NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

STUDY MATERIAL

PG : ENGLISH

PAPER - VIII

MODULE - 4

POST GRADUATE ENGLISH

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Cooperation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subho Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

Eighth Reprint : January, 2020

Printed in accordance with the regulations of the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.

POST-GRADUATE : ENGLISH

[PG : ENG.]

Paper – VIII

Module – 4

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Post Graduate Course in English
PG. Eng-VIII

Module
4

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Unit 1 □ Charles Baudelaire

Structure

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1.9 Baudelaic and English literature

1.0 Objectives

The part your study material will tell you briefly about the life and works of Charles Baudelaire, one of the major poets of France, and in more detail about two of his poems included in your course. Apart from an evaluation of these poems, the interaction between Baudelaire's work and English literature will also be discussed.

1.1 Baudelaire : Life and Works

Charles (Pronounced 'sharl' in French) Baudelaire belongs to a period of nineteenth-century French poetry when French Romanticism is supposed to have

reached its zenith. This achievement was made possible by the important body of works writeen by his famous predecessors. Alfred de Vigny (1797–1885) and Gerard de Nerval (1808–1855). Hugo is considered the greatest of then, excelling equally in lyric, epic and satire, apart from romantic drama and fiction. Baudelaire respected Hugo's skill in versification and, even when opposing his ideas, tried to imitate Hugo's formal devices.

Baudelaire was born in April, 1821. He therefore belonged to the second generation of french Romanticism. His poetry is romantic in its subjectivisim, melancholy and its protest against established norms. But he also differs from earlier romantics in focusing on cityscapes instead of landscapes, shunning the worship of nature, and expressing a distaste for idealized vague, ethereal forms of beauty. In these respects, he stands as an important transitional figure between Romanticism and the Modernism that begings to emerge late in the nineteenth century.

The poet's father, Francois Baudelaire was a tutor to noblemen before the french Revolution and, after it was over, had a comfortable government job. After the death of his wife, he married a second wife, was the mother of Charles baudelaire. She was a refined woman with a training in the English language to which she introduced her son. This knowledge of English proved useful for Baudelaire later, because he would use the theories of the English romantic Coleridge and the American romantic Edgar Allan Poe in his own poetry and criticism. Baudelaire was only six when his father died. Though he was grief-stricken, there followed a period of peace and affection with his mother, he was devoted to her all his life. Her pursuit of music and literature left a mark on her son's early poetry. Unforunately, this short interlude came to an end when she remarried. Baudelaire's stepfather, Aupick, was a major in the French army who later became a general and an ambassador. It cannot be said that he was uniterested in Baudelaire's well-being but his plans for his stepon's education meant admission to a boarding school and the resultant separation of mother and child. This did not suit Baudelaire at all. He became unruly and had to change school twice. When even the third scholl proved unsuitable, he was enroled in 1939 to study Law at paris. Out of the small sum which was paid to him every month from his father's legacy (which would be supposedly his once he reached

21), he spent much on drinks, women and costly clothers. He soon ran into a debt. Already he was writing some of the poems which, after several revisions, would be published in book-form only in 1857. But his mother and stepfather were against a career as a poet. To separate him from "bad company" they took him out of the Law school and shipped him off to India (Probably Kolkata) as a preparation for a business career. It is not at all clear whether he sailed all the way to India; probably he did not. what we know is that he disembarked at Mauritus and spent of few months on this island, enjoying, the tropical landscape. The experience left a lasting impression on his poetry, especially on poems, like "to a Creole Woman", "To a Woman of Malabar", "The Albatross", "The Swan", "The Voyage" and other poems where sea-images predominate.

He returned to Paris in 1842. He was 21 and could inherit his father's property which amounted to 75000 francs, quite a large sum by nineteenth-century standards. But he was not allowed to come into the legacy. His mother and Aupick, Deciding that Baudelaire would fritter away the fortune on his unhealthy pursuits, formed a trust from which the poet would be paid a small sum every month. Baudelaire could barely survive on this allowance and was unable to repay the huge debt he had run up. So, in one day, he was relegated from a comfortable middle-class existence to dire poverty. His company now was among the lower strata of society and his politics become more radical. In the revolution of 1848, which restored the republic in France for a short spell, Baudelaire was not merely an enthusiastic supporter, he actually took his position in the barriacades on Paris streets, armed with a gun. The fall of the Republic in 1850 after Louis Napolcon's coup and assumption of absolute royal powers disgusted Baudelaire and put his off politics. Though he was writing some of his best lyrics at this time and constantly revising them, very few of them were published before 1855. But whatever he earned was by his writings, among which were reviews of art and translations. In fact, it was he who introduced the American poet and story-writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) to the French reading republic. His translation of Poe's *Tales* is still the standard Franch translation.

His fame, however, rests on his poems, some of which were collected in *Flowers of Evil* (1857), followed by an enlarged edition in 1861. It was a remarkable year in other ways too. During 1861, he published essays on the composer Wagner and on the writers Gautier and Hugo. These were important

works of criticism while, in the poems in prose called *spleen of Paris* he embarked on new poetic experiment. After this Baudelaire fell desperately ill. After Aupick's death, the poet's strained relations with his mother improved and she looked after him druing his last illness. He died in August 1867 when he was preparing a complete edition of *Flowers of Evil.* This was published in 1868. His poems did not pay him well. But he was recognised by most of his peers, including Mallarme and Verlaine, as one of the greatest French poets even before his death, in spite of the unconventional nature of his subjects. He has been translated into many of the major languages of the world. A series of Bangla translations by Buddhadeva Bose (1908–1974), complete with a critical introduction, was collected in book-form as *Charles Baudelaire : Tanr Kobita.* (1961).

Baudelaire remained a devout Christian to the end, though many of his pomes may seem to point in an opposite direction.

1.2 Les Fleurs du Mal (Flowers of Evil) and its Preface

Very few poets have influenced the history and nature of poetry with a single book of short poems. Baudelaire is one of them. The final edition of Flowers of Evil contained one hundred and sixtythree poems. Almost all of them were rhymed, following traditional rhyme-schemes and stanza-patterns as practised by earlier romantics. Critics usually divide them into several groups of 'cycles'. These are not in chronological order because Baudelaire did not date his poems and they were written over a long period of time, starting about 15 years before the first edition of the book was published. The cycles are named according to predominant themes or after the names of women in intimate relationships with Baudelaire who is supposed to have been inspired by them. Some of these cycles are : "Limbo", "The Jeanne Duval Cycle", "The Marie Daubrum Cycle", "The Sabatier Cycle". Of the poems discussed below, "The Ideal" is from the Limbo Cycle and "The Poet's Beatrice" is from the Jeanne Duval Cycle.

From : The poems in the book are mostly sonnets or short lyrics. The metres

are generally alexandrines (six feet of 2 syllables each) or even shorter metres. There is little experiment; most prosodic qualities are inherited from Hugo and other first-generation romantics. But there is firmness in Baudelaire's phrasing which comes from his confident and careful choice of words and images. This is enhanced by the musical beauty of the sound-patterns created by the words he chooses.

Themes : There is an obsession with death and decay in the poems of *Flowers of Evil.* This is in line with the major romantics. But unlike many romantics, he does not idealise love. Instead, there is often a joyless, sadistic attitude to sex. The terms sadist/sadistic originate in the name of Marquis de Sade who is said to have obtained pleasure by inflicting pain on others. A link between the views of de Sade (1740–1814) and some themes and characters in European Romanticism was established by Mario Praz *(The Romantic Agony)* and other critics.

Many of Baudelaire's poems seem to accept despair, boredom and disgust as inevitable. Together with this there is an ambivalent attitude to the city. He finds the Parisian background at one sordid and fascinating. The irony against the city and its tasteless and hypocritical inhabitants is a favourite theme. From these drawbacks he does not exempt himself. He concludes the poem "To the Reader" with "You! Hypocrite reader! My double, my brother". Satire against his times mingles with self-criticism.

