SRINIVASAN COLLEGE OF ARTS &SCIENCE

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Course: B.A ENGLISH Year: II semester: IV

Course material on : DRAMA
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CORE COURSE VII

DRAMA

Objectives:

To introduce learners to the emergence of English Drama from the Elizabethans to the 20th century
To make learners understand the features of tragedy, comedy of humours, anti- sentimental comedy, drama of ideas and absurd play

Unit – I

Christopher Marlowe: *Dr. Faustus*

Unit – II

Ben Jonson: *The Alchemist*

Unit – III

Oliver Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*

Unit– IV

G. B Shaw: *Pygmalion*

Unit – V

Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*

UNIT – I

Summary of “The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus

This play starts with Dr. Faustus being discovered in his study looking at a book and trying to figure out which is better philosophy, divinity or magic. He decides on magic and has his servant, Wagner, send for Valdes and Cornelius who are renowned for their ability in conjuring and magic. Valdes and Cornelius convince Faustus that he has made the right decision in choosing magic and they teach him how to conjure.

Later two scholars are talking about Faustus and wondering where he’s gone and they see Wagner. Wagner tells them that Faustus is talking to Valdes and Cornelius and they are horrified and know that he must have started to pursue magic because he is now associated with Valdes and Cornelius.

Faustus conjures that following night and a demon named Mephistophilis comes and Faustus makes a deal with him and Lucifer. The deal: Faustus be a spirit in form and substance, Mephistophilis be his servant, that Mephistophilis do for him and bring him whatever he desires, Mephistophilis must also be invisible when with him and that he can be in whatever form he pleases when he wants. After twenty-four years have passed, then he will let Lucifer and Mephistophilis come and collect him and bring him to whatever fate awaits him. After he finished writing this in his blood, he sent Mephistophilis back to Lucifer and has him give Lucifer his deal. Lucifer accepts and all of Faustus’ wishes are granted.

Faustus talks with Mephistophilis about lots of stuff the universe and stuff like that and Mephistophilis tells him. Faustus asks about hell and Mephistophilis gives him a deep theological answer and when Faustus asks him to elaborate on the finer points Mephistophilis tells him he can’t and the night goes on.

Lucifer, Beelzebub and Mephistophilis bring the seven deadly sins to parade in front of Faustus and Faustus sees what they all are: Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth and Lechery. Faustus tells them to go back to hell where they came from and they leave. Lucifer and Beelzebub take their leave as well.

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As the twenty-four years move on, Faustus enjoys himself greatly, confusing a Pope by being invisible and taking the gifts sent to him and slapping him upside the head. Then being cursed by the friars accompanying the Pope. Mephistophilis had some fun too. He turned two men who stole Faustus' book into an ape and a dog and then returned the book to his owner. Also he helped Faustus in all his shenanigans.

When Faustus had dinner with the Emperor the Emperor wished to be able to talk to Alexander the Great and paramour. So Faustus conjured their spirits and he gained the Emperor's respect for his ability to conjure them. Faustus also gives sells his horse to a horse-courser and for forty dollars but tells him not to ride the horse into water. The horse-courser being foolish rides the horse into deep water and it turns to a bale of hay. The horse-courser goes back to get his money but he doesn't get it and has to give Faustus forty more dollars so Faustus won't call the police and report him.

Faustus is invited to the Duke of Vanholt's house to dine with him and his wife. During the banquet, the duchess asks for grapes but it is the middle of winter and grapes are no longer growing. So Faustus sends Mephistophilis to get so grapes for the lady. Mephistophilis returns with the grapes and the duke and duchess reward Faustus for his great kindness he showed the lady. Faustus later conjures Helen of Greece for some scholars and they are indebted to him.

When the twenty-four years have expired, and Faustus knows that his time is near. He asks Mephistophilis to bring him Helen so that he might kiss her and feel a little better as the time nears. He meets with some scholars who ask him what's become of him and tell him to turn and repent. Faustus laments though that if he could he would but he had already sold his soul to the Lucifer twenty-four years ago and now it has come time for him to be collected. The scholars tell him they will go into the next room and pray for his soul and that he might be saved. Faustus thanks them but their prayers are to no avail. For Lucifer comes to make Faustus uphold his end of the bargain. Devils carry Faustus away at midnight and he is never to set foot on this earth again, for he must now live out his eternity in hell.

Critical Analysis of "The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus"

Influences

The influences for Christopher Marlowe's "The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus" aren't really known, but many believe that the main source for Dr. Faustus was Das Faust-Buch anonymously published 1587. There is some discrepancy concerning this though. It appears that Das Faust-Buch wasn't translated into English until 1592. Some scholars believe the date that the play was first acted out was in 1588 or1589 (Phelps) and not 1594. (Ed. Baskerville) To account for this they believe that there may have been an earlier translation of Das Faust-Buch that was published shortly after 1587 and is now lost. But this is very unlikely however because Dr. Faustus is believed to have been written after Tamburlaine the Great which was written in 1587. So it seems unlikely that Christopher Marlowe would have been working on two plays at once.

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Other influences of Dr. Faustus may have been the fact that European culture was changing greatly. There were many new advances in science. America had been discovered and more classical texts were becoming more increasingly available. Europe was leaving behind an era of economic instability and entering a day where money wouldn't be as tight. Queen

Elizabeth was turning England into a powerful nation that stood to become a super power. (Janjua) The changing times had affected the Europeans view of the world and it showed in Marlowe's plays as well as in his contemporaries' plays.

Another influence for Christopher Marlowe in the writing of Dr. Faustus may have been the economic and social traps that gentlemen were subjected to and could often find themselves in unexpectedly. Gentlemen were expected to be hospitable to people and normally would entertain the Queen on her trips through the country. Entertaining the Queen was rather costly and for most it would lead to bankruptcy. (Scott) "There was the social pressure to behave in the manner of gentility, the economic pressure to carry on a lavish lifestyle, and in some ways the political pressure to be in the Queen's favor." (Scott) That's what gentlemen of the Elizabethan age had to endure and it's easy to see why Faustus would be so eager to enhance his social reputation by selling his soul to the devil so haphazardly.

Main Themes

The main themes in Dr. Faustus were many but a few stand out above the rest. One of them is man's limitation. Man is limited by what can be accomplished in their time. That is why Faustus gets bored with physics and turns to necromancy. He justifies it by saying, "A sound magician is a mighty god: Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity." (1.1 62-63) Faustus basically wants to leave human limitations behind and become more like a god so that he can do amazing feats and become renowned throughout the land. (Janjua)

Pride is another recurrent theme in Dr. Faustus. After Faustus starts to think that he has been gypped on his side of the bargain with Lucifer his soul is in torment with the good angel and the evil angel. In one such instance, Faustus is contemplating repentance as the good angel urges him to and he says, "Who buzzeth in mine ears I am a spirit? Be I a devil, yet God my pity me; Ay, God will pity me, if I repent." (2.3 14-16) The evil angel tells him, "Ay, but Faustus never shall repent." (2.3 17) Faustus then corrects his earlier confession by saying, "My heart's so hardened I cannot repent. Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven, but fearful echoes thunder in mine ears, "Faustus, thou art damned"." (2.3 18-21) So as Faustus' soul is battling itself he cannot repent because his evil angel, maybe his pride, won’t let him repent because he shall never repent.

Throughout Dr. Faustus, Faustus is mostly all talk and no action. In the beginning when he talks about all he will do when he is able to perform magic and how he will help the entire world so that is will become a better place. But once Faustus receives his powers, he only entertains himself with debauchery and ungodly acts for the twenty-four years he has his powers. In the end he only dies with a knowledge of the world he lives in, but without the wisdom all that knowledge could bring. (Janjua) Faustus, in the end dies knowing that what he did was wrong and that he should have stuck to his plans and bettered the world.

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Stylistic Devices

There are two main stylistic devices that Marlowe uses in “The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus”. They are: the use of blank verse and the fact that the play is a morality play.

What is blank verse? Webster’s dictionary describes blank verse like this, “unrhymed verse, especially the unrhymed iambic pentameter most frequently used in English dramatic, epic, and reflective verse.” (Webster’s Encyclopedicâ€¦) Marlowe is credited with the “Father of Blank Verse” because he greatly improved it from its original monotonous nature. “Marlowe invented numberless variations while still keeping the satisfying rhythm within a recurring pattern. Sometimes he left a redundant syllable, or left a line one syllable short, or moved the position of the cæsura. He grouped his lines according to the thought and adapted his various rhythms to the ideas. Thus blank verse became a living organism, plastic, brilliant, and finished.” (Bellinger)

Dr. Faustus is a difficult play to classify because it stretches across a couple of categories. Dr. Faustus could be a tragedy because Faustus doesn’t gain a deity in the end and that he gets what he deserves. On the other hand, Dr. Faustus could be a morality play because Faustus knows what he is getting into in the beginning and still goes through with it. The good angel, the scholars and the old man who warns Faustus of his terrible end, all try to get Faustus to repent and turn his back on necromancy and return to God. The evil angel, the devils, Lucifer, Beelzebub and the Seven Deadly Sins all try to keep Faustus to upholding his contract with Lucifer and keep on going on the path he is going. That path may be horrible and ultimately lead to the character’s destruction but that won’t keep the bad people from trying to keep them and the good people from trying to save them. That is why Faustus should be classified as a morality play more that a tragedy, because it is easy to get the moral from the story and apply it easier to everyday life. (Tuten)

Characters

The characters in Dr. Faustus are many and some affect the plot more than others. Here are just a few:

Faustus: Faustus is a German scholar who wants to be greater and be able to “â€¦make men to live eternally or, being dead, raise them to life again, then this profession were to be esteemed.” (1.1 24-26) So he sells his soul to the devil and asks for Mephistophilis to be his servant for twenty -four years. As the years whiz by, Faustus does nothing to achieve his goal of making medicine esteemed. Faustus soon decides his deal with the devil is unsatisfactory to him but cannot repent because of the contract he wrote and signed in his own blood. Faustus affects the plot in many ways as he is the main character so whatever he does could possibly change his life. I think Faustus was a good character in the play and really made the play interesting in the fact that he was just an everyday guy.

