

BRITISH DRAMA

UNIT I

THE GORBADUC

Thomas Nortan & Thomas Sackville

‘Gorboduc’ is a play written in 1561, by English authors Thomas Nortan and Sackville. It is the first known verse drama to use the poetic form called blank verse. As a political play, it concerns the legendary Britonic realm of Gorboduc. His throne is claimed by his sons Porrex and Ferrex. The legend of Gorboduc was a sensitive topic during the era of the play. It mirrors the real life anxieties regarding Queen Elizabeth I’s rights to rule and to determine the rightful succession to her throne. The play draws some plot elements from Seneca’s tragic plays, but is also considered to have departed from earlier models.

In the beginning of the play, a narrator summarises the legend of the king of Britain Gorboduc. He divided his kingdom in half, giving half to each of his son Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fight over the unfair share given to the other brother. Ultimately, the younger Purrex killed the elder Ferrex. Videna, the mother of these boys loved her favourite son Ferrex. To avenge his tragic death, she killed the other son Porrex. Then the people of the country, shocked by the bloodshed and malice displayed by their leaders killed both Gorboduc and his wife. The kingdom broke out in a civil war, started by the nobility, who tried to restore order by killing the initial rebels. Following these unfortunate events, Britons suffered from famine and unrest. Their population and dignity have collapsed.

The Duke of Albany, Fergus, plots to seize the throne. He collects an army with the help of his friends. The nobles kill the rebels just as Fergus, army is raised. They label him ‘a foreign enemy’ and vow to fight back. A nobleman Arostus tries to mediate the dispute through the agency of government, proposing that parliament decides the next king. In the play’s final scene, Eubulus laments the kingdom’s tragedy. He states that it could have been prevented had the kingdom depended on parliament from the beginning. Unlike the original legend, the play concludes with optimism.

Eubulus envisages the future of the country in which justice wins over greed. Sackville and Norton subvert the tragic story it is based on, exhibiting that civilization can survive the failures of its individual members, no matter how powerful they are.

The play discusses the issues associated with power struggle between two princes. When Gorboduc proclaims that he will divide the kingdom between Porrex and Ferred, his council members objected to this idea. To highlight their warning, they even cited the story of a cousins Cunedag and Morgan who once ruled Britain together. When the two argue about the rightful ownership of the throne, they break up and there is hostility between them. As a result, Cunedag killed Morgan, but Gorboduc did not listen to their council and proceeds with his idea. Farrex's scheming advisor Hermon tells him to take Porrex's portion of the kingdom, as it is his front chance to grab his share. Tyndar, Porrex's advisor tells Porrex that Ferrex intends to start a war against him. As a pre-emptive measure, Porrex invades Ferrex's part of the kingdom. Consequently, Ferrex perceives the invasion as confirmation of Herman's suspicion. Dordan sends a word to Gorboduc about the squabble between the brothers. Gorboduc laments that history repeats itself. But he refuses to send an enemy to intervene. He gets the shocking news that Ferrex has been slain. Porrex defends his murder by explaining his situation, for he believed that Ferrex wanted to usurp his land. Gorboduc makes no issue out of it. However, that night, his wife Videna goes to Porrex's room and states him to death. Thus the play explains how the mania for power leads to destruction and chaos.

THE JEW OF MALTA

Christopher Marlowe's

Marlowe is one of the university wits who were popular at the age of Elizabeth in England. The play is set on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea. In the opening scene, the Turkish Sultan's son Salim Calymath steps in, to exact Malta's tribute. The tribute has been neglected for the past ten years. Hence it has accumulated to a considerable sum. The governor of Malta Ferneze is unable to produce the funds quickly. But he assures that he will pay within a month. Ferneze decides to collect the tribute from the Jews of Malta. Accordingly, it is resolved that each Jew must give up half of his estate.

Barabas, the protagonist of the play rebels against this policy. Hence his entire property is confiscated. Barabas plots to retrieve part of his fortune through his daughter Abigall and the two young men Mathias and Lodowick, her suitors.

In the meantime, Abigall enters into nunnery having made false confession and retrieves her father's hidden fortune. The Spanish vice admiral Martin convinces Ferneze to break Malta's league with Turk, Promising him military aid from Spain against Turks. He sells his slaves to Ferneze. Barabas buys a slave Ithamore at the market place.

Barabas notifies the two young men's interest in winning the heart of Abigall and assure, them his favours to each. Barbas contrives a plot to have Mathias and Lodowick to kill each other. Ithamore delivers counterfeit letters to these young men who at last confront and kill each other.

Abigall comes to understand her father's plot and the consequent murder of her lover Mathias, and she enters into nunnery once again. Being afraid of being exposed by his daughter Abigall, Barabas kills all the nuns with porridge of rice. Abigall is the last to die. Before she breathes her last, she successfully hands over a written confession about her father's crimes to a friar Barnardine. The friars decide to confront Barabas after they bury the nuns.

In the mean time, there is a war on Malta by the troops of Turks as Ferneze refuses to pay the tribute. While the friars mount charges after charges at Barabas, he proclaims that he is repentant for his crimes and he will become a Christian. He is willing to contribute all his

property to the nunnery he enters. The two friars, being from different monasteries, fight to win Barabas' fortune. Now Barabas has set a death trap for them. He decides to murder both friars without arousing anyone's suspicion.

Ithamore, Barabas' accomplice, comes to know the criminal actions of Barabas and he begins to blackmail Barabas with threats to confess if the Jew does not send him gold. Ithamore is instigated by a courtesan Bellamira also. Barabas in the guise of a French musician enters into Bellamira's house and imprisons his blackmailers.