This recurrence of the themes of death, decay, disgust and sadism, this preoccupation with sin rather than virtue, has been called the "Satanism" in Baudelaire.

What lies behind Baudelaire's Satanism?

It is easy to misunderstand Baudelaire and see him as a godless man preoccupied and attracted by a sinful life. Actually he was serious in his belief in Christianity. His seriousness is proved by his private journal, *My Heart Laid Bare.* On the last page of this journal, he made some rules for himself shortly before his death. Among them one reads : "Make my prayer morning to God, the reservoir of all strength and all justice, ...every evening make a new prayer asking god for life and strength for my mother and me...". Why did such a believer in God prefer Satanism inhis verse? A clue may be found in his

"Preface" to *Flowers of Evil.* He wrote three different versions of the preface, the subject-matter of all three being more or less the same. None of these drafts were published with the book during Baudelaire's lifetime.

In one of the drafts he wrote : "It is more difficult to love God than to believe in Him. On the other hand, it is more difficult for people nowadays to believe in the Devil than to love him. Everyone smells him and no one believes in him. Sublime subtlety of the Devil." This statement is a bitter satire against the society he lived in, as the word "nowadays" makes clear. In such a society, everyone believes in God without loving Him. It is difficult to love God because you have to be strictly virtuous to do so. It is much easier to enjoy the pleasures that a sinful life offers; that is why Baudelaire says it is more difficult to believe in the Devil, to believe that he is always there to tempt us into a life of sin which is to carefully avoided. Therefore Baudelaire deliberately decided to write about these temptations and sinful pleasures overlooked in conventional romantic poetry. He found it amusing and pleasant to perform this difficult task. "to extract beauty from evil,', as he wrote in the "Preface." He said that he had a "passionate taste for the difficult." This showed that his "Satanism" was part of a process of adding new dimensions to French Romanticism. He did not want to bring about invovation in form; but there was a great deal that was invovative in the content of his verse.

Let us now examine the two poems in this unit to find evidences of the characteristics mentioned above.

1.3 "The Poet's Beatrice" (translated into English prose by Francis Scarfe)

Stanza 1 : The Text Through ashen fields, burnt to a cinder, where no green thing grew, while one day I was lamenting to Nature and, aimlessly wandering, was sharpening the dagger of my thought upon my heart, I saw, though it was high noon, a sinister, storm-heavy cloud descend upon my head, bearing with it a horde of depraved demons like cruel, inquisitive dwarfs. They began to examine me coldly and, like street-idlers gaping at a lunatic, I heard them

chuckling and whispering at each other, exchanging many a nudge and many a wink.

Glossary and comments :—

Cinder : coal-dust, ash.

Sinister : threatening / suggesting evil.

Chuckling : laughing quietly.

Nudge : a friendly push with an elbow, usually signifying the sharing of a secret.

Wink : the act of closing one eye very briefly and opening it again. This is usually a private singal.

The aimless wandering and the lament to nature are common attributes of the romantic poet. However, Baudelaire is unconventional in comparing his thoughts to a dagger. This probably refers to the satirical content to many of his poems. Also, he implies that his heart is like a stone : a dagger is usually sharpened on a stone. The landscape also does not fit into the romantic pattern. The fields are not green but cinder-black. The dark cloud is society itself, bearing depraved little men hostile to poertry. The poet stands isolated from them while the demons are like a team sharing secrets known only to themselves, as is suggested by their chuckles, whispers, nudges and winks.

1.4 Stanza 2

The Text :— 'Let us gaze our fill on this mockery of a man, this Hamlet's understudy, imitating his poses, with his distraught gaze and unkept hair. Isn't it an awful shame to see this epicure, this pauper, this unemployed actor, this oddfellow, just because he knows how to play his part like a professional, trying to interest the eagles, crickets, streams, and flowers in his songs of woe, and even bellowing his public tirades at us, who invented all that mumbo-jumbo ourselves?'

Glossary and comments :—

Mockery of a man : the parody of a man; not a proper human being at all.

Hamlet : the principal character in Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet.*

Understudy : Follower / imitator. A person who learns another actor's part in a play. so that he can replace him if necessary.

His poses : Hamlet often pretended to be mad.

Distraught : distracted, abnormal.

Unkempt : untidy.

Epicure : a person who gets great pleasure from costly food and drink.

Tirades : long angry speeches of accusation.

Mumbo-jumbo : complicated language with no clear purpose. Here, it specially indicated the language of literary criticism. If the dwarfs are the "inventors" of that idiom, then are the critics who fail to appreciate Baudelaire's poetry.

The whole stanza is supposed to be spoken by the dwarfs or depraved demons mentioned in stanza 1. In the course of the second stanza, they are identified with critics or moulders of public opinion who subject Baudelaire's unconventinal behavious and writings to a bitter attack. The description of nature in romantic poetry is treated unsympathetically (eagles, crickets, streams, flowers) and dismissively by the critics; so is romantic melancholy (songs of woe). Baudelaire in his turn pays them back by exposing their work as "mumbo-jumbo." The stanza also continues the process of the poet's isolation from society. His feelings are not appreciated and he remains alone with his sadness and his rejection of the hypocrisy of critics.

1.5 Stanza 3

The Text :— As my pride, as lofty as mountains, stands far above the clouds and the cries of demons, I could simply have turned my sovereign head the other way, had

I not seen among that obscene mob (O crime which failed to rock the sun!) the queen of my heart, whose eyes are beyond compare, laughing with them at my dire affliction, and giving them now and then a foul caress.

Glossary and comments :—

Sovereign head : head with unlimited power.

Turned my sovereign head the other way : ignored the demons completely, since I was more powerful.

Obscene mob : offensive, disgusting gang. The word "mob" is generally used in English in a derogatory sense. The translator uses this word as an adequate equivalent of the French word "troupe" which Baudelaire uses.

In this stanza, the poem takes a sudden turn; a satire against a society hostile to poetry turns into a poem of betrayal in love. The poet could have proudly ignored the attack of the demon-critics, but his resistance is crushed when he finds that the disgusting mob has been joined by the woman he loved. She is not only laughing at the poet; she is actively "with them", with the "demons" scoffing at the poet's emotins and creations. Her loving caresses are no longer for the poet but for the enemies of poetry. Her sympathy is for the unsympathetic. The betrayal, the poet says, is so great that it should have rocked the sun, but the sun and the rest of nature remain as they were, unshaken.

On reading the third stanza, the irony behind the title of the poem becomes clear. Beatrice is a name which, when mentioned in connection with poetry or poets, must remind the reader of the famous Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) and his love for Beatrice Portinari. She became Dante's ideal, the inspiration of his love and, as he supposed, the agent of his salvation. The strange thing is that Dante saw Beatrice only a few times between the first meeting at the age of nine and her death in 1290 when both were only 24. There was no affair in the conventional sense and yet the poems inspired by her have created a permanent myth of Dante and Beatrice as lovers. Baudelaire uses the Beatrice myth ironically. The woman in the poem does not inspire the creation of poetry but destroys the poet's resistance against the enemies of poetry by her very presence in their ranks. It is not with love that she is identified but with the

betrayal of love. Probably that is why the translator calls his translation "The Poet's Beatrice" though Baudelaire calls his poem "La Beatrice" (The Beatrice). The English title suggests to us that we should not expect the conventional Beatrice in the poem, nor an idealized romantic love. Instead we have a different kind of Beatrice altogether, the poet's Beatrice : Baudelaire's, not Dante's.

It has already been stated (see 1.2) that "The Poet's Beatrice" belongs to the Jeanne Duval cycle. There is a faint link here with Baudelaire's own experience. Baudelaire's affair with Jeanne continued, on and off, from 1842 to 1861. It was a love-hate relationship. Baudelaire was aware of her other affairs and considered her and obstacle in his life. At the same time he was tenderly helping her during financial difficulties. "The Poet's Beatrice" expresses some of his disgust for Jeanne's promiscuity. At the same time, there are other poems (e.g. "The Balcony") full of tenderness for Jeanne.

