At the same time, the Church faced dissension within its own ranks. When the sixteenth century opened, scarcely anyone in Europe doubted the need for reform of the Church. Most called for a reform from within, but Luther, that Papal Bull-burning German, crossed the Rubicon. Breaking completely with the church, he split Christendom into two belligerent blocs, and added a vicious ideological element to the Cold War of the sixteenth century.

The Council of Trent, called ostensibly to answer the Protestant challenge, created a new, toughened Church. To combat the Protestant Heresy, the Council redefined the Church’s doctrine and established iron-fisted mechanisms to enforce the creed, including the Index of Printed Books and the Inquisition at Rome. One of the most important debates at the Council of Trent was over the Question of Scripture vs. Tradition. Does religious truth rest upon the word of God alone, or does it rest upon the dual foundations of scripture together with the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions? Since the Church was the source and guardian of tradition, its religious and political authority weighed in the balance. Years of debate and thousands of scudi went into answering this question, but the conclusion was determined by political necessity: Scripture and Tradition together, not Scripture alone, were the win bulwarks of the faith.

Galileo’s trial hinged upon the Church’s rigid adherence to this doctrine. Galileo did not just defend a new astronomical system; he proclaimed science to be a new criterion of authority, and hence undermined the bedrock of Roman Catholic authority.

The philosophy of Aristotle was fundamental to the new scholasticism that emerged after Trent. Arguments based upon Aristotle’s physics explained and justified many of the
central dogmas that separated Roman Catholics from Protestants-the Church’s interpretation of the Eucharist, for example. But the issue was not simply one of physics, theology, or astronomy. The issue, as Brecht rightly portrays it, was “pernicious doctrines,” which was what the inquisition was formed in the first place to deal with, and was matter with which, by the time of the trial, the Holy Office had gained a great deal of practical experience.

The carnival scene in the Life of Galileo, where the people claim their right “to say and do just what one pleases,” may seem slightly contrived from an historical point of view, but it captures the essential point that in the time of Galileo the Church was engaged in a two-front war: one against high culture, which resisted conforming to Counter-Reformation patterns, and another against the people, who often perverted doctrine in aggressively original ways.

There are many historical examples of the originality of popular culture. The best known (thanks to a recent book on the subject by Carlo Ginzberg) was miller called Menocchio, of the Friuli region in northern Italy, who was denounced to the Inquisition in 1583. Menocchio owned a few books. None of them were heretical, but his reading of them was shockingly so. He became convinced for example, that the sacraments were human inventions and just so much merchandise. He said you may as well confess to a tree as to a priest; and that all men are equal because the spirit of God is in everyone. He constructed a wholly materialistic cosmology that all but denied God the creator.

Whenever Menocchio got the chance, he insolently exercised his freedom of judgment. Menocchio was brought to trial in 1599, just as proceedings against Giordano Bruno were drawing to a close. In the same year Tommaso Campanella was thrown into prison for fomenting a rebellion in Calabria. Campanella languished in prison for more than twenty years. Bruno and Menocchio went to the stake for heresy. The trial and execution of these two mean, a philosopher and a miller, symbolizes the war the Church waged against high and low cultures in an effort to impose doctrines promulgated by the Council of Trent. And it is not insignificant that Bruno and Campanella both vigorously supported Copernicus and Galileo respectively.

The attack on Galileo commenced in 1614, when the Dominican preacher Tommaso Caccini delivered a sermon denouncing mathematics as a diabolical art, mathematicians as enemies of the state and Galileo as the propagator of cosmological absurdities. Copernicus’s book was placed on the index in 1616. Cardinal Bellarmino, stating the Church’s position, declared that until the Copernican theory was demonstrated, a literal reading of scripture must be taken as a matter of faith. Construing the Trent decree in a narrow, bureaucratic way, Bellarmino declared that it would be extremely imprudent to rewrite Scripture in light of an unproven scientific theory – which was in fact the status of Copernicanism in 1616. Despite Galileo’s eloquent plea for separate standards of scientific authority, Bellarmino’s position remained the Church’s until the time of the trial.