In the final act, Ferneze prepares to defend Malta against the Turks. Ithamore, Bellamira and her attendant enter and all play their roles affectively in exposing Barabas' crimes. But the Jew's poison takes effect and they fall dead. Barabas has been captured but he feigns death through the use of a drug. He is thrown outside the city walls. The Jew betrays Malta and allows the Turks into the city. In the new government, the Jew occupies a high position as governor. But he finds it undesirable. So he decides to return Malta to Ferneze and contrives to massacre the Turkish forces. At last, the Turkish troops succumb to the trap laid by the Jew.

Ferneze turns the tables on Barabas at the last moment, and eventually Barabas dies. Ferneze takes Calymath as a prisoner in order to ensure Malta's future safety.

Almost all the characters in the play are motivated by greed for money. Barabas has more than enough money. But he refuses to contribute to the safety of Malta. But, despite all the destructive activities of Barabas, he plays a crucial role in the safety of Malta all the way to his death.

UNIT II

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

John Webster

John Webster's play *The "Duchess of Malfi"* is said to be the finest tragedy in the English language. The story of the play is taken from the *Novelle* of Bendello, Part 1, No. 2. The main outline of the story is based upon Painter's *"Palace of Pleasure"*.

The opening scene introduces two friends Antonio and Delio who discuss about the reform of the French court. In the play, Webster lays bare the rotten state of things in society. Naturally Webster becomes satirical in his observations about the prevailing condition. Bosola, the malcontent mediator becomes his spokesman. He casts his reflections on courtiers, politicians, women, human life and world. Materialistic considerations prevailed upon moral values and the outlook of the people become too worldly. Webster could not be blind to their state of things. There is no poet morally nobler than Webster. Bosola refers to the hierarchy of ranks in the court which is a hot bed of keen competition. Bosola has a cynical pose throughout, and sneers at the pretensions of the sanctimonious cardinal and at the open malignity of Ferdinand while he serves them for his own interest. Bosola had worked as a gallery slave for two years for a murder and that in the service of the cardinal and comes again to the cardinal who has been neglecting him. Bosola hits out at the cardinal for his hypocrisy.

The sexual corruption of the age has been highlighted through the character of Julia. Webster exposes the lack of modesty in 'great women of pleasure'. Through Bosola, Webster expresses his anguish at the pitiable and degenerated condition of mankind. He is pained to see man reduced to a beastly level.

The cardinal Ferdinand wants to employ Bosola as a spy on their sister. Bosola is entrusted with the job of watching the affairs of the Duchess. Ferdinand orders Bosola to watch if the Duchess loves anyone, for they do not approve of their sister's remarriage. They also warn her of dire consequences if she dared to disobey their advice. But Dutchess has already fallen in love with her Steward Antonio and decided to marry him. She bids her servant maid to watch behind the arras while she meets Antonio secretly. She has given him her royal ring and proceeds

to express her love for him. In the first scene, Duchess marries Antonio with God and Cariolo as witnesses. Castruccio cherishes a deep passion to be an eminent courtier. For that, Bosola suggests that he should put on his night-cap gracefully. He teaches him fashionable manner and advises him to make set speeches. When Duchess becomes pregnant, Bosola wants to verify the truth. So he offers her son apricots to eat. Hence she becomes sick and withdraws into her chamber for delivery. Antonio hurdles the situation tactfully and Duchess delivers a son. Bosola comes to know the birth of a son through a horoscope which is carelessly dropped by Antonio. Bosola decides to send the information to Duchess' brothers through Castruccio who is leaving for Rome.

Julia is the mistress of Cardinal Julia gets away from Malfi on the pretext of visiting an old anchorite. She deludes her husband Castruccio also into thinking that she is visiting anchorite. Cardinal changes women with ever being false. He claims that he has rescued Julia from her drab dull life with her husband. Ferdinand is upset about the news of Duchess delivery of a son.

In the palace of the Cardinal, Ferdinand is seen mad with rage after learning about the misconduct of the Duchess. The Cardinal begs him to speak in a lower tone and moderate his rage. He feels that Duchess has tarnished the honour of their family. The royal blood of Aragon has been defiled, according to Ferdinand His eyes are wet with tears and he would like to cut the Duchess into pieces. Ferdinand seems to envisage her in the shameful act of sin. Both brothers cannot apprehend who her seducer could be. The Cardinal begs Ferdinand to bear himself in patience until he finds out the truth and punishes her. He would like to have the bodies of his sister and her lover burnt in a coal pit from which no smoke might escape and ascend to heaven.

Ferdinand wishes to fix up a husband for his sister Duchess and he has chosen count Malatesti, but the Duchess rejects the idea, though she is willing to marry anyone to safeguard her brother's honour. Bosola tells the Duchess that Ferdinand has left for Rome in haste. Sensing the danger to the life of her lover Antonio, she wants him to escape the death trap laid down by her brothers. Thus she asks Antonio to proceed to Ancona where she will join him soon. Then she charges Antonio of misappropriation of her funds and wants to sack him from service.

Bosola wins the confidence of the Duchess of his appraisal of Antonio as an honest man. Thus the Duchess reveals her secret that Antonio is her husband. Bosola approves of her choice. While she reveals her secret plan of joining her husband exiled to other country. Bosola suggests her that she should pretend to go in a pilgrimage to our lady of Loretto, near Ancona. Immediately she makes herself ready to leave, but Bosola reports everything to her brothers as she is a spy appointed by them. Cardinal promises to use all his influence to get the couple exiled from Ancona. Cardinal changes his robes into the attire of a soldier and seizes the property of the Duchess. Ferdinand decides to kill Antonio. But his plots are foiled by Duchess' intervention. Antonio escapes to Milan with his eldest son. Duchess is taken as prisoner in her own palace. Bosola reports Ferdinand that the Duchess bears herself nobly in her misfortune. Ferdinand nourishes a deep desire to kiss her hand in Darkness as he has developed incest feelings for Duchess. As a token of reconciliation, Ferdinand offers her a deed man's hand which bears the ring of the Duchess. She realizes that it is the hand of Antonio who has been killed. He shocks her by exhibiting the waxen figures of her lover and children. She regrets that she is alive against her will. Ferdinand is overjoyed to hear the tormented Duchess. He sends a troop of madmen in order to turn her into lunatic. Basola is commanded to kill the Duchess. Accordingly, he makes her ready to face her execution. She is strangled to death along with her children. There is no real cause for Fredinand's rage against her. The much awaited Bosola asks reward for his services. But he is refused. Thus Bosola feel repentant for his action. The cardinal is so cruel to kill his beloved mistress Julia also. Finally Ferdinand becomes mad in account of his remorse for the death of his sister. He turns into a wolf and haunts the churchyard at night. Bosola kills Antonio by mistake and kills the cunning cardinal at last, as cardinal plots him after using him.