1.6 Further comments on "The Poet's Beatrice"

What do we lose in translation?

Baudelaire's French poem is written in couplets (two rhyming lines followed by two more rhyming lines and so on). There is no innovation here; he follows a traditional rhyme-scheme. The first stanza has 12 lines, the second 10, and the third 8 in the original. Still we miss the rhythm and music of the original. What we gain in the prose translation is the literal meaning of each word and line. This is important in the reading of Baudelaire because he always sought the exact phrase; nothing else would be sufficient for him. That is why he revised his poems again and again.

What does the poem owe to Romanticism?

(a) Subjectivism : the poet is preoccupied with the self. His own heart, his feelings, are important to him.

(b) A rebellious spirit which isolates him from the rest of society but gives him a sense of pride ("my sovereign head")

(c) Love : it may not be important to the woman who betrays her lover, but it is so important to the speaker that it crushes his rebellion against the dwarfs.

Where does Baudelaire depart from Romanticism?

He is counter-romantic in taking away all the idealized beauty from nature and the landscape, emphasizing sin and betrayal ("foul caress" in stanza 3), and in his ironic reworking of romantic figures like Beatrice and Hamlet.

1.7 The Ideal (Translated into English by Francis Scarfe

This is a sonnet which follows a rhyme-scheme of abab cded eef ggf. What we are reading, however, is once again a literal prose-translation. The poem was probably written in 1843–1844, but published in 1851, later to be included in *Flowers of Evil* (1857). This is once again an anti-romantic poem, setting up an unconventional alternative to the delicate, idealized female beauty praised by romantics.

The Text : Those beauties with high laced boots and bony fingers like castanets, whom one sees in vignettes, debased products of a worthless age, will never appeal to such a heart as mine.

I leave to Gavarni, the poet of anaemia, his simpering bevy of decaying belles, for among those colourless roses I find no flower that recalls my ideal red.

Glossary and comments :—

Castanets : a musical instrument consisting of two round pieces of wood which are held in the hand and hit together with fingers to cause a noise.

Vignettes : short pieces of writing about a particular person or event.

Anaemia : a disease involving loss of red cells in the blood. A person with anaemia looks pale and feels weak.

Simpering : smiling in a foolish, insincere way.

Bevy : army, crowd.

Belles : beautiful women. The word is no longer used except with irony.

The irony in the octave of the sonnet is against the kind of romantic poetry which praises pale and decaying beauty in women. Baudelaire distances himself from Gavarni (probably an imagined poet) who represents this praise of the weak and sickly and therefore is mocked as the poet of anaemia. "Colourless roses" continues the metaphor of anaemia, while the poet's opposite preference is represented by "ideal red". Baudelaire calls the idealization of decaying beauty "debased products of worthless age." This is his own age, and therefore his quarrel is with the prevailing taste of the society he lived in.

1.8 The Text

What my chasm-deep heart is seeking is you, Lady Macbeth, O soul mighty in crime, O dream of Aeschylus unfolding in the storm-swept North !

Or you, great Night, daughter of Michelangelo,calmly displaying, in your unusual pose, those charms shaped for the Titans' kisses.

Glossary and comments :—

Lady Macbeth : character is Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* "mighty in crime" she inspired her husband to capture the throne of Scotland by killing the king and other nobles.

Aeschylus (525–456 B.C) : Greek dramatist, famous for his tragedies. In one of the tragedies *(Agamemnon,)* King Agamemnon is killed by his wife Clytemnestra,

Dream of Aeschylus : Clytemnestra, because Aeschylus imagined her.

Storm-swept North : Scotland, which is in Northern Europe, while Greece is in the South of Europe.

Night : a huge piece of stone-sculpture made by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), a great sculptor and painter of the Italian Renaissance.

Titans : fabulous giants in Greek mythology.

After criticsing conventional romantic ideals in the octave, the poet sets up in the sestet the counter-ideals. He does so by alluding to three famous works of art, two from literature and the third from the art of sculpture; Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and a statue called "Night" made by michelangelo. It is the strength of these women (Clytemnestra, Lady Macbeth and Night) which appeals to Baudelaire, as apposed to the thin, bony, delicate beauties praised by Gavarni and others. That Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth are ruthless murderers does not seem to matter to the poet. To him, cruelty also is perhaps a sign of strength and therefore of health. May be, he is indirectly protesting against the idealization of the decaying, the sickly and the dying, which was attacked in the octave.

He sees the character of Lady Macbeth as a development of a tradition started by Aeschylus in ancient Greece. Vengefulness and violence in the character of Clytemnestra reach their fruition ("unfolding") in Lady Macbeth. The two are connected by these characteristics. But what is the connecting link with the sleeping figure of Night? Baudelaire mentions her "unusual pose" : the sleeping Night's right leg is stretched, while her left leg is curled in toward her head, the muscular left thigh supporting the right elbow and the right palm supporting the drooping head. There is a strange impression of movement in the restful pose, enhanced by the strength of the left shoulder and the taut breasts. The beauty is attractive, yet awesome : a beauty fit to be loved by giant titans, not puny humans. In the muscular strength, violence is latent. Perhaps that is where Baudelaire finds a connecting link with the two other women he mentions as his ideal.

1.9 Baudelaire and English Literature

Baudelaire has acknowledged his debt to several predecessors in his preface (mentioned in 1.2 above). Among them are the English romantic poet and critic S.T. Coleridge and the American romantic Edgar Allan Poe. In turn, he influenced English poetry of several generations, especially the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne and the poets of the 1890s. Jules Laforgue, a French poet influenced by him, proved important for T.S. Eliot early in the latter's career. In his maturer days, Eliot wrote an introduction to an English translation of Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals* (1930). In it he remarked : "It is not merely in the use of imagery of common life, not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery to its *first intensity*—presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent much more than itself—that Baudelaire has created a mode of release and ex-pression for other men."

Some Questions :—

1. Why do we regard Baudelaire as a romantic poet? Where does he differ from other romantics?

   [Hints : Do not depend on the points supplied in 1.6 alone. Carefully read 1.2 and 1.5 also.]

2. Comment on the irony used in the title and content of "The Poet's Beatrice."

3. How is the conventional poetic attitude to beauty attacked in "The Ideal"? Which are the figures from the literature and the arts of the past that Baudelaire chooses as his ideal and why?

Suggested reading :—

Baudelaire (in the Penguin Poets series).

Baudelaire. *Flowers of Evil : A Selection* (ed. M and J Mathews). New York : New Directions, 1958.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations* (tr. Harry Zohn). London; Fontann, 1973.

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Eliot, T.S. *Selected Essays*. London : Faber, 1934.

Scarfe, Francis. "Introduction" to *Baudelaire*. Harmondsworth : Penguing, 1961

Starkie, Enid, *Baudelaire*. London : Faber, 1934.

Unit 2 □ Brecht's : Life of Galileo

Structure

2.0 Introduction to the Playwright

2.1 Major works

2.2 Note on Brecht's major works : Nazi Germany and World War II

2.3 Theory of theatre

2.4 Alienation-effect, Brecht's theatre inheritance, associated ideas and praxis·

2.5 Brecht's Galileo (The Life of Galileo)

2.6 Versions of the play

2.7 Historical background to the Galileo controversy : the Scientist vs. the Church

2.8 Outline of the plot

2.9 Three versons of Galileo

2.10 Scene-wise breakup of the final verson of Brechts's Galileo

2.11 Brecht's Galileo and Contemporary Issues

2.12 A modern production

2.13 Review of contemporary production

2.14 A critical comment of The Life of Galileo By C. Spencer

2.15 Suggested long and short questions / topics

2.16 Select Bibliography

2.2 Introduction

Bertolt BRECHT (b. 1898d. 1956) is one of the World's greatest playwrights. Internationally acclaimed as theatre director, poet, theatre theorist, revolutionary intellectual, critic and translator. He is moder German who as influenced theatre theory and theatre praxis from California to Kolkata. In West as well as in East Germany Brecht became the most popular contemporary poet, playwright and Man of Letters, outdistanced only by such classics as Shakespeare. Schiller, and Goethe. Jean Vilar's production of *Mutter Courage* in 1951 secure him a following in France, and the **Berliner Ensemble's** participation in the Paris International Theatre Festival (1954) further spread his reputation. In 1955 Brecht received the Stalin Peace Prize. Next year he contracted a lung inflammation and died of the coronary thrombosis of August 14, 1956, in East Berlin.