Mephistophilis: Mephistophilis is the devil that Faustus conjured on his first attempt and shortly thereafter sold his soul to because he was a servant to Lucifer. Mephistophilis shows some concern for Faustus as he is about to sell his soul and says that it would be bad to do so, so incautiously. Mephistophilis is Faustus' to command for twenty-four years and Faustus kind of squanders his power but Mephistophilis doesn't care as long as Faustus upholds his end of the deal. Mephistophilis adds to the plot as being one of the evil people who ultimately ends up leading Faustus to his destruction.

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Good and Evil Angel: The good and evil angels are basically a reflection of the inner torment Faustus is going through as he continues to live his life in the debauched way he is. Countless times they appear to Faustus. The good angel appeals to his remaining humanity and tells him to repent while the evil angel keeps Faustus from repenting with lame excuses as "If thou repent, devils shall tear you to pieces." (2.3 77) and "[Contrition, prayer and repentance are] rather illusions, fruits of lunacy, that make men foolish that do trust them most." (2.1 18-19)

Lucifer: Lucifer is to whom Faustus sold his soul during the play so that he would be granted great powers in necromancy. Lucifer is the fallen angel from heaven and he lusts for Faustus' soul and when Faustus gives his soul for twenty-four years of power how can he resist. Besides what is twenty-four years in the face of eternity? Lucifer is a conniving devil who only wishes for us to come to destruction and in Faustus' case that's what happened. Lucifer won and Faustus lost.

Valdes and Cornelius: Valdes and Cornelius are the two magicians who convince Faustus that magic is the way to go. They are the ones who pique his interest in necromancy and start him on the path to his destruction. They must have been trying very hard to win him over because Faustus comments on how "â€¦[their] words have won me at the last." (1.1 101) Valdes and Cornelius are the bad friends in his life and they lead him on when they know what might happen to him in the end. (Bloom)

UNIT- II

The Alchemist (Jonson) Summary

Lovewit has left for his hop-yards in London, and he has left Jeremy, his butler, in charge of his house in Blackfriars. Jeremy, whose name in the play is Face, lives in the house with Subtle, a supposed alchemist, and Dol Common, a prostitute. The three run a major con operation.

The play opens with an argument that continues throughout the play between Subtle and Face. It concerns which of them is the most essential to the business of the con, each claiming his own supremacy. Dol quells this argument and forces the conmen to shake hands. The bell rings, and Dapper, a legal clerk, enters, the first gull of the day. Face takes on the role of "Captain Face", and Subtle plays the "Doctor."

Dapper wants a spirit that will allow him to win at gambling. Subtle promises one and then tells him he is related to the Queen of the Fairies. Dispatched to get a clean shirt and wash himself, Dapper leaves, immediately replaced by Drugger, a young tobacconist who wants to know how he should arrange his shop. Subtle tells him, and Face gets him to return later with tobacco and a damask. Their argument looks set to resume when Dol returns to warn them that Sir Epicure Mammon is approaching.

Sir Epicure Mammon and his cynical sidekick, Sir Pertinax Surly, are next through the door. Mammon is terrifically excited because Subtle has promised to make him the Philosopher's Stone, about which Mammon is already fantasizing. Face changes character into "Lungs" or "Ulen Spiegel," the Doctor's laboratory assistant, and the two conmen impress Mammon and irritate Surly with a whirl of scientific language. Face arranges for "Captain Face" to meet Surly in half an hour at the Temple Church, and a sudden entrance from Dol provokes Mammon, instantly besotted, into begging Face for a meeting with her.

Ananias, an Anabaptist, enters and is greeted with fury by Subtle. Ananias then returns with his pastor, Tribulation. The Anabaptists want the Philosopher's Stone in order to make money in order to win more people to their religion. Subtle, adopting a slightly different persona, plays along. Kastrill is the next new gull, brought by Drugger, who has come to learn how to quarrel—and to case the joint to see if it is fit for his rich, widowed sister, Dame Pliant. Face immediately impresses young Kastrill, and he exits with Drugger to fetch his sister.
Dapper, in the meantime, is treated to a fairy rite in which Subtle and Face (accompanied by Dol on cithern) steal most of his possessions. When Mammon arrives at the door, they gag him and bundle him into the privy. Mammon and Dol (pretending to be a "great lady") have a conversation which ends with them being bundled together into the garden or upstairs—Face is pretending that Subtle cannot know about Mammon's attraction to Dol.

The widow is brought into the play, as is a Spanish Don who Face met when Surly did not turn up. This Spaniard is in fact Surly in disguise, and the two conmen flicker between arguing about who will marry the widow and mocking the Spaniard by speaking loudly in English of how they will "cozen" or deceive him. Because Dol is occupied with Mammon, the conmen agree to have the Spaniard marry the widow, and the widow is carried out by Surly.

In the meantime, Dol has gone into a fit of talking, being caught with a panicked Mammon by a furious "Father" Subtle. Because there has been lust in the house, a huge explosion happens offstage, which Face comes in to report has destroyed the furnace and all the alchemical apparatus. Mammon is quickly packed out the door, completely destroyed by the loss his entire investment.

Things start to spiral out of control, and the gulls turn up without warning. At one point, nearly all the gulls, including an unmasked Surly, are in the room, and Face only just manages to improvise his way out of it. Dol then reports that Lovewit has arrived, and suddenly Face has to make a final change into "Jeremy the Butler."

Lovewit is mobbed by the neighbors and the gulls at the door, and Face admits to Lovewit, when forced to do so by Dapper's voice emerging from the privy, that all is not as it seems—and has him marry the widow. After Dapper's quick dispatch, Face undercuts Dol and Subtle and, as the gulls return with officers and a search warrant, Dol and Subtle are forced to escape, penniless, over the back wall. The gulls storm the house, find nothing themselves, and are forced to leave empty-handed. Lovewit leaves with Kastrill and his new wife, Dame Pliant. Face is left alone on stage with a financial reward, delivering the epilogue.

UNIT III

She Stoops to Conquer Character List

Sir Charles Marlow

The father of Young Marlow and friend of Hardcastle. A respectable and aristocratic fellow from the town who believes his son is of very modest character.

Marlow

Ostensibly the hero of a play. A respectable fellow who comes to Hardcastle's home to meet Kate Hardcastle. Possessed of a strange contradictory character, wherein he is mortified to speak to any "modest" woman, but is lively and excitable in conversation with barmaids or other low-class women.

Hardcastle

The patriarch of the Hardcastle family, and owner of the estate where the play is set. He despises the ways of the town, and is dedicated to the simplicity of country life and old-fashioned traditions.

Hastings

Friend of Marlow's, and lover of Constance Neville. A decent fellow who is willing to marry Constance even without her money.

Tony Lumpkin

Son of Mrs. Hardcastle from an earlier marriage, and known for his free-wheeling ways of drinking and tomfoolery. Loves to play practical jokes. Proves to be good-natured and kind despite his superficial disdain for everyone. His mother wants him to marry Constance but he is set against the idea.

Diggory

Hardcastle's head servant.

Mrs. Hardcastle

Matriarch of the Hardcastle family, most notable for her pronounced vanity. She coddles her son Tony, and wants him to marry her niece, Constance Neville.

Kate Hardcastle

Called "Miss Hardcastle" in the play. The heroine of the play, she is able to balance the "refined simplicity" of country life with the love of life associated with the town. She pretends to be a barmaid in order to judge her suitor Marlow's true character.

Constance Neville

Called "Miss Neville" in the play. Niece of Mrs. Hardcastle, an orphan whose only inheritance is a set of jewels in the care of her aunt. Her aunt wishes her to marry Tony Lumpkin, but Constance wants to marry Hastings.

Maid

Kate's servant. The woman who tells her that Marlow believed Kate to be a barmaid, which leads Kate towards her plan to stoop and conquer.

Landlord

Landlord of the Three Pigeons, who welcomes Marlow and Hastings, and helps Tony to play his trick on them.

Jeremy

Marlow's drunken servant. His drunken impertinence offends Hardcastle, which leads Hardcastle to order Marlow to leave.

She Stoops to Conquer Summary

She Stoops to Conquer opens with a prologue in which an actor mourns the death of the classical low comedy at the altar of sentimental, "mawkish" comedy. He hopes that Dr. Goldsmith can remedy this problem through the play about to be presented.