THE RIVALS

Richard Sheridan

Richard Sheridan's play "The Rivals" was written in 1774 and it was performed in 1775. The play has multiple plots. The main plot is the love affair of Miss Lydia Languish and Captain Jack Absolute, there is a sub-plot which deals with the love affair of Miss Julia Melville and a man namely Faulkland. Besides these, there is also another sub-plot dealing with Miss Malaprop's passion for an Irish baronet by the name of Sir Lucius O' Trigger.

Miss Lydia Languish is a niece of a lady called Mrs. Malaprop who happens to be Lydia's guardian. Lydia is a rich heiress, but if she marries anyone not approved by Mrs. Malaprop, Lydia will lose her fortune. But Lydia is not a woman addicted to money. She is interested in reading romantic novels. Her mind is filled with illusion and fantasies. She dreams of marrying a poor man and annoys her guardian rather than marries a rich man and lead common life without any excitement. She used to live in a dream world. She would prefer to elope with a man of her own choice defying the conventions of her guardian, she is determined to elope with lover to Scotland and get married there without the intervention of her guardian.

Captain Absolute, the son of a rich baronet by the name Sir Anthony absolute falls in love with Lydia. Being aware of Lydia's romantic taste, he disguises himself as a poor man by the name of Beverley. He hides his identity as a son of a rich man and a well-placed army officer. He tells Lydia that he is merely an Ensign or a Junior Army officer with no family background. Lydia loves him chiefly because he is a smart young man with no high social class. Mrs. Malaprop is vehemently opposed to this match, as Beverley is a low paid Ensign. In the meantime, Bob Acres is also mad after Lydia and is determined to marry her. But Lydia looks at him with deep contempt.

Knowing that Lydia resides in the city of Balt, Captain Absolute also arrives at the city to woo Lydia and wins her. His father is totally ignorant of his son's assumed name and his love affair with Lydia. Bob Acres is also present in scene with the intention of continuing his courtship with Lydia, though Lydia has not encouraged him.

As a father of Captain Absolute, Sir Anthony Absolute has chosen Lydia as his daughter in law Mrs. Malaprop also has given consent to this proposal. But Mrs. Malaprop feels Sir Anthony Absolute that Lydia is a headstrong, obstinate girl who is deeply in love with an Ensign by the name of Beverley. When Mrs. Malaprop asks Lydia if she is willing to give up her love for Beverley and marry Captain Absolute, She bluntly refuses. She says that she is neither interested in Captain Absolute nor Bob Acres.

The mistaken identity of Captain Absolute is resolved when Sir Anthony sends his son Captain Absolute to Mrs. Malaprop's house to have an interview with Lydia. Lydia is surprised to see his beloved Beverley in the guise of Captain Absolute. Lydia thinks that Ensign Beverley has come to meet her in the name of Captain Absolute to trick her aunt Lydia is kept in darkness about the truth that Beverley is Captain Absolute. When Sir Anthony asks his son if he is willing to marry Lydia, he accepts to his proposal. Soon things begin to settle down but now it is difficult for Absolute to hide his true identity from Lydia. As soon as Lydia that her lover Beverley and Captain Absolute is the same person, her dream is shattered. Now she comes to face the ground reality that she will have the routine kind of wedding without any sensation, She is disillusioned. She charges Captain Absolute of having played a trick upon her and she calls him an impostor.

In the meantime, Acres is taken back to know that Ensign Beverley is the beloved of Lydia, Acres challenges him to a duel to settle who has the better claim for the land of Lydia. Dwelling is forbidden at that time. Since Captain Absolute turns up at the appropriate time to inform him that there is no Beverley the question of fighting his friend Absolute does not arise. Lydia at once, softens on knowing that her lover is giving to fight a duel. This results in her reconciliation with her lover Absolute and their marriage is finalized with the unanimous approval of all.

Julia is Sir Anthony's ward. She is in love with Faulkland. Julia's father has had the wish of getting her daughter married to Faulkland and so Julia wants to accede to the last wish of his expired Father. Moreover, on one occasion, Faulkland has saved Julia's life from drowning in river. But Faulkland is skeptical of Julia's love and he wants assurances from her, which causes unhappiness in Julia. When Faulkland informs Absolute about his grievances about Julia, Absolute tells him about Julia's arrival in Bath in the company of her guardian Sir Anthony

Absolute. Bob Acres' account of Julia's merriments in Bath annoys Faulkland. Faulkland feels that while he has been suffering from pangs of separation from Julia, Julia has been enjoying herself in his absence. He even makes a complaint to her that her singing and dancing in his absence are clear evidences of her disloyalty to him. Even though Julia professes great love for him, he is not convinced. Irritated by his skeptical nature, Julia leaves him filled with self reproach.