Brechr's works have been translated into 42 languages and sold over 70 volumes. He wanted his theater to represent a forum for debate hall rather than a place of illusions. From the Russian and Chinese theaters Brecht derived some of his basic concepts of staging and theatrical stylization. His concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt,* or V-Effekt (sometimes translated as 'alienation effect') centered on the idea of 'making strange' and thereby making poetic. He aimed to take emotion out of the production, persuade the audience to distance from the make believe characters and make the actors itself dissociate from their roles. Then the political truth would be more easy to comprehend. Once he said: "Nothing is more important than leaning to think crudely. Crude thinking is the thinking of great men."

Considered by many a poet first and foremost, Bertolt Brechr's genius was for language. However, because this language is built ipon a certain bold and direct simplicity, his plays often lose something in the translation from his native German. Nevertheless, they contain a rare poetic vision, voice that has rarely been paralleled in the 20th century.

Brecht was influenced by a wide variety of sources including Chinese, Japanese, and Indian theatre, the Elizabethans (especially **Shakespeare**), Greek tragedy, **Büchner, Wedekind,** Fair-ground enterainments, the Bavarian folk play, and many more. Such a wide variety of sources might have proven overwhelming

for a lesser artist, but Brecht had the uncanny ability to take elements from seemingly incompatible sources, combine them, and make them his own.

In his early plays, Brecht experimented with **data** and **expressionsim,** but in his later work, he developed a style more suited to his own unique vision. He detested the "aristotelian" drama and its attempts to lure the spectator into a kind of trance-like state, a total identification with the hero to the point of complete self-oblivion, resulting in feelings of terror and pity and, ultimately, an emotional catharsis. He didnot want his audience to feel emotions—he wanted them to *think*—and towards this end, he determined to destroy the theatrical illusion, and thus, that dull trance-like state he so despised.

The result of Brecht's research was a technique known as "verfremdungseffekt" or the "alienation effect." It was desiogned to encourae the audience to retain their critical detachment. His theories resulted in a number of "epic" drams, among them *Mother Courage and Her Children* which tells the story of a travelling merchant who earns her living by following the Swedish and Imperial armies with her covered wagon and selling them supplies: clothing, food, brandy, ect, As the war grows heated, Mother Courage finds that this profession has put her and her children in danger, but the old woman doggedly refusses to give up her wagon. *Mother Courage and Her Children* was both a triumph and a failure for Brecht. Although the play was a great success, he never managed to achieve in his audience the unemotional, analytical response he desired. audiences never fail to be moved by the plight of the stubborn old woman.

In *Galileo,* Brecht paints a portrait of a passionate and tortured man. Galileo has discovered that the earth is not the center of the universe, but even though the Pope's own astronomer has confirmed this earth-shaking revelation, the Inquisition has forbidden him to publish his findings. For eight years, Galileo holds his tongue. Finally, a new Pope known for his endightenment ascends to the Papacy, and Galileo sees his chance. But the Grand Inquisitor is lurking in the background, plotting to destory the great astronomer's work.

Brecht would go on to write a number of modern masterpieces including *The Good Person of Szechwant* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.* In the end, Brecht's audience stubbornly went on being moved to terror and pity. However, his

experiments were not a failure. His dramatic theories have spread across the globe, and he left behind a group of dedicated disciples known today as "Brechtians" who continue to propagate his teachings. At the time of his death, Brecht was planning a play in response to **Samuel Becket's** *Waiting for Godot.*

2.1 Major works

Because several Brecht works were not performed until long after they were written, the dates below show both the year they were written, followed by year were first produced.

Baal **(1918/1926)** *Drums in the Night (Trommeln in der Nacht, 1918/20) In the Jungle of the Cities / In the Swamp* **(1921-23)** *Man is Man (Mann ist Mann, 1924-25) The Threepenny Opera (Die Dreigroschenoper,* **1928)** *happy End (1929) Lindbergh's Flight (Der Lindberghflug,* **1929)** *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (Die Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny,* **1928-29)/ (1930)** *The Baden Lehrstück on Consent* **(1928-29)** *He Who says Yes (Der Jasager,* **1929)** *Saint Joan of the Stockyards (Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe,* **1929/1959)** *He Who Says No (der Neinsager,* **1930)** *The Measures Taken (Die Massnahme,* **1930)** *The Mother (Die Mutter,* **1930/1932)** *The Exception and the Rule (Die Ausnahme und die Regel,* **1930-31)/(1936)** (A short play about the exploitation of men. The characters undergo harsh treatment from a wealthy merchant with a lucrative interest in the imaginary deserts of Yahi.) *The Seven Deadly Sins (Die Sieben Todsüden der Kleinbürger,* **1933)** *The Roundheads and the Peakheads (Die Rundköpfe und die Spitsköpfe,* **1931-36)** *Fear and Misery in the Third reich (Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches,* **1935-38)** *Señora Carrara's Rifles (Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar,* **1937/1937)** based loosely on **J. M. Synge's** *Riders to the Sea,* but relocated by Brecht in the Spanish Civil War. *Mother Courage and Her Children (Mutter Curage und ihre Kinder,* **1939/1941)** *The Trial of Lucullus* **(1939)** Galileo *(Leden des Galilei,* **1938/1943)** *The Good Person of Sezuan (Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan, 1940/ 1943)* **Puntila and His Man Matti** *(Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti,* **1941)** *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui,* **1941/ 1961)** *Schweik in the Second World War (Scheyk in Zweiten Waltkrieg,* **(1941-**

44) *The Vision of Simone Machard* (1941-44) with Lion Feuchtwanger *The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Der kaukasische Kreidekreis)* (1944-45) *The Days of the Commune (Die Tage der Kommune,* (1948-49) *The Tutor* (1950), Adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus,* (1952-5), as *Coriolan.*

2.2 Note on Brecht's major works : Nazi Germany and World War II

After *Adolf Hitler* won the election in 1933, Brecht perceived a great danger to himself and left for exile—to **Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, England,** then **Russia** and finally in the **United States.** In his resistance toward the Nazi Fascist movements, Brecht wrote his most famous plays: ***Galileo, Mother courage and Her Children, Puntila and Matti, his Hired man, The Resistable Rise of arturo Ui, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Person of Sezuan,*** and many others, Brecht also wrote poetry which continues to attact attention and respect. He worked on a few screenplays for Hollywood, like Hangmen Also Die, though he had no real success or pleasure in this.

2.3 Theory of theatre

Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it : B. Brecht

Brecht wanted the answer to Lenin's question 'Wie und was soll man lernen?' ('How and what should we learn?'). He created an influential theory of theatre, the ***epic theatre,*** wherein a play should not cause the spectator to emotionally identify with the action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the actions on the stage. He believed that the experience of a climactic catharsis of emotion left and audience complacent. Instead, he wanted his audiences to use this critical perspective to identify social ills at work in the world and be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change.

Hans Eisler has noted, these plays resemble political. Brecht described them as "a collective political meeting" in which the audience is to participate actively. One sees in this model a rejection of the concept of the bureaucratic elite party where the politicians are to issue directives and control the behaviour of the masses.