Act I is full of set-up for the rest of the play. Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle live in an old house that resembles an inn, and they are waiting for the arrival of Marlow, son of Mr. Hardcastle's old friend and a possible suitor to his daughter Kate. Kate is very close to her father, so much so that she dresses plainly in the evenings (to suit his conservative tastes) and fancifully in the mornings for her friends. Meanwhile, Mrs. Hardcastle's niece Constance is in the old woman's care, and has her small inheritance (consisting of some valuable jewels) held until she is married, hopefully to Mrs. Hardcastle's spoiled son from an earlier marriage, Tony Lumpkin. The problem is that neither Tony nor Constance loves the other, and in fact Constance has a beloved, who will be traveling to the house that night with Marlow. Tony's problem is also that he is a drunk and a lover of low living, which he shows when the play shifts to a pub nearby. When Marlow and Hastings (Constance's beloved) arrive at the pub, lost on the way to Hardcastle's, Tony plays a practical joke by telling the two men that there is no room at the pub and that they can find lodging at the old inn down the road (which is of course Hardcastle's home).

Act II sees the plot get complicated. When Marlow and Hastings arrive, they are impertinent and rude with Hardcastle, whom they think is a landlord and not a host (because of Tony's trick). Hardcastle expects Marlow to be a polite young man, and is shocked at the behavior. Constance finds Hastings, and reveals to him that Tony must have played a trick. However, they decide to keep the truth from Marlow, because they think revealing it will upset him and ruin the trip. They decide they will try to get her jewels and elope together. Marlow has a bizarre tendency to speak with exaggerated timidity to "modest" women, while speaking in lively and hearty tones to women of low-class. When he has his first meeting with Kate, she is dressed well, and hence drives him into a debilitating stupor because of his inability to speak to modest women. She is nevertheless attracted to him, and decides to try and draw out his true character. Tony and

Hastings decide together that Tony will steal the jewels for Hastings and Constance, so that he can be rid of his mother's pressure to marry Constance, whom he doesn't love.

Act III opens with Hardcastle and Kate each confused with the side of Marlow they saw. Where Hardcastle is shocked at his impertinence, Kate is disappointed to have seen only modesty. Kate asks her father for the chance to show him that Marlow is more than both believe. Tony has stolen the jewels, but Constance doesn't know and continues to beg her aunt for them. Tony convinces Mrs. Hardcastle to pretend they were stolen to dissuade Constance, a plea she willingly accepts until she realizes they have actually been stolen. Meanwhile, Kate is now dressed in her plain dress and is mistaken by Marlow (who never looked her in the face in their earlier meeting) as a barmaid to whom he is attracted. She decides to play the part, and they have a lively, fun conversation that ends with him trying to embrace her, a move Mr. Hardcastle observes. Kate asks for the night to prove that he can be both respectful and lively.

Act IV finds the plots almost falling apart. News has spread that Sir Charles Marlow (Hardcastle's friend, and father to young Marlow) is on his way, which will reveal Hastings's identity as beloved of Constance and also force the question of whether Kate and Marlow are to marry. Hastings has sent the jewels in a casket to Marlow for safekeeping but Marlow, confused, has given them to Mrs. Hardcastle (whom he still believes is the landlady of the inn). When Hastings learns this, he realizes his plan to elope with wealth is over, and decides he must convince Constance to elope immediately. Meanwhile, Marlow's impertinence towards Hardcastle (whom he believes is the landlord) reaches its apex, and Hardcastle kicks him out of the house, during which altercation Marlow begins to realize what is actually happening. He finds Kate, who now pretends to be a poor relation to the Hardcastles, which would make her a proper match as far as class but not a good marriage as far as wealth. Marlow is starting to love her, but cannot pursue it because it would be unacceptable to his father because of her lack of weatlh, so he leaves her. Meanwhile, a letter from Hastings arrives that Mrs. Hardcastle intercepts, and she reads that he waits for Constance in the garden, ready to elope. Angry, she insists that she will bring Constance far away, and makes plans for that. Marlow, Hastings and Tony confront one another, and the anger over all the deceit leads to a severe argument, resolved temporarily when Tony promises to solve the problem for Hastings.

Act V finds the truth coming to light, and everyone happy. Sir Charles has arrived, and he and Hastings laugh together over the confusion young Marlow was in. Marlow arrives to apologize, and in the discussion over Kate, claims he barely talked to Kate. Hardcastle accuses him of lying, since Hardcastle saw him embrace Kate (but Marlow does not know that was indeed Kate). Kate arrives after Marlow leaves the room and convinces the older men she will reveal the full truth if they watch an interview between the two from a hidden vantage behind a screen. Meanwhile, Hastings waits in the garden, per Tony's instruction, and Tony arrives to tell him that he drove his mother and Constance all over in circles, so that they think they are lost far from home when in fact they have been left nearby. Mrs. Hardcastle, distraught, arrives and is convinced she must hide from a highwayman who is approaching. The "highwayman" proves to be Mr. Hardcastle, who scares her in her confusion for a while but ultimately discovers what is happening. Hastings and Constance, nearby, decide they will not elope but rather appeal to Mr. Hardcastle for mercy. Back at the house, the interview between Kate (playing the poor relation) and Marlow reveals his truly good character, and after some discussion, everyone agrees to the match. Hastings and Constance ask permission to marry and, since Tony is actually of age and therefore can of his own volition decide not to marry Constance, the permission is granted. All are happy (except for miserly Mrs. Hardcastle), and the "mistakes of a night" have been corrected.

There are two epilogues generally printed to the play, one of which sketches in metaphor Goldsmith's attempt to bring comedy back to its traditional roots, and the other of which suggests Tony Lumpkin has adventures yet to be realized.

She Stoops to Conquer Themes

Class

While the play is not explicitly a tract on class, the theme is central to it. The decisions the characters make and their perspectives on one another, are all largely based on what class they are a part of. Where Tony openly loves low-class people like the drunks in the Three Pigeons, Marlow must hide his love of low-class women from his father and "society." His dynamic relationship with Kate (and the way he treats her) is defined by who he thinks she is at the time – from high-class Kate to a poor barmaid to a woman from good family but with no fortune. Hastings' and Marlow's reaction to Hardcastle is also a great example of the importance of class—they find him impudent and absurd, because they believe him to be of low class, but his behavior would be perfectly reasonable and expected from a member of the upper class, as he truly is.

Money

One of the factors that keeps the play pragmatic even when it veers close to contrivance and sentiment is the unavoidable importance of money. While some of the characters, like Marlow and Hardcastle, are mostly unconcerned with questions of money, there are several characters whose lives are largely defined by a lack of access to it. Constance cannot run away with Hastings because she worries about a life without her inheritance. When Marlow thinks Kate is a poor relation of the Hardcastles, he cannot get himself to propose because of her lack of dowry. And Tony seems to live a life unconcerned with wealth, although the implicit truth is that his dalliances are facilitated by having access to wealth.

Behavior/Appearance

One of the elements Goldsmith most skewers in his play's satirical moments is the aristocratic emphasis on behavior as a gauge of character. Even though we today believe that one's behavior – in terms of "low" versus "high" class behavior – does not necessarily indicate who someone is, many characters in the play are often blinded to a character's behavior because of an assumption. For instance, Marlow and Hastings treat Hardcastle cruelly because they think him the landlord of an inn, and are confused by his behavior, which seems forward. The same behavior would have seemed appropriately high-class if they hadn't been fooled by Tony. Throughout the play, characters (especially Marlow) assume they understand someone's behavior when what truly guides them is their assumption of the other character's class.

Moderation

Throughout the play runs a conflict between the refined attitudes of town and the simple behaviors of the country. The importance of this theme is underscored by the fact that it is the crux of the opening disagreement between Hardcastle and his wife. Where country characters like Hardcastle see town manners as pretentious, town characters like Marlow see country manners as bumpkinish. The best course of action is proposed through Kate, who is praised by

Marlow as having a "refined simplicity." Having lived in town, she is able to appreciate the values of both sides of life and can find happiness in appreciating the contradictions that exist between them.

Contradiction

Most characters in the play want others to be simple to understand. This in many ways mirrors the expectations of an audience that Goldsmith wishes to mock. Where his characters are initially presented as comic types, he spends time throughout the play complicating them all by showing their contradictions. Most clear are the contradictions within Marlow, who is both refined and base. The final happy ending comes when the two oldest men – Hardcastle and Sir Charles – decide to accept the contradictions in their children. In a sense, this theme helps to understand Goldsmith's purpose in the play, reminding us that all people are worthy of being mocked because of their silly, base natures, and no one is above reproach.

Comedy

Though it is only explicitly referred to in the prologue, an understanding of Goldsmith's play in context shows his desire to reintroduce his audience to the “laughing comedy” that derived from a long history of comedy that mocks human vice. This type of comedy stands in contrast to the then-popular “sentimental comedy” that praised virtues and reinforced bourgeois mentality. Understanding Goldsmith's love of the former helps to clarify several elements of the play: the low scene in the Three Pigeons; the mockery of baseness in even the most high-bred characters; and the celebration of absurdity as a fact of human life.

Deceit/Trickery

Much of this play's comedy comes from the trickery played by various characters. The most important deceits come from Tony, including his lie about Hardcastle's home and his scheme of driving his mother and Constance around in circles. However, deceit also touches to the center of the play's more major themes. In a sense, the only reason anyone learns anything about their deep assumptions about class and behavior is because they are duped into seeing characters in different ways. This truth is most clear with Marlow and his shifting perspective on Kate, but it also is true for the Hardcastles and Sir Charles, who are able to see the contradictions in others PYGMALIONbecause of what trickery engenders.