In spite of Julia's letter of regret to Faulkland, he decides to subject her to a test in order to test her sincerity. He tells her that he has unfortunately landed on a trouble and he wants to flee from his country. Julia expresses her solid support to him in all crises. Thus Faulkland is relieved of his suspicious thoughts and reveals that he is in no danger. Julia is much offended by his suspicious nature and wants to terminate her affair with him. On her walking out, Faulkland repents for his folly. Anyhow, this couple reconciles with each other and the play ends with the jingling of marriage bells.

Sheridan has introduced a comic character Mrs. Malaprop. Though she is a widow and an old woman, she falls in love with Sir Lucius O' Trigger, an Irish baronet. Mrs. Malaprop takes initiative and sends love letters to him through her sly servant maid Lucy who cooks up the story that these letters are from Lydia. Lucy tells Sir Lucius that Miss. Lydia Languish is signing these letters as Delia, while those letters are from Mrs. Malaprop. Sir Lucius is forced to believe that he has attracted the love of a young Lydia. He gives money to Lucy every time, she brings a letter.

Sir Lucius is hurt by the truth that he has been fooled, challenges Captain Absolute for a duel and Absolute has to accept the challenge. As soon as the duel starts between Absolute and Lucius, Sir Anthony arrives in the company of Mrs. Malaprop, to prevent the impending danger and bloodshed. There, Lydia denies having written letters to Lucius, and Mrs. Malaprop accepts her role in it. Now the truth is out and so there is no question of any rivalry between them. When Lucius rejects the love proposal of Mrs. Malaprop, she is consoled by Sir Anthony. She bitterly complains: "O Sir Anthony, men are all barbarians". The play ends with a celebration of the love affairs. Mrs. Malaprop's use of incorrect words in the play creates laughter in the play and we have "Malapropism" in English Dictionary due to her. In every speech that she makes in the

course of the play she confuses with words which have similar sounds but different meanings.
Mrs. Malaprop is the most famous single character in “The Rivals”.

UNIT II

THE CENCI

Shelley

P.B. Shelley is a revolutionary romantic poet. He is known for his ideals, and poetic imagination. Though Shelley is most popular for his poems, the play 'The Cenci' also proves his ability as a playwright.

'The Cenci' is a poetic drama. It is a tragedy in five acts written in 1819. Written in blank verse, the play relates the infamous story of Beatrice Cenci, who was executed for the murder of her father count Cenci in 16th century in Italy. Pope Clement VIII was on the papal throne.

Count Cenci, a rich Roman nobleman was notorious for his dissoluteness and heinous atrocities. He does not even consider it necessary to hide his crimes. He is confident in his impunity. Even the Pope is ready to forgive the count's sevis as he offers much to the church, though Pope is aware of his crimes. In response to the reproaches of those around him, he asserts his self without a trace of embarrassment.

"I am sweet in the sight of agony and feeling

That someone will die there, but I live

There is neither remorse nor fear in me

Which torment others so much" .

Cenci has no regard for his wife and children as he is filled with anger, contempt and hatred. Even in the very presence of the papal Cardinal Camillo, he sends curses to his sons whom he has exiled from Rome. But surprisingly after a little later, he arranges a magnificent feast in which he offers praises to God for the reward of his sons. Thus he proves himself a hypocrite. He has a beautiful daughter Beatrice and she becomes suspicious of the mysterious death of her brothers. She can feel the father rejoicing over the brothers' death. At last Cenci announces to her and her stepmother Lucretia that his two sons are dead. One was crushed down by a collapsed church vault; the other was killed by mistaken identity.

Beatrice is aware that the elder brother Giacomo is ruined by his father and drags a miserable existence with his family. The girl Beatrice is mortally afraid that she can be the next victim. She can feel father's lascivious glances at her. Beatrice turns to distinguished guests pleading their intervention and protection. But the guests, knowing the hot tempered and revengeful character of Cenci disperse without helping the hapless victim.

Beatrice has been raped by his depraved father Cenci. Beatrice wants to get rid of his criminal father with the help of Orsino, a priest and Roman nobleman whom she has once hoped to marry. Cenci's family extends their support to Orsino to kill the count Cenci. When the other conspirators are found out, Orsino evades capture. But the rest are tried and executed.

This play exalts the will power of a girl Beatrice who is determined to kill her own father who has dishonored her. She does not go for suicide, as suicide is a sin in the eyes of the church. Even heaven seems to help Cenci as he is not questioned by the court of law and the church. In such a hopeless situation, Beatrice wins the help of her God-fearing step mother Lucretia. Both plan the murder of Cenci. Their plot fails as Cenci has crossed the bridge an hour earlier than the appointed time. Cenci wants to enjoy the humiliation of Beatrice and dreams of depriving his heirs of everything. Hearing the rebellious attitude of Beatrice, he unleashes numerous curses on her. Having no other way to escape his pervert father, Beatrice resolves to commit patricide. She employs hooligans to kill Cenci. But they come back and admit their failure that they do not want to kill the old man who is sleeping. Desparately, Beatrice herself dares to the tyrant with a dagger. Soon Cenci's dead body is found on the branches of a tree.

The angry Savella demands that everyone go with him to Rome to witness the count Cenci's murder. Though the conspirators are afraid, Beatrice does not lose her spirit. She accuses the servants of the law and the Papal throne of inaction and indulgence in the crime of her father. In Rome, during the trial, Beatrice spell bounds everyone with her powerful speech about the dubious value of the confession obtained in this way. Under the cruel torture, her stepmother and brother confessed their conspiracy to kill Cenci. Beatrice condemns them for their weakness. She condemns "justice, miserable, earthly, heavenly ruthlessness" for condign villainy. Witnessing the firmness of her spirit, her relatives join her. The pope remains unmoved and passes a verdict that conspirators must be executed. Beatrice is not ready to face her death as she suffers from confusion such as, 'behind the tombstone, there is no heaven, no God, no earth,

only darkness'. She controls herself and bids farewell to her family. Beatrice is willing to face her death with dignity. The play exhibits the reformatory spirit of a woman who fights for justice in spite of the cruel law system and Papal system, working in favour of tyrant like Cenci.