For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of techniques that remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself, which he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* (translated as *distancing effect, estrangement effect, estrangement effect,* or *alienation effect*). Such techniques included the direct address by actors to the audience, transposition to text to third person or past tense, speaking the stage direction out loud, exaggerated, unnatural stage lighting, the use of song, and explanatory placards. By highlighting the constructed nature of the theatrical event, Brecht hoped to communicate that the audience's reality was, in fact a construction and as such was chageable.

Another technique that Brecht employed to achieve his *Verfremdungseffekt* was the idea referred to as **historification.** The content of many of his plays dealt with fictional retellings of historical figures or events. His idea was that if one were to tell a story from a time that is contemporary to an audience, they may not be able to maintain the critical perspective he hoped to achieve. Instead, he focused on historical stories that had parallel themes to the social ills he was hoping to illuminate in his own time. He hoped that, in viewing these historical stories from a critical perspective, the contemporary issues Brecht was addressing would be illuminated to the audience.

In one of his first productions, Brecht famouslt put up signs that said "Glotzt nicht so romantisch!" ("Don't stre so romantically!"). His manner of stagecraft has proven both fruitful and confusing to those who try to produce his works o works in his style. His theory of theatre has heavily influenced modern theatre, though it is believed that the effect of the epic theatre wears off after watching a few similar plays. Some of his innovations, thought, have become so common that they've become theatrical canon.

Although Brecht's work and ideas about theatre and generally thought of as belonging to **modernism,** there is recent thought that he is the forerunner of contemporary **postmodern** theatre practice. This is particularly so because he

questioned and dissolved many of the accepted practices of the theatre of his time and created a uniquely **Political theatre,** that involved the audience in understanding its meaning. Moreover, he was one of the first theatre practitioners to incorporate multimedia into the semiotics of theatre.

2.4 Alienation-effect, Brecht's theatre inheritance, associated ideas and praxis

Brecht used a technique he called "Verfremdungseffekt" to remind the audience that they were watching a play. This "alienation effect," as it is called in English, was a rejection of the Aristotelian dramatic premise that the audience should believe that the events they are watching are unfolding in time before their eyes. In keeping with Marxism, Brecht wanted his plays to appeal to his audience's reason rather than having the audience identify with the characters. He accomplished this by using overly philosophic or exaggeratedly straightforward lines and stage settings that didn't appeal aesthetically.

"In order to produce A effects the actor has to discard whatever means he has learned of persuading the audience to identify itself with characters which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience into a trance, he must not go into a trance himself. His muscles must remain loose, for a turn of the head e.g., with tautened neck muslces, will "magically" lead the spectators' eyes and even their heads to turn with it, and this can only detract from any speculation or reaction which the gestures may bring about. His way of speaking has to be free from ecclesiastical singsong and from all those cadences which lull the spectator so that the sense gets lost." (from *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 1984).

Once Brecht said : "Nothing is more important than learning to think crudely. Crude thinking is the thinking of great men."

"His theater of alienation intended to motivate the viewer to think. brecht's postulate of a thinking component converges, strangely enough, with the objective discernment that autonomous artworks presupposes in the viewer, listener, or reader as being adequate to them. His didactic style,

however, is intolerant of the ambiguity in which thought originates : It is authoritarian. This may have been Brecht's response to the ineffectuality of his didactic plays : As a virtuoso of manipulative technique, he wanted to coerce the desired effect just as he once planned to organize his rise to fame." (Theodor adorno in *aesthetic Theory*, 1997)

Brecht formutated his literary theories much in reaction to georg Lukács (1885-1971), a Hungarian philosopher and Marxist literary theoretician. He disapproved Luckács attempt to distinguish between good realism and bad natualism. Brecht considered the narrative from of Balzac and Tolstoy limited. He rejected Aristotele's concept of catharsis and plot as a simple story with a beginning and end. From Marx he took idea of superstructure to which art belongs, but avoided too simple explanations of ideological world view–exemplified in the character of the Good Woman of Setzuan.

2.5 Brecht's Galileo (the Life of Galileo)

Along with Mother Courage, the character of Galileo is one of Brecht's greatest creations, immensely live human and complex, Unable to resist his appetite for scientific investigation, Galileo's heretical discoveries about the solar system bring him to the attention of the Inquistion. He is scared into public abjuring his theories but, despite his self-contempt, goes on working in private, eventually helping to smuggle his writings out of the country.

As an examination of the problems that face not only the scientist but also the whole spirit of free inquiry when brought into conflict with the requirements of government or official ideology, **Life of Galileo** has few equals.

Written in exile in 1937-9 and first performed in Zurich in 1943, **Galileo** was first staged in English in 1947 by Joseph Losey in a version Jointly prepared by Brecht and Charles Laughton, who played the title role.

The figure of Galileo, whose 'heretical' discoveries about the solar system brought him to the attention of the Inquistion, is one of Brecht's most human and complex creations. Temporarily silenced by the Inquisition's threat of torture, and

forced to abjure his theories publicly, Galileo continues to work in private, eventually smuggling his work out of the country.

The plot of the play concerns the latter period of the life of **Galileo Galilei**, the great Italian **natural philosopher**, who was persecuted by the **Roman Catholic Church** for his promulddgation of his scientific discoveries. The play embraces such themes as the confict between the dogmatic **church** and **science**, as well as constancy in the face of oppression.

2.6 Versions of the play

Brecht started work on the play as early as the 1930s, while still in Germany, After emigrating to the **United States** from **Hitler's Germany** (with stopovers in various other countries, among them the **USSR**, in between), Brecht translated and re-worked his play in collaboration with the actor **Charles Laughton**. The result of their concerted effort was the 'americn version' of the play, titled simply *Galileo,* which to this day remains the most widely staged version in the english-speaking world. The American version premiered at the Los Angeles Coronet Theatre in July 1947 under the direction of **Joseph Losey**. The same version also formed the basis for Losey's 1975 film adaption.

After his return to (now **East**) **Germany** (following the end of **WWII** and Brecht being subpoened in the US by **HUAC** for alleged communist connections), Brecht continued to work on the play, now once again in the German language The final German version premiered at **Cologne** in April 1955.

2.7 Historical Background to the Galileo controversy : the Scientist vs. the Church

Galileo Galilei was among the most famous scientists of his day. During a career of some forty years in the late fifteen and early sixteen hundreds, his revolutionary views and scientific discoveries made him famous in Italy and

throughout Europe. then he ran afoul of the Inquistion because some of his teachings appeared to conflict with Christian dogma. Finally, he was forced to stand tril and submit to severe limitations on his personal freedom and on what he could write and publish. In hindsight, Galileo's innocence seems quite obvious, but it is also possible to argue that, at least in part, Galileo must assume at least of a small portion of responsibility for his plight.

Clearly, the Holy Office wanted to make an example of Galileo. As Italy's most important scientific figure in the 17th century, he was a prime target for Church authorities. They were determined to have the last word on the nature of what they regarded as God's universe; neither Galileo not any other scientist had any business butting in. thus his trial was less a matter of suilt or innocence then of putting Galileo in his place and fending off any possible challenge to the power of the Holy Office.

However, this trial was more than just a putdown a one man. It set limits on personal freedom and thought. It culminated in an expanded list of prohibited books and outlawed the teaching of Copernican doctrine.

Galileo's struggle with the Inquisition consisted of two phases. At first, the inquisitor, Cardinal Bellarmine, admonished him that representing the Copernican view of the universe as accurate was heresy. Therefore Galileo was ordered to renounce his prior endorsement of the Copernican system. All further discussion of such ideas was to remain strictly in the realm of the hypothetical.

Phase two of the affair focused upon Galileo's second book. In it, he contrasted Copernican and Aristotelian concepts of the universe in clear disobedience of the prohibitions that resulted from his first brush with Church law. His arguments for a heliocentric solar system were hardly hypothetical, and they were much too hard to refute for the comfort of his inquisitors. worse yet, his views were incompatible with Aristotelian accounts of the movement of heavenly bodies, and that made it much harder to use Aristotle to explain away some of the more fanciful aspects of Biblical cosmology.