UNIT IV

PYGMALION

Written by	George Bernard Shaw
Characters	Professor Henry Higgins Colonel Pickering Eliza Doolittle Alfred Doolittle Mrs. Pearce Mrs. Higgins Mrs. Eynsford-Hill Clara Eynsford-Hill Freddy Eynsford-Hill
Date premiered	16 October 1913
Place premiered	Hofburg Theatre in Vienna, Austria
Genre	romantic comedy, social criticism
Setting	London, England

Pygmalion is a play by George Bernard Shaw, named after a Greek mythological figure. It was first presented on stage to the public in 1913.

In ancient Greek mythology, Pygmalion fell in love with one of his sculptures, which then came to life. The general idea of that myth was a popular subject for Victorian era British playwrights, including one of Shaw's influences, W. S. Gilbert, who wrote a successful play based on the story called *Pygmalion and Galatea* that was first presented in 1871. Shaw would also have been familiar with the burlesque version, *Galatea, or Pygmalion Reversed*. Shaw's play has been adapted numerous times, most notably as the 1956 musical *My Fair Lady* and its 1964 film version.

Shaw mentioned that the character of Professor Henry Higgins was inspired by several British professors of phonetics: Alexander Melville Bell, Alexander J. Ellis, Tito Pagliardini, but above all, the cantankerous Henry Sweet.[1]

Plot[edit]

George Orwell claimed that "The central plot of Shaw's play, Pygmalion, is lifted out of Peregrine Pickle [by Smollett], and I believe that no one has ever pointed this out in print, which suggests that few people can have read the book." ("As I Please" TRIBUNE July 7, 1944)

Act One[edit]

A group of people are sheltering from the rain. Among them are the Eynsford-Hills, superficial social climbers eking out a living in "genteel poverty", consisting initially of Mrs. Eynsford-Hill and her daughter Clara. Clara's brother Freddy enters having earlier been dispatched to secure them a cab (which they can ill-afford), but being rather timid and faint-hearted he has failed to do so. As he goes off once again to find a cab, he bumps into a flower girl, Eliza. Her flowers drop into the mud of Covent Garden, the flowers she needs to survive in her poverty-stricken world. Shortly, they are joined by a gentleman, Colonel Pickering. While Eliza tries to sell flowers to the Colonel, a bystander informs her that a man is writing down everything she says. The man is Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics. Eliza worries that Higgins is a police officer and will not calm down until Higgins introduces himself. It soon becomes apparent that he and Colonel Pickering have a shared interest in phonetics; indeed, Pickering has come from India to meet Higgins, and Higgins was planning to go to India to meet Pickering. Higgins tells Pickering that he could pass off the flower girl as a duchess merely by teaching her to speak properly. These words of bravado spark an interest in Eliza, who would love to make changes in her life and become more mannerly, even though, to her, it only means working in a flower shop. At the end of the act, Freddy returns after finding a taxi, only to find that his mother and sister have gone and left him with the cab. The streetwise Eliza takes the cab from him, using the money that Higgins tossed to her, leaving him on his own.

Act Two[edit]

Lynn Fontanne (Eliza) and Henry Travers (Alfred Doolittle) in the Theatre Guild production of *Pygmalion* (1926)

Higgins' home – the next day

As Higgins demonstrates his phonetics to Pickering, the housekeeper Mrs. Pearce, tells him that a young girl wants to see him. Eliza has shown up because she wishes to talk like a lady in a flower shop. She tells Higgins that she will pay for lessons. He shows no interest, but she reminds him of his boast the previous day. Higgins claimed that he could pass her for a duchess. Pickering makes a bet with him on his claim, and says that he will pay for her lessons if Higgins succeeds. She is sent off to have a bath. Mrs. Pearce tells Higgins that he must behave himself in the young girl's presence, meaning he must stop swearing, and improve his table manners, but he is at a loss to understand why she should find fault with him. Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, appears with the sole purpose of getting money out of Higgins, having no paternal interest in his daughter's welfare. He sees himself as a member of the undeserving poor, and means to go on being undeserving. With his intelligent mind untamed by education, he has an eccentric view of life. He is also aggressive, and when Eliza, on her return, sticks her tongue out at him, he goes to hit her, but is prevented by Pickering. The scene ends with Higgins telling Pickering that they really have got a difficult job on their hands.

Act Three[edit]

Mrs. Higgins' drawing room

Higgins bursts in and tells his mother he has picked up a "common flower girl" whom he has been teaching. Mrs. Higgins is not very impressed with her son's attempts to win her approval because it is her 'at home' day and she is entertaining visitors. The visitors are the Eynsford-Hills. Higgins is rude to them on their arrival. Eliza enters and soon falls into talking about the weather and her family. Whilst she is now able to speak in beautifully modulated tones, the substance of what she says remains unchanged from the gutter. She confides her suspicions that her aunt was killed by relatives, and mentions that gin had been "mother's milk" to this aunt, and that Eliza's own father was always more cheerful after a goodly amount of gin. Higgins passes off her remarks as "the new small talk", and Freddy is enraptured. When she is leaving, he asks her if she is going to walk across the park, to which she replies, "Walk? Not bloody likely!" (This is the most famous line from the play, and, for many years after the play's debut, use of the word 'bloody' was known as a *pygmalion*; Mrs. Campbell was considered to have risked her career by speaking the line on stage.[7]) After she and the Eynsford-Hills leave, Henry asks for his mother's opinion. She says the girl is not presentable and is very concerned about what will happen to her, but neither Higgins nor Pickering understands her thoughts of Eliza's future, and leave feeling confident and excited about how Eliza will get on. This leaves Mrs. Higgins feeling exasperated, and exclaiming, "Men! Men!! Men!!!"

Act Four[edit]

Higgins' home – midnight

Higgins, Pickering, and Eliza have returned from a ball. A tired Eliza sits unnoticed, brooding and silent, while Pickering congratulates Higgins on winning the bet. Higgins scoffs and declares the evening a "silly tomfoolery", thanking God it's over and saying that he had been sick of the whole thing for the last two months. Still barely acknowledging Eliza beyond asking her to leave a note for Mrs. Pearce regarding coffee, the two retire to bed. Higgins returns to the room, looking for his slippers, and Eliza throws them at him. Higgins is taken aback, and is at first completely unable to understand Eliza's preoccupation, which aside from being ignored after her triumph is the question of what she is to do now. When Higgins does understand he makes light of it, saying she could get married, but Eliza interprets this as selling herself like a prostitute. "We were above that at the corner of Tottenham Court Road." Finally she returns her jewellery to Higgins, including the ring he had given her, which he throws into the fireplace with a violence that scares Eliza. Furious with himself for losing his temper, he damns Mrs. Pearce, the coffee and then Eliza, and finally himself, for "lavishing" his knowledge and his "regard and intimacy" on a "heartless guttersnipe", and retires in great dudgeon. Eliza roots around in the fireplace and retrieves the ring.

Act Five[edit]

Mrs. Higgins' drawing room – the next morning

Higgins and Pickering, perturbed by the discovery that Eliza has walked out on them, call on Mrs. Higgins to phone the police. Higgins is particularly distracted, since Eliza had assumed the responsibility of maintaining his diary and keeping track of his possessions, which causes Mrs. Higgins to decry their calling the police as though Eliza were "a lost umbrella". Doolittle is announced; he emerges dressed in splendid wedding attire and is furious with Higgins, who after their previous encounter had been so taken with Doolittle's unorthodox ethics that he had recommended him as the "most original moralist in England" to a rich American founding Moral Reform Societies; the American had subsequently left Doolittle a pension worth three thousand pounds a year, as a consequence of which Doolittle feels intimidated into joining the middle class and marrying his missus. Mrs. Higgins observes that this at least settles the problem of who shall provide for Eliza, to which Higgins objects – after all, he paid Doolittle five pounds for her. Mrs. Higgins informs her son that Eliza is upstairs, and explains the circumstances of her arrival, alluding to how marginalised and overlooked Eliza felt the previous night. Higgins is unable to appreciate this, and sulks when told that he must behave if Eliza is to join them. Doolittle is asked to wait outside.

Eliza enters, at ease and self-possessed. Higgins blusters but Eliza isn't shaken and speaks exclusively to Pickering. Throwing Higgins' previous insults back at him ("Oh, I'm only a squashed cabbage leaf"), Eliza remarks that it was only by Pickering's example that she learned to be a lady, which renders Higgins speechless. Eliza goes on to say that she has completely left behind the flower girl she was, and that she couldn't utter any of her old sounds if she tried – at which point Doolittle emerges from the balcony, causing Eliza to relapse totally into her gutter speech. Higgins is jubilant, jumping up and crowing over her. Doolittle explains his situation and asks if Eliza will come with him to his wedding. Pickering and Mrs. Higgins also agree to go, and leave with Doolittle and Eliza to follow.