ARMS AND THE MAN

G.B. Shaw

“Arms and the Man” is a comedy written by Shaw. The play is set in Bulgaria in 1885 during the Serbo-Bulgarian war. It is a humorous play and a social satire that presents a realistic account of war and shows how foolish it is to idealise war as something noble. It also criticizes the romantic and unrealistic notions of love. The title of the play is taken from Virgil’s “*Aeneid*”, which glorifies war and heroic deeds of those who participate in war.

Raine, a rich Bulgarian woman receives an exciting news that Bulgarian forces have conquered Serbs. Sergius, Raina’s fiancé has participated in the war and he is idealized as a hero in the war as he is at the head of the cavalry charge. Raine is very proud of her fiancé and worships him as a brave man. Lonka, the servant-maid warns them that the defeated Serbian are likely to escape in to the houses of Bulgarians that the romantic girl Raina does not listen to her words and keeps her windows unlocked.

Bluntschli, a worn-out soldier sneaks into the room of Raina through the unlocked window. Raine raises an alarming noise at his unannounced entry but she is silenced by a gun. He warns her that he will kill her if she makes any commotion. The man is a Swiss and an escaped Serbian officer. Raina, who has had romantic ideas of war, is disillusioned when she listens to the horrific account of his war experiences. As Bluntschli shivers in cold and fear, Raina hides him in her room. As the Bulgarian soldiers hunt for him, Raina rescues his life. She is much surprised when Bluntschli discloses the reality that war is not to be glorified. He feels that he is happy to escape the carnage alive. He is very hungry and so he devours the chocolate cream offered by Raina. Raina criticizes him for preserving chocolate cream in his pocket rather than ammunition, as a soldier. In the traditional society, a soldier is expected to be a brave man who never shows signs of hunger and anxiety. Raina has assimilated such ideology in her mind and so she expects Bluntschli to be a man of valour who never expresses fear of hunger. But Shaw exposes the real condition of a soldier in a battlefield as everyone is mortally afraid and feels happy to withdraw to a shelter. Thus Shaw shatters the popular image of a soldier as a super human and shows the real emotions of a soldier in a battlefield.

Sergius, the fiancé of Raina poses himself as a war hero as he claims himself responsible for the victory of Bulgarians. But when Bluntschli narrates the incident in the battlefield Sergius is a fool who has wrongly given direction to the cavalry. But Bulgarians succeeded merely by luck. The Serbs had machine guns but were given wrong ammunition by accident. Therefore, they cannot now drum Sergius and his men. Raina is exposed to the absurdness of Sergius and is drawn towards Bluntschli as he is honest.

Bluntschli sleeps in Raina's room, taking her into his confidence. She allows him no sleep as he has not slept for days. In the second act, Louka, the servant is engaged to male servant Nicola. But she aspires for more things not content with her present status. Both of them know the secrets of Petkoff family, but Louka wants to make use of her knowledge as a stepping stone for her aspirations. Major Petkoff tells his wife that Sergius will never get promotion as Sergius says that he has abandoned his commission in the army out of anger that he will never move up in the ranks.

Sergius is a hypocrite. Though he engaged to Raina, he flirts with Louka, the maid. Louka wants to utilize his favour for her aspiration. At that time, Bluntschli re enters Raina's house. Petkoff has no knowledge about Bluntschli. Raina is so happy to see Bluntschli and blurts out 'the chocolate cream soldier'.

Sergius comes to learn the love of Raina for Bluntschi and challenges him to anvil. Sergius confirms that Raina has given him her picture through her father's coat. Major Petkoff is against the love between Raina and Sergius. Sergius and Louka reveal their secret love. So Nicola releases Louka from their engagement. Bluntschi displays his fortune as an owner of seven hotels in swiss and he has inherited a lot of money from his father. Since Raina is 23, she is ready to marry Bluntschli. Nicola is hired by Bluntschli as he admires him. Sergius accepts to marry Louka and consequently her dream has been realized. The play ends with Sergius statement about Bluntschli, 'what a man'!

The play brings out the real nature and emotions of the characters in the play. Raina who has illusions about war and love is disillusioned at last. Sergius who boasts about his valour is exposed as a sham hero. His flirtation with Louka shows his degraded nature, whereas Louka uses such a love for her upliftment in social hierarchy. Louka is no longer a servant-maid now.

Due to her high ambitious, she has climbed up the social hierarchy. Shaw, being a rational thinker, exposes the rationale behind every man's actions.

UNIT IV

STRIFE

John Galsworthy's

Galsworthy appeared on the literary horizon of England at a time when England was giving through radical changes in all spheres of human thought and activity. The modern age of Galsworthy begins from the late 1890's. It was a period of anxiety, disgust and frustration, competition and cold war. The new age witnessed the rise of dynamic middle class, democracy and enormous industrial progress. Thus there are radical thinkers like G.B. Shaw, Butler Wells and Galsworthy. They concentrate upon the material aspect of life. It was a time for naturalism and realism.

The play "Strife" deals with the conflict between capitalism and labour, between a factory owner and the workers. There is a factory called Trenartha Tori Plate works situated on the borders of England and Wales. The play focuses on the strike at the factory. For the past seven months, the workers are on strike. The families of the workers suffer due to starvation and cold. The company has suffered a loss to the tune of 50,000 pounds. The workers run short of coal of food. Even though the two parties arrive at a solution, the strike continues due to the extreme attitude of two men – Sir Anthony, chairman of the company and Roberts, the leader of the workers.