From the viewpoint of his inquisitors, Galileo's use of Copernican ideas went far beyond the hypothetical, and they were not about to believe that his writings on astronomy were meant to be mere speculation.

In his letter to the Grand Duchess Christins, Galileo, while claiming to be just hypothesizing, said a heliocentric cosmos could be defended as real because it does not contradict the Bible. In a heliocentric system, he said if the sun were commanded to stop, then the whole universe would also stop. he stated that this view conflicted, not with Christian dogma, but just with the way it was being interpreted at the time.

Galileo's seems right to distinguish between science and the Bible. Indeed, a distinction between the scientific and spiritual spheres was essential to his theories. As he wrote to the grand Duches Christina, the Church needed to consider adjustments in its interpretation of the Bible in the light of discoveries made by applying Copernican theories to the observable universe.

Galileo appeared guilty to the Inquisition because his congessions and admissions seemed tongue in cheek. The record of his trial shows Galileo responding to his inquisitors with great deference. He blames many of his more controversial ideas on senility and a bed memory. He claims no recollection of a special injunction which allegedly was read to him in the earlier proceedings and which forbid him to defend or teach the heliocentric system in any way whatsoever. It is unclear if Galileo forgot or if the Holy Office sought to buttress its position through forgery.

Bertholt Brecht's play about Galileo raises the possibility that the great Renaissance scientist brought many of his trouble upon himself due to arrogance and egocentricity. Brecht suggests that Galileo cared most about profiting from his discoveries and inventions and filling his stomach. Brecht's Galileo does not care about improving the quality of human life through his inventions. He just wants to show he is right and his persecutors are wrong. In one scene, when a humble monk argues that Galileo's theories might actually increase suffering by destroying the belief of the faithful in a rewarding afterlife, Galileo hunghtily responds that people need not suffer at all; they need only take their fate in their own hands.

Brecht suggests that Galileo cared very litle about other people. If the monk has problems watering his garden, then he should solve them by using an irrigation system of Galileo's inventions, such obtuseness, according to Brecht, makes Galileo guilty of faliure to live up to his moral responsibilities as a scientist.

The proceedings against Galileo were more ambiguous then they appear to be at first flance. There is no doubt that he was evaisve nor is it likely that he misconstrued the court's findings due to innocent mistakes and not because it suited his purposes to do so. What seems more certain is that Galileo, the premier scientist of 17th century Italy, spent the greater part of his life proving that his ideas about the universe were right no matter what the Church said. If, as an old man, he took back some of the assertions of his earlier writings, he did so under duress.

2.8 Outline of the plot

Galileo is short of money, a few student brings a telescope from the Netherlands. Galileo improves it, but then sells it to the Venetian Republic as his own invention.

Galileo uses the telescope to substantiate **Copernicus' heliocentric model** of our **solar system,** wich is highly incompatible with both popular belief and church doctine. His daughter's marriage to a well-of young man (who she is genuinely in love with) fails because of Galileo's recalcitrance to distance himself from him unorthodox teachings.

Galileo is brought to the Vatican for questioning. Upon being threatened with torture, he recants his teachings. His students are shocked by his surrender in the face of pressure from the church authorities.

Galileo, old and broken, living under house arrest, is visited by one of his former pupils, Andrea. Galileo gives him a book containing all his scientific discoveries, asking him to smuggle it out of Italy for dissemination aboroad. Andrea now believes Galileo's actions were heroic and that he just recanted to fool the ecclesiastical authorities. However, Galileo insists his actions had nothing to do with heroism but were merely the result of self-interest.

2.9 Three versons of Galileo

There were three different versions of Brecht's **Galileo**. The first was the German version which was entitled **"the Earth Moves"**. It was originally written in November 1938. Brecht wrote the first script in mere sixteen days. Brecht made a few small changes in his plays, these revisions however did not change much of the content of the play. The second version of his play dates from the April of 1944 while he was in the United States. Brecht met with Jed Harris, the producer of Thornton wilder's **"Our town"**, as a result he decided to take up the play. At that time there existed a translation of the first version of his play by Desmond Vesey. The American version was known under the title. **"The life of the Physicist Galileo."** the play was put on stage in New York and hollywood after Brecht's return to Europe. The final version of the play was created in 1953, during his years in the Berliner Ensemble. He redrafted a third version using the most suitable parts of the previous two versions' text. The German premiere of his play was given in Cologne in April of 1955, this version was known as "Versuche 14" later it was published in Brecht's "Gesammelte werke."

2.10 Scene-wise breakup of the final verson of Brecht's Galileo

Final version Scene 1 : Galileo talks to Andrea, explains him the Copernican System, Ludovico comes by to arrange private lessons, He shows Galileo the telescope from Holland. Andrea is 11 years old.

Scene 2 : Galileo perfects the telescope and presents the new invention to the Republic of Venice. It has a better scope, still, he stole the idea.

Scene 3 : Galileo's research proves the realness of the Copernican System, Curator finds out about Galileo's plagiarism, Galileo writes to the court in Florence.

Scene 4 : Galileo in Florence, perfect the telescope, and notes new discoveries.

Galileo gets into a dispute over the truthfulness of his discoveries with the aristocrats of the Florentene court.

Scene 5 : Galileo continues his research, the plague breaks out.

Scene 6 : The Vatican's Collegium Romanum confirms Galileo's discoveries.

Scene 7 : Ludovico and Galileo's daughter are in love. The Inquisition indicates that it found Copernican doctrine in Galileo's book.

Scene 8 : Galileo's conversation with the humble monk on the conflicts between religion and science.

Scene 9 : New Pope Urban XIII, Preparation for Virginia's wedding, Galileo's research of swimming bodies and sunspots continues.

Scene 10 : The Copernican Doctrine Circulates among people.

Scene 11 : Inquisition summons Galileo to Rome.

Scene 12 : The Pope forbids Galileo's teachings.

Scene 13 : Galileo recants.

Scene 14 : Galileo in house arrest, still continues his scientific research, a passing by stranger gives him a duck, Andrea visits him, Galileo gives him Discorsi, andrea is very enthusiastic about the "new ethics".

Scene 15 : Andrea smuggles out Galileo's Discorsi.

2.11 Brecht's *Galileo* and contemporary Issues

Bertolt Brecht's 1943 play *Life of Galileo* is very reminiscent of a large Hollywood historical biography of the era. It is long, epic in scope, worthy, informative and has the stilted feel of pedagogy about it. However, *Galileo* transcends its limitations because its subject is disturbing and pertinent to us today. Performed cleanly, clearly and briskly in a comfortably vernacular translation by John Willett, *Galileo* strongly engages the intellect.

Novelistically; the play transpires from 1609 when Galileo was 46 years old through his death in 1642. The subject of *Life of Galileo* is the conflict between

famed physicist-mathematician galileo Galilei and the Roman Catholic Church over his observations and writings which offered the first proof for Copernicus' theory that the earth orbits around the sun. In the 17th century, this was contrary to the Church's interpretation of the bible which resulted in its teaching that the earth was the stationary center of the universe around which the sun and stars revolved. In 1933, the Church used its temporal, politial power to force Galileo to stand trial before the Inquisition. Under the threat of torture, Galileo renounced his findings. Despite his recantation, Galileo was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. During these years, Galileo was kept under close clerical supervision and denied the right to write, travel, or have contact with the outside world.

The horrors of the Inquisition have been well documented, and precious few of today's Catholic faithful would deny them. However, in a world where fatwas are issued and unauthorized religious practice results in prosecution, torture and death, contemplating the not dissimilar horrors of the Inquisition helps us better understand what is at stake in the major conflicts of today.