Brecht makes Galileo’s recantation the central problem of the play, rendering it as a capitulation to the authorities. Historical analysis probably cannot help us decide whether Galileo was a coward or a hero. But it may help us to decide whether or not he had a choice in the matter. Indeed, by changing the ending of his play, Brecht himself forces the question. Galileo I is about the necessity of fighting for the liberty to teach the truth. Galileo II, on the other hand, is about the social responsibility of the scientist. This can only mean that for
Brecht the scientist must not just seek the truth; he must also see to it that the truth does not get into the wrong hands. Where does this leave Galileo? Did he have a choice?

One choice, a typically Renaissance option, can be illustrated by reference to one of Galileo’s contemporaries – a scientist who might in fact have supplied Brecht with a more suitable model for the conception of science he advocates in Galileo II.

Giambattista Della Porta was twenty-nine years older when Galileo. He was born in Naples in 1535, and died in 1615, when Galileo was at the peak of his career, eighteen years before the trial. The two scientists knew each other; both belonged to the Academia dei Lincei, the scientific academy that sponsored Galileo’s books, and they communicated with one another about Galileo’s research with the telescope. There is another similarity between Galileo and Della Porta. In 1574, and again in 1590, Della Porta confronted the inquisition and was forced to recant his scientific views.

However, Galileo and Della Porta represented two very different scientific traditions. Whereas Galileo stood for the tradition of mathematical physics, Della Porta was Europe’s most famous champion of natural magic. According to Della Porta, nature was a great repository of occult forces, which science can exploit for beneficial purposes. Natural magic was sixteenth-century Italy’s version of the utilitarian science was advocated by Francis Bacon and later Brecht. It promulgated a utopian image of science as the foundation for reforming society and manners.

Della Porta’s major scientific discovery was that all supposed “magical” phenomena are in reality the results of natural causes, and it was his radical stance not his science of occult qualities that got him into trouble with the Inquisition. For the Church, in order to work its magic, had to maintain a monopoly over access to the occult. Indeed, the church was a vast reservoir of magical power, which it was capable of deploying for a variety of secular purposes. Della Porta, who insisted that science can exploit occult powers, thus struck a blow at the Church’s monopoly over the supernatural, just as Galileo challenged the Church’s monopoly over interpreting the book of nature.

Della Porta, like Brecht, was tremendously impressed by the potential of science. He knew it could do good, but also great harm. Because of this he maintained that sometimes it is necessary to write obscurely, speaking in riddles and symbolic language, lest knowledge get into the wrong hands. Although he published a popular work entitled Natural Magic, he withheld publication of his most precious secrets, the “quintessence of his science,” on the grounds that they might be abused or corrupted by the people. He sent a manuscript of this work only to Rudolf II, the Holy Roman Emperor, imaging that Rudolph, whom he thought the most enlightened prince in Europe, would use it for the best ends.

The distance in attitudes toward the ‘secrets of nature’ between Della Porta and Galileo is almost the same as the distance that separates us from the Renaissance. For Della Porta, only a magus could rightfully penetrate into the secrets of nature. Galileo, on the other hand, declared nature to be an open book that anyone can read, provided he knows the language in which it is written, mathematics. For Della Porta, the pearls of science were too precious to be fed to swine; for Galileo, public confirmation of his discoveries was an essential component of the scientific method.
Galileo, given the style of science he practiced, took the only choice available to him. To have taken the route advocated by Della Porta, and presumably also Brecht, would have meant doing a completely different kind of science. Since the Copernican issue could not be settled in strictly scientific terms, and had necessarily to be debated on theological grounds, Galileo argued the debate in that treacherous territory. Perhaps, in light of these historical circumstances, the most appropriate dramatic form for the trial of Galileo is not epic, but tragedy.

**Brecht has portrayed a conflict between the individual and the world in his Play Life of Galileo?**

Most of the time Brecht portrayed a clash between the ends means between the past rational way and the present Reality or we can say the conflict between the individual and the world. It energy through different ways as a conflict between the old order and the new world, as far as Brechtian style is concern he showed the collision between the two irreconcilable ideologies.

In the plays he showed the stagnant traditional view of religion and also the pasteurization of the moral standards with an unaccommodating ideas of the established tradition but it is a human need to redefine all the rigid ad orthodox nations street’s Galileo is a historical personality but its prior concern is to change the whole rigid old structure of the society is based on the so-called religious beliefs.

Galileo character seemed the representative of new scientific view, which is apposed by the obsolescent elongation of the church. The whole depiction of the church in ‘Life of Galileo’ is dictatorial one, which has a complete hold over the political matters and also on science. It seems that the domination on both classes as a opposition for the new world order or you can say free research.