In the meeting of the Board of Directors, the chairman holds on to his policy of "No Surrender". Simon Harness, a trade union official meets them. He tells the Directors that the union does not encourage the striking workers as some of their demands are excessive. He tells the Board that the workers need justice not sympathy. The workers involve in the strike without the support of the union. They strike the work because of Roberts. The daughter of Mr. Anthony Enid entreats her father to end the strike. Her old maid Annie, the wife of Roberts, is severely ill. She offers to help Annie, but Roberts rejects. After a few days, the workers decide to end the strike. But Roberts forces the workers out to surrender. Since Roberts is participating in the strike, he neglects his ailing wife Annie. Eventually Annie dies without making any complaint about her cold husband. Edger has sympathy for the suffering factory workers. Since Anthony rejects any compromise, he is voted down in the Board and he resigns from the chairmanship. On

account of the extreme policy of Roberts, he is rejected by the workers. Harness brings about a compromise, thus the strike comes to an end. The terms of the final compromise are the same as had been decided in the beginning of the play. Both the factory workers and factory management have suffered heavy financial loss. Their sufferings do not bring in any betterment in their lives.

Galsworthy is considered as a social reformer, objectively and impartially posing a problem, showing always both sides of the question, and leaving his audience to think about the answer. Galsworthy's humanism is manifested in this play. "Strife" was published in 1909. It was popular and war received with universal acclaim. Their play exhibits the conflict between the working class and the capitalists. At the same time, the extreme policies of two male egotists enlarge the differences and create more problems for two barriers. The issues of the workers are not redressed until the two selfish men step down from their positions. The egoistic self centred men do not allow their respective side to compromise. The poor workers suffer due to the strong headed men. Thus Galsworthy discusses the problem of the proletariat and the capitalists realistically.

The extremism and fanaticism in both men are the reasons for the sufferings. The conflict is between the haves and the have-nots. Roberts took the strike as a weapon not only to secure more money but also to strike a blow at the capitalists, who have been sucking the blood of the workers. Though they are the back bone of the society, their interests are marginalized. Though Roberts had 800 pounds before the strike commenced, but he spent all the money for the strike, not for his ailing wife. Roberts is fully dedicated to the workers. He remains so committed to his duty that he preferred to be childless. He believed that poor workers should not have children as it means multiplying beggars. He represents socialism and opposes the ownership of a particular person. He feels that workers are exploited by the capitalists. He believes that if the workers fight unitedly, they can make the monster capitalism surrender. But Anthony, the chairman of the factory believes that there is a wide gap between masters and workers, and it cannot be bridged. He has no humanity and mercy.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

T.S. Eliot

“Murder in the Cathedral” was the first verse drama written by T.S. Eliot in 1935 to be staged on Canterbury Festival in 1935. This play is an exposition of the nature of saintliness. In form, it is between Morality and Chronicle play. Introspective symbols are subtly interwoven with simplified historical narrative.

The play contains history one can say that it is a kind of historical dramatic narrative. It highlights the antagonism between the forces of Virtue and vice, through the conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket. Thomas Becket was a chancellor, and then he became the Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry II.

The play opens with the singing of women of Canterbury. Some impulse of grave concern has dragged these women to the cathedral. After the women retire having sung the chorus, three priests of the church arrive and they spout out the venom of their indignation against the temporal Government of England. They allege that the kings and barons are the source of duplicity and incline. They wonder what their Archbishop Thomas Becket is doing in France at the time of unrest. At that moment, the Archbishop has returned from exile to England. Shortly, he is expected to come to the Church of Canterbury. The first priest wonders whether the dispute between the king and the Archbishop has ended or patched up. The other assumes that Becket is returning on his own accord. The third one presumes that destiny has dragged the Archbishop to Canterbury. The women of the chorus wish that the Archbishop should go back to France as his coming to England means his death in Canterbury. Even though during the past seven years, they have suffered due to heavy taxes and tyrannical rule of the king, the calamity which they now foresee on the arrival of Thomas Becket in England is unprecedented one.

In the mean time, Thomas Becket enters and requests them to have peace. Becket replies them that his enemies and rebellious bishops of Yorkshire would not allow him peace. On his return journey, he finds his enemies trying to kill him. The First Tempter enters and talks with Archbishop. He tries to persuade the Bishop to reconcile with the king. The Archbishop firmly refuses to the proposal. He rebukes Becket: “Your lordship is too proud?... Be easy man!” He describes the benefits of being an easy man?

“The easy man lives to eat the best dinners, Take a friend’s advice. Leave well alone or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone”.

Thomas ignores the temptation of the First Tempter and dismisses him telling, “you come twenty years too-late”. The Second Tempter comes in and reminds Thomas of his previous meetings in Clarendons, and Northampton and entreats him to exhort the state again as he once did as a chancellor. He points out that he has eluded the pleasures entitled to chancellor by resigning his previous position and accepting the port of Archbishop. He alludes that it is no good to be a self bound servant of a powerless pope, Thomas Becket refuses to yield to the pressures of power and glory. He bids the Tempter to flee away from him. The Third Tempter introduces himself as a man who simply minds his business. He posits himself as a lover of his country. He reminds Becket that England is a land of the Normans. But the king of England is Angevin. Why should an Angevin rule England? King Henry is fighting in France and so it is a right time for them to form a condition to get back Norman’s liberty. In this process, Church favour and pope’s blessing is a prerequisite for the liberty. If only Becket joins hands with Barons, it will terminate the tyrannical jurisdiction of king’s court over Bishop’s court and Barons’ court. Thomas firmly declines to accept the proposal of the Third Tempter: “Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves, Now take the shape of a Wolf among wolves pursue your treacheries as you have done before”.