The scene ends with another confrontation between Higgins and Eliza. Higgins asks if Eliza is satisfied with the revenge she has brought thus far and if she will now come back, but she refuses. Higgins defends himself from Eliza's earlier accusation by arguing that he treats everyone the same, so she shouldn't feel singled out. Eliza replies that she just wants a little kindness, and that since he will never stop to show her this, she will not come back, but will marry Freddy. Higgins scolds her for such low ambitions: he has made her "a consort for a king." When she threatens to teach phonetics and offer herself as an assistant to Nepommuck, Higgins again loses his temper and promises to wring her neck if she does so. Eliza realises that this last threat strikes Higgins at the very core and that it gives her power over him; Higgins, for his part, is delighted to see a spark of fight in Eliza rather than her erstwhile fretting and worrying. He remarks "I like you like this", and calls her a "pillar of strength". Mrs. Higgins returns and she and Eliza depart for the wedding. As they leave, Higgins incorrigibly gives Eliza a number of errands to run, as though their recent conversation had not taken place. Eliza disdainfully explains why they are unnecessary and wonders what Higgins is going to do without her (in another version, Eliza disdainfully tells him to do the errands himself; Mrs. Higgins says that she'll get the items, but Higgins cheerfully tells her that Eliza will do it after all). Higgins laughs to himself at the idea of Eliza marrying Freddy as the play ends.

Critical reception[edit]

The play was well received by critics in major cities following its premieres in Vienna, London, and New York. The initial release in Vienna garnered several reviews describing the show as a positive departure from Shaw's usual dry and didactic style.[8] The Broadway premiere in New York was praised in terms of both plot and acting, described as "a love story with brusque diffidence and a wealth of humor."[9] Reviews of the production in London were slightly less unequivocally positive, with the *Telegraph* noting that the play was deeply diverting with interesting mechanical staging, although the critic ultimately found the production somewhat shallow and overly lengthy.[10] The *London Times*, however, praised both the characters and actors (especially Sir Herbert Tree as Higgins and Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Eliza) and the happy if "unconventional" ending.[11]

Ending

Pygmalion was the most broadly appealing of all Shaw's plays. But popular audiences, looking for pleasant entertainment with big stars in a West End venue, wanted a "happy ending" for the characters they liked so well, as did some critics.[12] During the 1914 run, to Shaw's exasperation but not to his surprise, Tree sought to sweeten Shaw's ending to please himself and his record houses.[13] Shaw returned for the 100th performance and watched Higgins, standing at the window, toss a bouquet down to Eliza. "My ending makes money; you ought to be grateful," protested Tree, to which Shaw replied, "Your ending is damnable; you ought to be shot."[14][15] Shaw remained sufficiently irritated to add a postscript essay, "'What Happened Afterwards,"[16] to the 1916 print edition for inclusion with subsequent editions, in which he explained precisely why it was impossible for the story to end with Higgins and Eliza getting married.

He continued to protect what he saw as the play's, and Eliza's, integrity by protecting the last scene. For at least some performances during the 1920 revival, Shaw adjusted the ending in a way that underscored the Shavian message. In an undated note to Mrs. Campbell he wrote,

When Eliza emancipates herself – when Galatea comes to life – she must not relapse. She must retain her pride and triumph to the end. When Higgins takes your arm on 'consort battleship' you must instantly throw him off with implacable pride; and this is the note until the final 'Buy them yourself.' He will go out on the balcony to watch your departure; come back triumphantly into the room; exclaim 'Galatea!' (meaning that the statue has come to life at last); and – curtain. Thus he gets the last word; and you get it too.[17]

(This ending, however, is not included in any print version of the play.)

Shaw fought against a Higgins-Eliza happy-end pairing as late as 1938. He sent the 1938 film version's producer, Gabriel Pascal, a concluding sequence which he felt offered a fair compromise: a tender farewell scene between Higgins and Eliza, followed by one showing Freddy and Eliza happy in their greengrocery-flower shop. Only at the sneak preview did he learn that Pascal had finessed the question of Eliza's future with a slightly ambiguous final scene in which Eliza returns to the house of a sadly musing Higgins and self-mockingly quotes her previous self announcing, "I washed my face and hands before I come, I did".

UNIT V

Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot, staging by Otomar Krejca, Avignon Festival, 1978

Written by	Samuel Beckett
Characters	Vladimir Estragon Pozzo Lucky A Boy
Mute	Godot
Date premiered	5 January 1953
Place premiered	Théâtre de Babylone [fr], Paris
Original language	French
Genre	Tragicomedy (play)

Waiting for Godot (/ˈɡɒdoʊ/ *GOD-oh*[1]) is a play by Samuel Beckett, in which two characters, Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo), wait for the arrival of someone named Godot who never arrives, and while waiting they engage in a variety of discussions and encounter three other characters.[2] *Waiting for Godot* is Beckett's translation of his own original French-language play, ***En attendant Godot***, and is subtitled (in English only) "a tragicomedy in two acts".[3] The original French text was composed between 9 October 1948 and 29 January 1949.[4] The premiere, directed by Roger Blin, was on 5

January 1953 at the Théâtre de Babylone [fr], Paris. The English-language version premiered in London in 1955. In a poll conducted by the British Royal National Theatre in 1990, it was voted the "most significant English language play of the 20th

Act I

The play opens on an outdoor scene of two bedraggled companions: the philosophical Vladimir and the weary Estragon - the latter of whom, at the moment, cannot remove his boots from his aching feet, finally muttering, "Nothing to be done."[nb 1] Vladimir takes up the thought loftily, while Estragon vaguely recalls having been beaten the night before. Finally, his boots come off, while the pair ramble and bicker pointlessly. When Estragon suddenly decides to leave, Vladimir reminds him that they must stay and wait for an unspecified person called Godot—a segment of dialogue that repeats often. Unfortunately, the pair cannot agree on where or when they are expected to meet with this Godot.[nb 2] They only know to wait at a tree, and there is indeed a leafless one nearby.

Eventually, Estragon dozes off and Vladimir rouses him but then stops him before he can share his dreams—another recurring activity between the two men. Estragon wants to hear an old joke, which Vladimir cannot finish without going off to urinate, since every time he starts laughing, a kidney ailment flares up. Upon Vladimir's return, the increasingly jaded Estragon suggests that they hang themselves, but they abandon the idea when the logistics seem ineffective. They then speculate on the potential rewards of continuing to wait for Godot, but can come to no definite conclusions.[7] When Estragon declares his hunger, Vladimir provides a carrot (among a collection of turnips), at which Estragon idly gnaws, loudly reiterating his boredom.

"A terrible cry"[8] heralds the entrance of Lucky, a silent, baggage-burdened slave with a rope tied around his neck, and Pozzo, his arrogant and imperious master, who holds the other end and stops now to rest. Pozzo barks abusive orders at Lucky, which are always quietly followed, while acting civilly though tersely towards the other two. Pozzo enjoys a selfish snack of chicken and wine, before casting the bones to the ground, which Estragon gleefully claims. Having been in a dumbfounded state of silence ever since the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir finally finds his voice to shout criticisms at

Pozzo for his mistreatment of Lucky. Pozzo ignores this and explains his intention to sell Lucky, who begins to cry. Estragon takes pity and tries to wipe away Lucky's tears, but, as he approaches, Lucky violently kicks him in the shin. Pozzo then rambles nostalgically but vaguely about his relationship with Lucky over the years, before offering Vladimir and Estragon some compensation for their company. Estragon begins to beg for money when Pozzo instead suggests that Lucky can "dance" and "think" for their entertainment. Lucky's dance, "the Net", is clumsy and shuffling; Lucky's "thinking" is a long-winded and disjointed monologue—it is the first and only time that Lucky speaks.[nb 3] The monologue begins as a relatively coherent and academic lecture on theology but quickly dissolves into mindless verbosity, escalating in both volume and speed, that agonises the others until Vladimir finally pulls off Lucky's hat, stopping him in mid-sentence. Pozzo then has Lucky pack up his bags, and they hastily leave.

Vladimir and Estragon, alone again, reflect on whether they have met Pozzo and Lucky before. A boy then arrives, purporting to be a messenger sent from Godot to tell the pair that Godot will not be coming that evening "but surely tomorrow".[10] During Vladimir's interrogation of the boy, he asks if he came the day before, making it apparent that the two men have been waiting for a long period and will likely continue. After the boy departs, the moon appears, and the two men verbally agree to leave and find shelter for the night, but they merely stand without moving.

Act II[edit]

It is daytime again and Vladimir begins singing a recursive round about the death of a dog, but twice forgets the lyrics as he sings.[nb 4][12] Again, Estragon claims to have been beaten last night, despite no apparent injury. Vladimir comments that the formerly bare tree now has leaves and tries to confirm his recollections of yesterday against Estragon's extremely vague, unreliable memory. Vladimir then triumphantly produces evidence of the previous day's events by showing Estragon the wound from when Lucky kicked him. Noticing Estragon's barefootedness, they also discover his previously forsaken boots nearby, which Estragon insists are not his, although they fit him perfectly. With no carrots left, Vladimir is turned down in offering Estragon a turnip or a radish. He then sings Estragon to sleep with a lullaby before noticing further evidence to confirm his memory: Lucky's hat still lies on the ground. This leads to his waking Estragon and involving him in a frenetic hat-swapping scene. The two then wait again for Godot, while distracting themselves by playfully imitating Pozzo and Lucky, firing insults at each other and then making up, and attempting some fitness routines—all of which fail miserably and end quickly.