‘Science is ruined and church is sitting on it with fat behind’

So we can say that Galileo’s new invitation is challenging because it shows the new idea about science and it became a threat to the social standards. The protagonist is of the opinion that in his day’s astronomy has reached the market place and has thus broken the monopoly of an exclusive coterie. In this play when the balled singer announced that the earth is hot the center of the sun, than whole order of the society turned upside down. The builder will keep his building for himself and the woodchopper will burn his own fuel whereas.

‘Princes will have to wax their own boots’

The emperor can bake his own bread for orders the soldiers want care two hoots

They’ll go for stroll instead’

The whole scenario of Galileo society was so much stagnant that if they start to thuck about the new idea that awards questions arises from them. The sees the topsy-turvy Copernican macrocosm as a working model for their own social microcosm. It seemed that old order felt
a threat this dread is of an existential nature like that of a little mimic’s company peasants who without a divinely appointed order will begin to say;

‘There is no meaning in our misery hunger is simply not having eaten and not a Test of strength’

The language or linguistic change is refocused in scene 4 when the Aristotelian philosopher commences an arid disputed by Galileo that his lens-polisher will not be able to follow the argument.

Brecht’s Anti-villain hero Galileo breaks an age old age idea about the universe but also shatters the traditional concept of a hero because he accepts not virtue but martyrdom.

In the end we can say that Brecht does not simply dismiss religion as kind of pre-scientific superstition and also its necessity. In the clash between religion and Marxism Brecht not only reconcile religion with dialectical materialism but also to develop human socially in which religion necessity is denied.

Q.7. Discuss the portrayal of the church in Life of Galileo?

For the theatre it is important to understand that this play must lose a great part of its effect for its performance is directed chiefly against the Roman Catholic Church.

Of the dramatis personae, many wear the church’s garb. Actors who, because of that, try to portray these characters as odious would be doing wrong. But neither, on the other hand, has the church the right to have the human weaknesses of its members glossed over. It has all too often encouraged these weaknesses and suppressed their exposure. But in this play there is also no question of the church being admonished: ‘Hands off science!’ Modern science is a legitimate daughter of the church, a daughter who has emancipated herself and turned against the mother.

In the present play the church functions, even when it opposes free investigation, simply as authority.

Since science was a branch of theology, the church is the intellectual authority, the ultimate scientific court of appeal. The play shows the temporary victory of authority, not the victory of the priesthood. It corresponds to the historical truth in that the Galileo of the play never turns directly against the church. There is not a sentence uttered by Galileo in that sense. If there had been, such a through commission of investigation as the Inquisition would undoubtedly have brought it to light. And it equally corresponds to the historical truth that the greatest astronomer of the Papal Roman College, Christopher Clavius, confirmed Galileo’s discoveries (scene 6). It is also true that clerics were among his pupils (scenes 8, 9 and 13).

To take satirical aim at the worldly interests of high dignitaries seems to be cheap (it would be in scene 7). But the causal way in which these high officials treat the physicist is only meant to show that, by reason of their past experiences, they think they can count on ready complaisance from Galileo. They are not mistaken.
When one looks at our bourgeois politicians, one cannot but extol the spiritual (and scientific) interests of those politicians of old.

The play, therefore, ignores the falsifications made to the protocol of 1616 by the Inquisition of 1633, falsifications established by recent historical studies under the direction of the German scholar Emil Wohlwill. Doubtless the judgment and sentence of 1633 were thereby made juridical possible. Anybody who understands the point of view outlined above will appreciate that the author was not concerned with this legal side of the trial.

There is no doubt that Urban VIII was personally incensed at Galileo and, in the most detestable manner, played a personal part in the proceedings against him. The play passes this over.

Anyone who understands the standpoint of the author will realize that this attitude implies no reverence for the church of the seventeenth, let alone of the twentieth century.

Casting the church as the embodiment of authority in this theatrical trial of the persecutors of the champions of free research certainly does not help to get the church acquitted. But it would be highly dangerous, particularly nowadays, to treat a matter like Galileo’s fight for freedom of research as a religious one; for thereby attention would be most unhappily deflected from present-day reactionary authorities of a totally uneclesiastical kind.