Consequently, the Third Tempter leaves him utterly disappointed in his mission of convincing Becket the Fourth Tempter comes in full of praise for Becket’s unbending will. The Fourth Tempter persuades him to seek his personal glory through sainthood. He says, “King is forgotten and another shall come Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb”. Then the four Tempters sing together and call Thomas an obstinate man, blind and intent on self destruction. The three priests warn him not to stand against a formidable foe. They request him to act like a wise man. Thomas Becket recalls his past career as a chancellor and his immense power over the Barons. Then he preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas morning speaking on the occasion, Becket observes that it is only in the Christian mysteries that they can rejoice mourn at once from the same season. The topic of his sermon in the church in the glory and justification of God’s deeds, according

Becket, martyrdom is always the design of God for His love of men and a warning as well as an inspiring lesson.

The Second part of the play starts with the Chorus, sung by the women of Canterbury. They foresee the death of Archbishop. At that time, four knights rush into the church and ask for the Archbishop. When the Archbishop appears before them, they abuse him and charge him of rebelling against the king. They abuse him thus:

“This is the creature that crawled upon the king, swollen with blood and swollen with pride”.

As soon as Becket refuses all these allegations saying that he has been very loyal to the king Thomas pleads that he is not guilty of all these charges,

“Never was it my wish To uncrown the king’s son, or to diminish His honour and power”.

The knights course Becket to absolve the Bishops suspended by the Pope. Becket expresses his inability to revoke their suspension. Eventually, the first Knight conveys him the king’s command that he must depart from the country. As he resists the order, the knights threaten him with his life. He answer:

“If you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb to submit my cause before God’s throne”.

Even though the priests ask him to move to alter, but Thomas is formidable. He places duty above danger. Even though the church door is shut down to prevent the entry of the Knights, Becket asks them to keep it open. As soon as they rush in sheer madness to will Becket, he answers them:

“I am here. No traitor to the king. I am a priest, A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ, Ready to suffer with my blood”.

The knights kill Becket while he prays to God. Then they justify their murder of the Archbishop as their concern is their country. The second knight defends his action by saying that Becket belied King’s expectations His interference in the state work costs his life. They proclaim

the Becket is responsible for his own murder. They hold that Becket's ideology of Church is higher than crown is responsible for his death.

It is said that 'Murder in the Cathedral' is not just a dramatization of the death of Thomas Becket: it is a deep searching study of the significance of martyrdom. The women of the chorus perceive that Becket's sacrifice will cleanse the universe.

The central theme of the play is martyrdom. The word 'martyr' in the ancient sense, means witness, and the church did not confine the term to those who shed blood. So Becket, as a martyr is not primarily one who suffers for a cause. Instead he is a witness to the reality of God's powers. Martyrdom is never the design of man. Becket has to wait for his murderers to appear. When the knights rush to the altar, the murder takes place. Eliot is pre occupied with the notion of spiritual election.

UNIT V

WAITING FOR GODOT

Samuel Becket

Waiting for Godot is a new kind of drama. It belongs to a great extent to the Theatre of Absurd. The drama of absurd does not have traditional plot, character, dialogue and setting. Nothing happens in an absurd play. There are no external conflicts. It is a formless play which has not been founded in any structural principles.

Critics are perplexed about the meaning of the play. Yet the play was a striking success not because of its story or characterization, but because of the richness of themes. The nothingness of the play is very mysterious. In fact the play is not about waiting for a certain Godot, but man's endless waiting for Christ or for Death. The theme of the triviality and boredom of human life, the theme of prevalence of suffering, the theme of ignorance, the theme of economic and intellectual exploitation and the meaningless of human life are implied in the play. A critic calls Becket the creator of the 'myth of nothingness'.

Waiting is the predominant theme of the play. It may mean the waiting for man's redemption from misery and mortality. It may refer to man's waiting for his own death that relieves him from misery and suffering. Godot may be a representative of his contemporary terms, of some authority who has assured protection to the tramps who may symbolize French citizen in France under the German occupation. Vladimir and Estragon are two Renaissance workers though they wait for Godot, they cannot be sure of the identity of Godot. They are unsure what will happen if the Godot arrives. They have no watches and no time-tables, since they cannot act, they are impotent. They express their baffled helplessness which one experiences when forced to remain in a situation one does not understand. Moreover they have no control over their situation also. All that Estragon and Vladimir do is to seek way to pass their time in the situation in which they are posited. They narrate stories, sing song, play verbal games, enact the rules of Pozzo and Lucky and do physical exercises.

The main characters Gogo and Didi are ignorant. They suffer from eternal ignorance and darkness. They cannot say who Godot is. They do not know whether they are waiting in the right

place or right day. The way the two tramps pass their time indicates the boredom and triviality of human activities, the lack of significance in life and constant suffering. It who brings out the hollowness an insincerity of most social intercourse. Estragon and Vladimir question each other, contradict each other and abuse each other. Then they are reconciled to each other without any genuine intention. All these devices are employed to highlight the point that waiting for Godot is unbearable. Estragon takes off his boots, grapes inside them, and shakes them out expecting something to fall out of them. But nothing happens. Vladimir does the same, with the same result. Repeatedly they put on end take off their hats. It conveys the alter meaningless of human existence. At last they are driven to cannot suicide. Even suicide is not within their reach.

The theme of exploration is suggested through the episode of Pozzo and Lucky Pozzo's words are derived from Lucky. Yet Pozzo holds Lucky on a rope and treats him worse than an animal. Lucky has been so debased by the cruel treatment that he kicks Estragon viciously whose fault is that he sympathises with him and tries to wipe away his tears. Having taken everything for Lucky, Pozzo plans to sell Lucky in a fair. It is the character of the rich that they employ the poor even to do their thinking for them. The 'Net' in which Lucky is caught is an economic dependence on other country. The exploited becomes so demoralized that they are unable to offer any resistance to the exploiters. Lucky does not have the guts to liberate himself from his enslavement.