Suddenly, Pozzo and Lucky reappear, but the rope is much shorter than during their last visit, and Lucky now guides Pozzo, rather than being controlled by him. As they arrive, Pozzo trips over Lucky and they together fall into a motionless heap. Estragon sees an opportunity to exact revenge on Lucky for kicking him earlier. The issue is debated lengthily until Pozzo shocks the pair by revealing that he is now blind and Lucky is now mute. Pozzo further claims to have lost all sense of time, and assures the others that he cannot remember meeting them before, but also does not expect to recall today's events tomorrow. His commanding arrogance from yesterday appears to have been replaced by humility and insight. His parting words—which Vladimir expands upon later—are ones of utter despair.[13] Lucky and Pozzo depart; meanwhile Estragon has again fallen asleep.

Alone, Vladimir is encountered by (apparently) the same boy from yesterday, though Vladimir wonders whether he might be the other boy's brother. This time, Vladimir begins consciously realising the circular nature of his experiences: he even predicts exactly what the boy will say, involving the same speech about Godot not arriving today but surely tomorrow. Vladimir seems to reach a moment of revelation before furiously chasing the boy away, demanding that he be recognised the next time they meet. Estragon awakes and pulls his boots off again. He and Vladimir consider hanging themselves once more, but when they test the strength of Estragon's belt (hoping to use it as a noose), it breaks and Estragon's trousers fall down. They resolve tomorrow to bring a more suitable piece of rope and, if Godot fails to arrive, to commit suicide at last. Again, they decide to clear out for the night, but again, they do not move.

Characters[edit]

Beckett refrained from elaborating on the characters beyond what he had written in the play. He once recalled that when Sir Ralph Richardson "wanted the low-down on Pozzo, his home address and curriculum vitae, and seemed to make the forthcoming of this and similar information the condition of his condescending to illustrate the part of Vladimir ... I told him that all I knew about Pozzo was in the text, that if I had known more I would have put it in the text, and that was true also of the other characters."[14]

Vladimir and Estragon

Vladimir and Estragon (The Doon School, India, 2010)

When Beckett started writing he did not have a visual image of Vladimir and Estragon. They are never referred to as tramps in the text, though are often performed in such costumes on stage. Roger Blin advises: "Beckett heard their voices, but he couldn't describe his characters to me. [He said]: 'The only thing I'm sure of is that they're wearing bowlers.' "[15] "The bowler hat was of course *de rigueur* for male persons in many social contexts when Beckett was growing up in Foxrock, and [his father] commonly wore one."[16] That said, the play does indicate that the clothes worn at least by Estragon are shabby. When told by Vladimir that he should have been a poet, Estragon says he was, gestures to his rags, and asks if it were not obvious.

There are no physical descriptions of either of the two characters; however, the text indicates that Vladimir is possibly the heavier of the pair. The bowlers and other broadly comic aspects of their personas have reminded modern audiences of Laurel and Hardy, who occasionally played tramps in their films. "The hat-passing game in *Waiting for Godot* and Lucky's inability to think without his hat on are two obvious Beckett derivations from Laurel and Hardy – a substitution of form for essence, covering for reality", wrote Gerald Mast in *The Comic Mind: Comedy and the Movies*.[17] Their "blather", which indicated Hiberno-English idioms, indicated that they are both Irish.[18]

Vladimir stands through most of the play whereas Estragon sits down numerous times and even dozes off. "Estragon is inert and Vladimir restless."[19] Vladimir looks at the sky and muses on religious or philosophical matters. Estragon "belongs to the stone",[20] preoccupied with mundane things, what he can get to eat and how to ease his physical aches and pains; he is direct, intuitive. He finds it hard to remember but can recall certain things when prompted, *e.g.*, when Vladimir asks: "Do you remember the Gospels?"[21] Estragon tells Vladimir about the coloured maps of the Holy Land and that he planned to honeymoon by the Dead Sea; it is his short-term memory that is poorest and points to the fact that he may, in fact, be suffering from Alzheimer's disease.[22] Al Alvarez writes: "But perhaps Estragon's forgetfulness is the cement binding their relationship together. He continually forgets, Vladimir continually reminds him; between them they pass the time."[23] They have been together for fifty years but when asked–by Pozzo–they do not reveal their actual ages. Vladimir's life is not without its discomforts too but he is the more resilient of the pair. "Vladimir's pain is primarily mental anguish, which would thus account for his voluntary exchange of his hat for Lucky's, thus signifying Vladimir's symbolic desire for another person's thoughts."[24] These characterizations, for some, represented the act of thinking or mental state (Vladimir) and physical things or the body (Estragon).[25] This is visually depicted in Vladimir's continuous attention to his hat and Estragon, his boots. While the two characters are temperamentally opposite, with their differing responses to a situation, they are both essential as demonstrated in the way Vladimir's metaphysical musings were balanced by Estragon's physical demands.[26]

The above characterizations, particularly that which concerns their existential situation, is also demonstrated in one of the play's recurring theme, which is sleep.[27] There are two instances when Estragon falls asleep in the play and had nightmares, which he wanted to tell Vladimir when he woke. The latter refuses to hear it since he could not tolerate the way the dreamer cannot escape or act during each episode. An interpretation noted the link between the two characters' experiences and the way they represent them: the impotence in Estragon's nightmare and Vladimir's predicament of waiting as his companion sleeps.[27] It is also said that sleep and impatience allow the spectators to distinguish between the two main characters, that sleep expresses

Estragon's focus on his sensations while Vladimir's restlessness shows his focus on his thoughts.[28] This particular aspect involving sleep is indicative of what some called a pattern of duality in the play.[29] In the case of the protagonists, the duality involves the body and the mind, making the characters complementary.[28]

Throughout the play the couple refer to each other by the pet names "Didi" and "Gogo", although the boy addresses Vladimir as "Mister Albert". Beckett originally intended to call Estragon "Lévy" but when Pozzo questions him he gives his name as "Magrégor, André"[30] and also responds to "*Catulle*" in French or "Catullus" in the first Faber edition. This became "Adam" in the American edition. Beckett's only explanation was that he was "fed up with Catullus".[31]

Vivian Mercier described *Waiting for Godot* as a play which "has achieved a theoretical impossibility—a play in which nothing happens, that yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. What's more, since the second act is a subtly different reprise of the first, he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice."[32] Mercier once questioned Beckett on the language used by the pair: "It seemed to me...he made Didi and Gogo sound as if they had earned PhDs. 'How do you know they hadn't?' was his reply."[33] They clearly have known better times, a visit to the Eiffel Tower and grape-harvesting by the Rhône; it is about all either has to say about their pasts, save for Estragon's claim to have been a poet, an explanation Estragon provides to Vladimir for his destitution. In the first stage production, which Beckett oversaw, both are "more shabby-genteel than ragged...Vladimir at least is capable of being scandalised...on a matter of etiquette when Estragon begs for chicken bones or money."[34]

Pozzo and Lucky[edit]

Jean Martin, who originated the role of Lucky in Paris in 1953, spoke to a doctor named Marthe Gautier, who was working at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital. Martin asked if she knew of a physiological reason that would explain Lucky's voice as it was written in the text. Gautier suggested Parkinson's disease, which, she said, "begins with a trembling, which gets more and more noticeable, until later the patient can no longer speak without the voice shaking". Martin began incorporating this idea into his rehearsals.[35] Beckett and the director may not have been completely convinced, but they expressed no objections.[36] When Martin mentioned to the playwright that he was "playing Lucky as if he were suffering from Parkinson’s”, Beckett responded by saying " Yes, of course", and mentioning that his own mother had Parkinson’s.[37]

When Beckett was asked why Lucky was so named, he replied, "I suppose he is lucky to have no more expectations..."[38]

It has been contended that "Pozzo and Lucky are simply Didi and Gogo writ large", unbalanced as their relationship is.[39] However, Pozzo's dominance is noted to be superficial; "upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that Lucky always possessed more influence in the relationship, for he danced, and more importantly, thought – not as a service, but in order to fill a vacant need of Pozzo: he committed all of these acts *for* Pozzo. As such, since the first appearance of the duo, the true slave had always been Pozzo."[24] Pozzo credits Lucky with having given him all the culture, refinement, and ability to reason that he possesses. His rhetoric has been learned by rote. Pozzo's "party piece" on the sky is a clear example: as his memory crumbles, he finds himself unable to continue under his own steam.

Little is learned about Pozzo besides the fact that he is on his way to the fair to sell his slave, Lucky. He presents himself very much as the Ascendancy landlord, bullying and conceited. His pipe is made by Kapp and Peterson, Dublin's best-known tobacconists (their slogan was "The thinking man's pipe") which he refers to as a "briar" but which Estragon calls a "dudeen" emphasising the differences in their social standing. He confesses to a poor memory but it is more a result of an abiding self-absorption. "Pozzo is a character who has to overcompensate. That's why he overdoes things ... and his overcompensation has to do with a deep insecurity in him. These were things Beckett said, psychological terms he used."[40]

Pozzo controls Lucky by means of an extremely long rope, which he jerks and tugs if Lucky is the least bit slow. Lucky is the absolutely subservient slave of Pozzo and he unquestioningly does his every bidding with "dog-like devotion".[41] He struggles with a heavy suitcase without ever thinking of dropping it. Lucky speaks only once in the play and it is a result of Pozzo's order to "think" for Estragon and Vladimir. Pozzo and Lucky have been together for sixty years and, in that time, their relationship has deteriorated.