The details of Galileo's family life are of necessity given short shrift. Although his beloved daughter, Virginia, is prominent here, only a tiny part of her story is told. Yet the plays surrounds Galileo with gallery of friends, enemies and acolytes who keep the action teeming with life.

The cynical, left-leaning Brecht has been accused of ignoring historical accuracy in order to stack his case against the Church, However, my research reveals that, inlarge part, the events depicted in *Life of Galileo* accurately reflect historic record. This contributes much to the power and believability of the play. Despite the fact that there is a wealth of detail, there is much more to Galileo than can be encompassed in any one play. What we do have is so intriguing that all but the least curious or most knowledgeable among its audiences will likely dig further into the story of Galileo and draw their own conclusions.

2.12 A modern production

Director Joe Discher has elicited performances which effectively emphasize the

black (scarlet, here) and white nature of most of the characters. A hearty and enthusiastic band of 23 actors enliven 50 or so roles. Sherman Howrad dominates the proceedings as Galileo, it is rich, resourceful performance. He captures the teacher and the inventor-scientist, as well as the cunning rogue and manipulator that are wrapped up in this complex man. In Sherman's performance and John Willett's translation, what is regarded by many as Brecht's condemnation of Galileo ("Whoever doesn't know the truth is an idiot; whoever knows it and calls it a lie is a criminal") for his recantation is washed away when Galileo smuggles out work that he has clandestinely written during the borrowed time that his recantation has brought him.

2.13 Review of a contemporary production

Every member of the cast makes important contributions to the fine ensemble performance with a solid, stalwat performance. Each is so in synch with the others that it would be unfair and distort the effect that is achieved to single any one out from the others.

James Wolk's geometric unitset with its rounded stairs and platforms, rounded stage, and decorative ovals, circles and arcs is pleasing to the eye, evocative and most playable. Brian Russman's constumes are appropriate and unobtrusive.

Although this production retains the ballads which set each scene (to original music composed by director Discher and balladeer jay Leibowitz), this production is essentially realistic in nature. Given the harsh reality of the subject at hand, wisely eschews the "epic" stylization which works so well for Brecht in his larger than life parables, such as *Mother Courage and her Children.*

Yes, *Life of Galileo* is good for us and for any serious minded, mature adolescent whom we might choose to bring to it. Al the same time, in the hands of Joe Discher and his large, enthusiastic ensemble, it is a stirring experience that you will long remember.

Postscript : In 1992, Pope John Paul II, lifting the edict of Inquisition against Galileo, wrote, "Galileo sensed in his scientific research the presence of the

Creator, Who stirring in the depths of his spirit, stimulated him, anticipating and assisting his intuitions."

2.14 A critical comment of The Life of Galileo by C. Spencer

From the beginning, humanity placed itself at the center of the universe, which made it feel safe, loved and special. When the Scientific Revolution began to question the ideals of ancient astronomy and Church dogma, it fueled a fire that would burn both the Church and her detractors. The Department of Film, Television and Theatre"s production of Bertolt Brecht's "The Life of Galileo" examines the spark that ignited the fires of changes.

"The Life of Galileo" follows the life of Galileo Galilei, the 16th century astronomer who is credited with Confirming Copernicus' heliocentric model of the universe. The show details progression of Galileo's incorrectly credited discovery of the telescope and his discovery of four of Jupiter's moons and the rings of Saturn. The discovery would eclipse the long-held belief in aristotelian conmology and the Ptolemaic geocentric understanding of the universe.

The title of the show may be slighty misleading. Brecht's play is not, in fact, a biography of Galileo at all, but an anachronistic look at the conflicts between dogma and the scientific method using the story of Galileo as a starting point. A number of blatant historical inaccuracies exist in the script and both the positions of Galileo and the Church are very much exaggerated.

Where the bulk of Galileo's correspondence was done in cleverly crafted and subtly argued letters, brecht places the astronomer face to face with adversarial cardinals and monks. Brecht also includes Virginia, Galileo's daughter, in the whole of Galileo's life, when, in fact, she entered a monastery at the age of 13 and only corresponded with her father through writing. Furthermore, Virginia is written as a weak character, whereas the real Virginia was strong and witty.

Brecht's writing is somewhat inaccessible without a clear understanding of what he was trying to comment on. For example, "The Life of Galileo" is an

affront to more than just the Chruch. Brecht was also commenting on the trends toward Nazism and Fascism in the 20th century. Ironically, Brecht was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947 to answer charges that his plays were Maxist propaganda—which, to an extent, they were. The famous recording of Brecht's evasive answers to the questions of McCarthy and HUAC are played during intermission of the FIT show.

2.15 Suggested long and short questions / topics

1. Attempt an outline of the plot-structure of Brecht's *Galileo.*
2. In what category would you place *Galileo* and wny? It is "historical tragedy" or "epic theatre" or "biographical melodrama" or anything else?
3. What idea of Galileo the man do you get Brecht's Play?
4. Would you consider *Galileo* to be an allegorical and symbolic play? Why?
5. What modern and contemporary relevances can you find in *Galileo?*

   Or

   Can you interpret *Galileo* as a conflict between Science and Religion?

   Or

   Can you interpret *Galileo* as a conflict between Freedom of Speech / ideas and Totalitarianism?
6. Consider *Galileo* as Brecht's postmodern play exploring the theme of Power.
7. Write a short note on the historical background of Brecht's play.
8. Write a brief note on Brecht's idea of the "Alienation effect."
9. Give one example of Brecht's use of the "Alienation effect."
10. Who is Andrea? What is his function in the play?
11. What is the Inquisition? What did it do to Galileo?
12. What scene of *Galileo* appeals to you most and why?

2.16 Select Bibliography

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For text of Brecht's *Galileo* you may obtain the Methuen or Penguin paperback.

Unit 3 □ *A Doll's House* : Henrik Ibsen

Structure

3.0 Introduction

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3.0 Introduction

All over Europe, the nineteenth century theatre was characterised by melodrama, spectacle, satire and revivals of Shakespeare. The French theatre was dominated by farce and the "well-made play". Even though these forms of drama were witty and well-constructed, it increasingly struck a new generation as irrelevant to the socio-economic situation around them. It was the French novelist Emile Zola who first argued for new kinds of literature that reflected real life and attempted a scientific objectivity. Altough he was initially calling for a change in the novel, he later wrote an essay "Naturalism in the Theatre" (1881) which contained a famous proclamation :

"There in more poetry in the little apartment of a bourgeois than in all the empty, worm-eaten palaces of history."

In fact what Zola was calling for was not entirely new. The Russian theatre had produced a series of social dramas, including Griboyedov's *Woe from* Wit (1831), Gogol's satire *The Government Inspector* (1836) and Turgenev's *A Month*

in the Country (1850). The real radicalism that Zola was advocating lay in its capacity to expose the double standards of the bourgeois society.

The need for drama to transform society was at the heart or the writing of Georg Brandes (1842-1927), a Danish theatre critic whose ideas made profound impacts on Ibsen. Brandes also was a great admirer of Ibsen's dramatic writing and the two men had an ongoing correspondence. Based on the principles of "truth and freedom", Ibsen and Brandes called for a revolution in theatre that would champion the rights of the individual against a hypocritical and oppressive society.

Brandes gave a series of lectures in 1871 on the literature of nineteenth century Europe. He called on writers to revolt and inflict a change in social values :

"For it is not so much our laws that need changing as it is our whole conception of society. The younger generation must plough it up and replant it before a new literature can bloom and flourish."

He criticised the conservatism and restrictive morality of contemporary bourgeois society, which he said "under the mask of liberty has all the features of tyranny" and pointed to the freedom or the individual as the only freedom that really mattered.

For Brandes, as for Zola, the great need was for writers to make their own times and everyday reality the subject of their work. This would bring to light important issues and problems, focusing on "our lives" not "our dreams". Brandes felt that the role of literature in submitting problems of debate would keep it alive and meaningful.