The rhythmic pattern in the dialogue not only divides the play into several phases but gives it a structural pattern. In the Act I, Vladimir asks Estragon about his foot and Estragon, in turn, asks Vladimir about his kidney trouble. Each of them is offended, that the other should think it necessary whether the trouble hurts. Vladimir relates an incident in the New Testament to Estragen, but he is not interested about it. In the similar fashion, Estrogen's anecdote is rejected by Vladimir. They pretend to be interested in the conversation.

The personality of a tree is in its leaves carries symbolic significance. The word 'Godot' is deeply symbolic. He is the earthly ideal of a better social order. Godot also means death or silence. He represents the inaccessible self. Godot's white beard reminds the image of old father aspect of God. His irrational preference for one of two brothers recalls Jehovah's treatment of Cain and Abel. Some critics observe that he is an empty promise in a meaningless life. The two

tramps represents ordeal of waiting, which is shared by every human being in the universe. Pozzo and Lucky represent a master and a slave.

Absurd play is a drama which treats human life and human situation as absurd unfit or foolish. The absurd dramatist takes things rationally and not romantically. The playwright attempts to convey the meaninglessness of human life through dialogues. Nothing significant happens on the stage. The Theatre of Absurd prefers existential themes. Mostly themes are presented through symbols.

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

John Osborne

John Osborne is popular English playwright. 'Look Back in Anger' is a realist play. It focuses in the life and mental struggle of an intelligent and educated but disaffected Youngman of working class origin, Jimmy Porter and his wife Alison who is also an equally competent woman from impassive upper middle class.

The young couple Jimmy and Addison attempts to surmount class conflict and deal with a deteriorating marriage in 1950s England. Since Alison Lavis from a traditional upper class background and has husband Jimmy, from a working class back ground there is a clash of values between the husband and wife. The couple happens to live with Cliff Lewis Jimmy's friend in an apartment.

In the first Act, Jimmy makes angry remarks about upper class complacency and his wife's lack of enthusiasm. According to Jimmy suffering is the only way to experience true human emotion, and that Alison and other upper class people are less alive than he is. With the aim of assaulting the honour of Alison's family background, he makes sarcastic remarks about her parents. He feels that all women are out to destroy men. Cliff attempts to iron out the differences and bring about peace between them. As the two fall against Alison's ironing board, She burns her arm. Jimmy apologizes and she yells at him.

Alison reveals to cliff that she is pregnant with Jimmy's child. Out of fear, she has not reported this news to Jim as he might feel trapped and get angry. Jimmy finds Alison and Cliff kissing each other, but does not respond. Later, the couple play their 'bear and squirrel' game, which allows them to be affectionate to each other.

In the meantime, Helena Charless, one of Alison's upper class friends, visits the couple when Alison reveals Helena's plan of staying with them. Jimmy becomes furious. He says that he wishes that Alison's baby would die so that she could experience true suffering.

In the Second act, Helena joins the couple and shares the domestic duties. Alison shares her experience of living with working class friends and her displeasure with them. She discloses the fact that since Alison's parents disapproved of their marriage, they got married, that made

Jimmy marry Alison. Jimmy is much prejudiced against Alison's parents as they belong to upper class. As Jimmy goes on abusing Alison's mother, Helena attempts to reason out his wounded psyche. At that time, Jimmy expresses his deep anguish about his father who has had a miserable death in the Spanish civil war due to his severe wounds. He says that those critical moments taught him about life than Helena and Alison have ever known. Near the end of the scene Jimmy leaves. In his absence, Helena asks Alison's father to come and collect his daughter Alison. Alison shows her indifference to Jimmy as he orders her to visit the dying Hugh's mother, a working class woman.

Colonel Redfern, the father of Alison thinks that his deep disapproval for Alison's marriage with Jimmy can be the reason for his hostile attitude towards them. The Colonel is a relic of an old version of England that has ceased to exist. Alison along with her father leaves the apartment and Helena stays back as she has a work meeting Helena gives Jimmy a letter written by Alison and Jimmy is angry at her polite restrained language. On listening to the news of Alison's pregnancy, Jim is not at all moved. As he insults Helena, she slaps him. As he collapses, Helena kisses him passionately.

As Helena overstays in Jimmy's room, they have developed a passionate love affair. At that moment, Alison comes back sick and disheveled. Helena feels repentant for stealing Jim from Alison, though Alison is not angry with Helena. Now Helena decides to leave Jimmy. Jimmy comments that Helena is not strong enough for true love, which needs 'muscle and guts'. Alison has had a miscarriage and she says that the loss of the child has made her understand the depth of emotion that Jim expects. As Alison collapses at Jimmy's feet, Jimmy is moved, and he kneels to help her. Then with a kind of mocking, tender irony, he launches into their imaginary game of 'bear and squirrel'.

This play talks about the economic disparity between upper class woman and a low class man and the consequences after their marriage. Alison bluffs to handle the angry husband Jimmy, while Helena, a rational woman helps him bring out the bruised mind of a boy mentally bruised by the hardship in his childhood days. Thus the play explores the mind of an angry young man. The term describes a generation of post-world war II working class men who have ascribed to leftist, anarchist policies. According to cultural critics, these young men were not part of any organized movement, but were individuals angry at a Post-Victorian Britain that

refused to acknowledge their social, and class alienation. Jommy accuses the social, political structures that have kept him from achieving his dreams and aspirations. He directs this anger towards his friends and notably his wife Alison. Osborne pictures the domestic disharmony between the husband who comes from poor back ground the wife who hails from upper middle class and the challenges associated with it, also he pictures the trauma and disillusionment experienced by young men who expected miracles after the World War II.

Prepared by,

Dr. Y. Vigila Jebaruby,

Associate Professor in English,

Rani Anna Government College for Women,

Tirunelveli - 627008