Lucky has always been the intellectually superior but now, with age, he has become an object of contempt: his "think" is a caricature of intellectual thought and his "dance" is a sorry sight. Despite his horrid treatment at Pozzo's hand however, Lucky remains completely faithful to him. Even in the second act when Pozzo has inexplicably gone blind, and needs to be led by Lucky rather than driving him as he had done before, Lucky remains faithful and has not tried to run away; they are clearly bound together by more than a piece of rope in the same way that Didi and Gogo are "[t]ied to Godot".[42] Beckett's advice to the American director Alan Schneider was: "[Pozzo] is a hypomaniac and the only way to play him is to play him mad."[19]

"In his [English] translation ... Beckett struggled to retain the French atmosphere as much as possible, so that he delegated all the English names and places to Lucky, whose own name, he thought, suggested such a correlation."[43]

The Boy

The cast list specifies only one boy.

The boy in Act I, a local lad, assures Vladimir that this is the first time he has seen him. He says he was not there the previous day. He confirms he works for Mr. Godot as a goatherd. His brother, whom Godot beats, is a shepherd. Godot feeds both of them and allows them to sleep in his hayloft.

The boy in Act II also assures Vladimir that it was not he who called upon them the day before. He insists that this too is his first visit. When Vladimir asks what Godot does the boy tells him, "He does nothing, sir."[44] We also learn he has a white beard—possibly, the boy is not certain. This boy also has a brother who it seems is sick but there is no clear evidence to suggest that his brother is the boy who came in Act I or the one who came the day before that.

Whether the boy from Act I is the same boy from Act II or not, both boys are polite yet timid. In the first Act, the boy, despite arriving while Pozzo and Lucky are still about, does not announce himself until after Pozzo and Lucky leave, saying to Vladimir and Estragon that he waited for the other two to leave out of fear of the two men and of Pozzo's whip; the boy does not arrive early enough in Act II to see either Lucky or

Pozzo. In both Acts, the boy seems hesitant to speak very much, saying mostly "Yes Sir" or "No Sir", and winds up exiting by running away.

Godot[edit]

The identity of Godot has been the subject of much debate. "When Colin Duckworth asked Beckett point-blank whether Pozzo was Godot, the author replied: 'No. It is just implied in the text, but it's not true.' "[45]

Deirdre Bair says that though "Beckett will never discuss the implications of the title", she suggests two stories that both may have at least partially inspired it. The first is that because feet are a recurring theme in the play, Beckett has said the title was suggested to him by the slang French term for boot: "*godillot*, *godasse*". The second story, according to Bair, is that Beckett once encountered a group of spectators at the French *Tour de France* bicycle race, who told him "Nous attendons Godot" – they were waiting for a competitor whose name was Godot.[46]

"Beckett said to Peter Woodthorpe that he regretted calling the absent character 'Godot', because of all the theories involving God to which this had given rise."[47] "I also told [Ralph] Richardson that if by Godot I had meant God I would [have] said God, and not Godot. This seemed to disappoint him greatly."[48] That said, Beckett did once concede, "It would be fatuous of me to pretend that I am not aware of the meanings attached to the word 'Godot', and the opinion of many that it means 'God'. But you must remember – I wrote the play in French, and if I did have that meaning in my mind, it was somewhere in my unconscious and I was not overtly aware of it."[49] (Note: the French word for 'God' is 'Dieu'.) However, "Beckett has often stressed the strong unconscious impulses that partly control his writing; he has even spoken of being 'in a trance' when he writes."[50] While Beckett stated he originally had no knowledge of Balzac's play *Mercadet ou le faiseur*, whose character Godeau has an identical-sounding name and is involved in a similar situation, it has been suggested he may have been instead influenced by *The Lovable Cheat*,[51] a minor adaptation of *Mercadet* starring Buster Keaton, whose works Beckett had admired[52] and who he later sought out for *Film*.

Unlike elsewhere in Beckett's work, no bicycle appears in this play, but Hugh Kenner in his essay "The Cartesian Centaur"[53] reports that Beckett once, when asked about the meaning of Godot, mentioned "a veteran racing cyclist, bald, a 'stayer', recurrent placeman in town-to-town and national championships, Christian name elusive, surname Godeau, pronounced, of course, no differently from Godot." *Waiting for Godot* is clearly not about track cycling, but it is said that Beckett himself did wait for French cyclist Roger Godeau [de] (1920–2000; a professional cyclist from 1943 to 1961), outside the velodrome in Roubaix.[54][55]

Of the two boys who work for Godot only one appears safe from beatings, "Beckett said, only half-jokingly, that one of Estragon's feet was saved".[56]

The name "Godot" is pronounced in Britain and Ireland with the emphasis on the first syllable, /ˈɡɒdoʊ/ *GOD-oh*;[2] in North America it is usually pronounced with an emphasis on the second syllable, /ɡəˈdoʊ/ *gə-DOH*. Beckett himself said the emphasis should be on the first syllable, and that the North American pronunciation is a mistake.[57] Georges Borchardt, Beckett's literary agent, and who represents Beckett's literary estate, has always pronounced "Godot" in the French manner, with equal emphasis on both syllables. Borchardt checked with Beckett's nephew, Edward, who told him his uncle pronounced it that way as well.[58] The 1956 Broadway production split the difference by having Vladimir pronounce "Godot" with equal stress on both syllables (goh-doh) and Estragon pronounce it with the accent on the second syllable (g'doh).[59][60]

Setting[edit]

There is only one scene throughout both acts. Two men are waiting on a country road by a tree. The men are of unspecified origin, though it is clear that they are not English by nationality since they refer to currency as francs, and tell derisive jokes about the English – and in English-language productions the pair are traditionally played with Irish accents. The script calls for Estragon to sit on a low mound but in practice—as in Beckett's own 1975 German production—this is usually a stone. In the first act the tree is bare. In the second, a few leaves have appeared despite the script specifying that it is the next day. The minimal description calls to mind "the idea of the *lieu vague*, a location which should not be particularised".[61]

Other clues about the location can be found in the dialogue. In Act I, Vladimir turns toward the auditorium and describes it as a bog. In Act II, Vladimir again motions to the auditorium and notes that there is "Not a soul in sight." When Estragon rushes toward the back of the stage in Act II, Vladimir scolds him, saying that "There's no way out there." Also in Act II, Vladimir comments that their surroundings look nothing like the Macon country, and Estragon states that he's lived his whole life "Here! In the Cackon country!"

Alan Schneider once suggested putting the play on in a round—Pozzo has often been commented on as a ringmaster[62]—but Beckett dissuaded him: "I don't in my ignorance agree with the round and feel *Godot* needs a very closed box." He even contemplated at one point having a "faint shadow of bars on stage floor" but, in the end, decided against this level of what he called "explicitation".[63] In his 1975 Schiller Theater production, there are times when Didi and Gogo appear to bounce off something "like birds trapped in the strands of [an invisible] net", in James Knowlson's description.

Interpretations[edit]

"Because the play is so stripped down, so elemental, it invites all kinds of social and political and religious interpretation", wrote Normand Berlin in a tribute to the play in Autumn 1999, "with Beckett himself placed in different schools of thought, different movements and "isms". The attempts to pin him down have not been successful, but the desire to do so is natural when we encounter a writer whose minimalist art reaches for bedrock reality. "Less" forces us to look for "more", and the need to talk about *Godot* and about Beckett has resulted in a steady outpouring of books and articles.[64][65]

Throughout *Waiting for Godot*, the audience may encounter religious, philosophical, classical, psychoanalytical and biographical – especially wartime – references. There are ritualistic aspects and elements taken directly from vaudeville,[66] and there is a danger in making more of these than what they are: that is, merely structural conveniences, avatars into which the writer places his fictional characters. The play "exploits several archetypal forms and situations, all of which lend themselves to both comedy and pathos."[67] Beckett makes this point emphatically clear in the opening notes to *Film*: "No truth value attaches to the above, regarded as of merely structural and dramatic convenience."[68] He made another important remark to Lawrence Harvey, saying that his "work does not depend on experience – [it is] not a record of experience. Of course you use it."[69]

Beckett tired quickly of "the endless misunderstanding". As far back as 1955, he remarked, "Why people have to complicate a thing so simple I can't make out."[70] He was not forthcoming with anything more than cryptic clues, however: "Peter Woodthorpe [who played Estragon] remembered asking him one day in a taxi what the play was really about: 'It's all symbiosis, Peter; it's symbiosis,' answered Beckett."[71]

Beckett directed the play for the Schiller-Theatre in 1975. Although he had overseen many productions, this was the first time that he had taken complete control. Walter Asmus was his conscientious young assistant director. The production was not naturalistic. Beckett explained,

It is a game, everything is a game. When all four of them are lying on the ground, that cannot be handled naturalistically. That has got to be done artificially, balletically. Otherwise everything becomes an imitation, an imitation of reality [...]. It should become clear and transparent, not dry. It is a game in order to survive.[72]

Over the years, Beckett clearly realised that the greater part of *Godot*'s success came down to the fact that it was open to a variety of readings and that this was not necessarily a bad thing. Beckett himself sanctioned "one of the most famous mixed-race productions of *Godot*, performed at the Baxter Theatre in the University of Cape Town, directed by Donald Howarth, with [...] two black actors, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, playing Didi and Gogo; Pozzo, dressed in checked shirt and gumboots reminiscent of an Afrikaner landlord, and Lucky ('a shanty town piece of white trash'[73]) were played by two white actors, Bill Flynn and Peter Piccolo [...]. The Baxter production has often been portrayed as if it were an explicitly political production, when in fact it received very little emphasis. What such a reaction showed, however, was that, although the play can in no way be taken as a political allegory, there are elements that are relevant to any local situation in which one man is being exploited or oppressed by another."[74]

Political[edit]

"It was seen as an allegory of the Cold War"[75] or of French Resistance to the Germans. Graham Hassell writes, "[T]he intrusion of Pozzo and Lucky [...] seems like nothing more than a metaphor for Ireland's view of mainland Britain, where society has ever been blighted by a greedy ruling élite keeping the working classes passive and ignorant by whatever means."[76]

Vladimir and Estragon are often played with Irish accents, as in the Beckett on Film project. This, some feel, is an inevitable consequence of Beckett's rhythms and phraseology, but it is not stipulated in the text. At any rate, they are not of English stock: at one point early in the play, Estragon mocks the English pronunciation of "calm" and has fun with "the story of the Englishman in the brothel".[77]

Freudian[edit]

"Bernard Dukore develops a triadic theory in *Didi, Gogo and the absent Godot*, based on Sigmund Freud's trinitarian description of the psyche in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) and the usage of onomastic techniques. Dukore defines the characters by what they lack: the rational Go-go embodies the incomplete ego, the missing pleasure principle: (e)go-(e)go. Di-di (id-id) – who is more instinctual and irrational – is seen as the backward id or subversion of the rational principle. Godot fulfills the function of the superego or moral standards. Pozzo and Lucky are just re-iterations of the main protagonists. Dukore finally sees Beckett's play as a metaphor for the futility of man's existence when salvation is expected from an external entity, and the self is denied introspection."[78]

Jungian[edit]

"The four archetypal personalities or the four aspects of the soul are grouped in two pairs: the ego and the shadow, the persona and the soul's image (animus or anima).

The shadow is the container of all our despised emotions repressed by the ego. Lucky, the shadow, serves as the polar opposite of the egocentric Pozzo, prototype of prosperous mediocrity, who incessantly controls and persecutes his subordinate, thus symbolising the oppression of the unconscious shadow by the despotic ego. Lucky's monologue in Act I appears as a manifestation of a stream of repressed unconsciousness, as he is allowed to "think" for his master. Estragon's name has another connotation, besides that of the aromatic herb, tarragon: "estragon" is a cognate of estrogen, the female hormone (Carter, 130). This prompts us to identify him with the anima, the feminine image of Vladimir's soul. It explains Estragon's propensity for poetry, his sensitivity and dreams, his irrational moods. Vladimir appears as the complementary masculine principle, or perhaps the rational persona of the contemplative type."[79]

Philosophical[edit]

Existential[edit]

Broadly speaking, existentialists hold that there are certain fundamental questions that all human beings must come to terms with if they are to take their subjective existences seriously and with intrinsic value. Questions such as life, death, the meaning of human existence and the place of God in that existence are among them. By and large, the theories of existentialism assert that conscious reality is very complex and without an "objective" or universally known value: the individual must create value by affirming it and living it, not by simply talking about it or philosophising it in the mind. The play may be seen to touch on all of these issues.

Martin Esslin, in his *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1960), argued that *Waiting for Godot* was part of a broader literary movement that he called the Theatre of the Absurd, a form of theatre which stemmed from the absurdist philosophy of Albert Camus. Absurdism itself is a branch of the traditional assertions of existentialism, pioneered by Søren Kierkegaard, and posits that, while inherent meaning might very well exist in the universe, human beings are incapable of finding it due to some form of mental or philosophical limitation. Thus humanity is doomed to be faced with *the Absurd*, or the absolute absurdity of the existence in lack of intrinsic purpose.[80]

Ethical[edit]

Just after Didi and Gogo have been particularly selfish and callous, the boy comes to say that Godot is not coming. The boy (or pair of boys) may be seen to represent meekness and hope before compassion is consciously excluded by an evolving personality and character, and in which case may be the youthful Pozzo and Lucky. Thus Godot is compassion and fails to arrive every day, as he says he will. No-one is concerned that a boy is beaten.[81] In this interpretation, there is the irony that only by changing their hearts to be compassionate can the characters fixed to the tree move on and cease to have to wait for Godot.

Christian[edit]

Much of the play is steeped in scriptural allusion. The boy from Act One mentions that he and his brother mind Godot's sheep and goats. Much can be read into Beckett's inclusion of the story of the two thieves from Luke 23:39–43 and the ensuing discussion of repentance. It is easy to see the solitary tree as representative of the Christian cross or the tree of life. Some see God and Godot as one and the same. Vladimir's "Christ have mercy upon us!"[82] could be taken as evidence that that is at least what he believes.

This reading is given further weight early in the first act when Estragon asks Vladimir what it is that he has requested from Godot:[83]

> **Vladimir**: "Oh ... nothing very definite."
> **Estragon**: "A kind of prayer."
> **Vladimir**: "Precisely."
> **Estragon**: "A vague supplication."
> **Vladimir**: "Exactly."

Other explicit Christian elements that are mentioned in the play include, but not limited to, repentance,[84] the Gospels,[85] a Saviour,[86] human beings made in God's image,[87] the cross,[88] and Cain and Abel.[89]

According to biographer Anthony Cronin, "[Beckett] always possessed a Bible, at the end more than one edition, and Bible concordances were always among the reference books on his shelves."[90] Beckett himself was quite open on the issue: "Christianity is a mythology with which I am perfectly familiar so I naturally use it."[91] As Cronin argues, these biblical references "may be ironic or even sarcastic".[92]

"In answer to a defence counsel question in 1937 (during the libel action brought by his uncle against Oliver St. John Gogarty) as to whether he was a Christian, Jew or atheist, Beckett replied, 'None of the three' ".[93] Looking at Beckett's entire œuvre, Mary Bryden observed that "the hypothesised God who emerges from Beckett's texts is one who is both cursed for his perverse absence and cursed for his surveillant presence. He is by turns dismissed, satirised, or ignored, but he, and his tortured son, are never definitively discarded."[94]

Autobiographical[edit]

Waiting for Godot has been described as a "metaphor for the long walk into Roussillon, when Beckett and Suzanne slept in haystacks [...] during the day and walked by night [... or] of the relationship of Beckett to Joyce."[95] Beckett told Ruby Cohn that Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, which he saw on his journey to Germany in 1936, was a source for the play.[96]

Sexual[edit]

Though the sexuality of Vladimir and Estragon is not always considered by critics,[97][98] some see the two vagabonds as an ageing homosexual couple, who are worn out, with broken spirits, impotent and not engaging sexually any longer. The two appear to be written as a parody of a married couple.[99] Peter Boxall points out that the play features two characters who seem to have shared life together for years; they quarrel, embrace, and are mutually dependent.[100] Beckett was interviewed at the time the play was premiering in New York, and, speaking of his writings and characters in general, Beckett said "I'm working with impotence, ignorance. I don't think impotence has been exploited in the past."[101] Vladimir and Estragon consider hanging themselves, as a desperate way to achieve at least one final erection. Pozzo and his slave, Lucky, arrive on the scene. Pozzo is a stout man, who wields a whip and holds a rope around Lucky's neck. Some critics have considered that the relationship of these two characters is homosexual and sado-masochistic in nature.[102] Lucky's long speech is a torrent of broken ideas and speculations regarding man, sex, God, and time. It has been said that the play contains little or no sexual hope; which is the play's lament, and the source of the play's humour and comedic tenderness.[103] Norman Mailer wonders if Beckett might be restating the sexual and moral basis of Christianity, that life and strength is found in an adoration of those in the lower depths where God is concealed.[104]

Beckett's objection to female actors[edit]

Beckett was not open to most interpretative approaches to his work. He famously objected when, in the 1980s, several women's acting companies began to stage the play. "Women don't have prostates", said Beckett,[105] a reference to the fact that Vladimir frequently has to leave the stage to urinate.

In 1988 a Dutch theatre company, De Haarlemse Toneelschuur, put on a production directed by Matin Van Veldhuizen with all female actors, using a French-to-Dutch translation by Jacoba Van Velde.[106] Beckett brought an unsuccessful lawsuit against the theatre company. "The issue of gender seemed to him to be so vital a distinction for a playwright to make that he reacted angrily, instituting a ban on all productions of his plays in The Netherlands."[107] This ban was short-lived, however: in 1991 (two years after Beckett's death), Judge Huguette Le Foyer de Costil ruled that productions with female casts would not cause excessive damage to Beckett's legacy, and allowed the play to be duly performed by the all-female cast of the Brut de Beton Theater Company at the prestigious Avignon Festival.[108]

The Italian Pontedera Theatre Foundation won a similar claim in 2006 when it cast two actresses in the roles of Vladimir and Estragon, albeit in the characters' traditional roles as men.[109] At the 1995 Acco Festival, director Nola Chilton staged a production with Daniella Michaeli in the role of Lucky.[1