Ibsen reponded with there great naturalistic classics :*The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879) *and Ghosts* (1881). With this trilogy, he placed Norwegian society under the microscope, revealing its destructive effect on the individual search for truth and freedom. Both Brandes and Ibsen emphasised the need to explore issues through faithful individual characterisation and a commitment to realism. Ibsen emphasised his avoidance of preaching a "message" in his plays :

"They try to make me responsible for the opinions that certain of the characers

in the play express. And yet in the whole book there is not a single opinion, not a single remark to be found that is there on the dramatist's account. I took Good care about that .... My intention was to try and give the reader the impression of experiencing a piece of reality." Ibsen was followed by many other powerful dramatists, whose work explored, developed or went beyond naturalism : Strindberg, Chekhov, Henri Becque, Leo Tolstory, Gerhart Hauptmann, Georage Bernard Shaw, Maxim Gorky, and later the french anarchist Alfred Jarry, the Belgain symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck and the two Irish dramatists, W B Yeats and J M Synge, all were creating a new kind of drama, uncompromising in its subject matter and radical in its form.

This new drama required new theatres, and many alternative companies were founded, led by a set of visionary figures—the first modern theature directors. The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen set up the influential Meiningen players in 1874 and his meticulous productions toured all over Europe. Andre' Antoine founded the The' atre Libre in Paris in 1887 which was dedicated to presenting naturalism. Otto Brahm's Freie Buhne was opened in Berlin in 1889 as a socialist co-operative and Jack Thomas Grein's Independent Theatre Group was formed in London in 1891, both influenced by Andre Antoine. Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko founded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898.

The pursuit of this new form of drama was made possible by many aesthetic and technical advances. Naturalism is not an absolute notion, and the nineteenth century naturalist theatre would strike modern theatre-goers as highly artificial, which relied on the skills of scenic artists : real doors and windows were set amongst artificial, painted canvas scenery. Antione's Theatre Libre invented the notion of the "fourth wall" and pursued naturalism tenaciously. This meant that stage was considered to be actually a room in a bourgeois household with the fourth wall missing, enabling the audience to watch the unfurling drama inside. The invention of electric lighting in the 1880's further transformed what was possible. They could be dimmed and focussed and his created all kinds of new naturalistic and expressive possiblities.

The hardest struggles these directors faced were perhaps to change the mentality of the actors and their acting style. Nineteenth century actors tended to use a somewhat stentorian, declamatory style, and preferred over-expressive

strong emotion to the fine details that this new drama demanded. This naturalist drama, of which Ibsen was one of the primary pioneers, is the first step and the basic infrastructure of the theatre of today. Thus Ibsen's plays remain as popular as they were during his era as texts to be read as well as dramas to be enacted.

3.1 Ibsen's Life and Works

Henrik Johan Ibsen (20 March 1828— 23 May 1906) was born to Knud Ibsen and Marichen Altenburg, a relatively well-to-do merchant family, in the small port twon of Skien, Norway, which was primarily noted for shipping timber. He was a descendant of some of the oldest and most distinguished families of Norway. Shortly after his birth, however, his family's fortunes took a singnificant turn for the worse. His mother turned to religion for solace, while his father went into a severe depression. The characters in his plays often mirror his parents, and his themes often deal with issues of financial as well as moral conflicts stemming from dark private secrets hidden from society.

At fiteen, Ibsen left home. He moved to the small towm Grimstad to become an apprentice pharmacist and began writing plays. After a few years Ibsen came to Oslo intending to attend university. He soon cast off the idea (his attempts at entering university were blocked as he did not pass all his entrance exams), preferring to commit to writing. His first play, the tragedy *Catilin* (1849) was published under the pseudonym Brynjolf Bjarma, When he was only 22, but it was not perfonned. *St John's Night in* 1853 and *Lady Inger of Østråt in* 1855 did not attenion as well. Still, Ibsen was determined to be a playwright, although he was not to write again for some years.

He spent the next few years employed at the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen, where he was involved in the production of more than 145 plays as a writer. director, and producer. During this period he did not publish any new plays of his own. Despite Ibsen's failure to achieve success as a playwright, he gained a great deal of practical experience at the Norwegian Theater, experience that was to prove valuable when he continued writing.

Ibsen returned to Oslo in 1858 to become the creative director of Oslo's National Theater. He married Suzannah Thoresen the same year and they gave birth to their only child, Sigurd. The couple lived in very poor financial circumstances and Ibsen became very disenchanted with life in Norway. In 1864 he left Oslo and went to Italy in self-imposed exile. He was not to return to his native land for the next 27 years, and when he returned it was to be as a notes playwright, however controversial.

His next play, *Brand* (1865), at last brought him the critical acclaim he sought, along with a measure of financial success, as also his next play, *Peer Gynt* (1867). With success, Ibsen became more confident and began to introduce more and more his own beliefs and judgments into the drama, exploring what he termed the "drama of ideas". His next series of plays are often considered his Golden Age, when he entered the height of his power and influence, becoming the center of dramatic controversy across Europe, Ibsen moved from Italy to Dresden, Germany in 1868. Here he spent years writing the play he himself regarded as his main work, *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), dramatizing the life and times of the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate. Although Ibsen himself always considered this play to be the masterpiece among all his works, most of his critics feel on the contrary and his works which follow are much more acclaimed. Ibsen moved to Munich in 1875 and published *A Doll's House* in 1879. The play is a scathing criticism of the traditional roles of men and women within the Victorian marriage.

Ibsen followed *A Doll's House with Ghosts* (1881), another scathing commentary on Victorian morality, in which a window reveals to her pastor that she has hidden the evils of her marriage during its duration. The pastor had advised her to marry her than fancé despite his philandering, and she did so in the belief that her love would reform him. But she was not to receive the result she was promised. Her husband's philandering continued right up until his death, and the result it that her son is syphilitic. When even the mention of veneral disease was scandalous, to show that even a person who followed society's ideals of morality had no protection againts it was indeed a reactionary step for the playwright. In the play, the protagonist asserted the nobal life which Victorians believed would result from fulfilling one's duty rather than following one's desires were only idealized beliefs; they were simply the "ghosts" of the past,

haunting the present.

In *An Enemy of the People* (1882), Ibsen Went even further. In earlier plays, controversial elements were important and even pivotal components of the action, but they were on the small scale of individual households. In the last play mentioned, controversy become the primary focus, and the antagonist was the entire community. One primary message of the play is that the individual, who stands alone, is more often "right" than the mass of people, who are portrayed as ignorant and always flways with the tide. The Victorian belief was that the community was a noble institution that could be trusted was the fiction that Ibsen challenged. *In An Enemy of the People Ibsen* chasitised not only the right wing or 'Victorian' elements of society but also liberalism of the time. He showed it to be just as self-serving as Conservatism. *An Enemy of the People* was written as a counterblast to the people who had rejected his previous work, *Ghosts* as well as *A Doll's House*. The protagonist is a doctor, a pillar of the community. The town is a vacation spot whose primary draw is a public bath. The doctor discovers that the water used by the bath is being contaminated when it seeps through the grounds of a local tannery. He expects to be acclaimed for saving the town from the nightmare of infecting visitos with disease, but instead he is declared an 'enemy of the people' by the locals, who band against him and even throw stones through his windows, The play ends with his complete ostracism. It is obvious to resder that disaster is in store for the town as well as for the doctor, due to the community's unwillingness to face reality The play has been made into a popular Bengali film titled *Ganashatru* by the film maker Satyajit Ray. American actor Steve McQueen also filmed the play in Englisfh in 1978 with himself in the lead role.

As his audiences and critics by now expected of him, Ibsen's next play again attacked entrenched beliefs and assumptions— but this time his attact was not against the Victorins but against overeager reformers and their idealism. Always the iconoclast, Ibsen was as willing to tear down ideologies, even if they were at one time his own. *The Wild Duck* (1884) is considered by many to be Insen's finest work, and it is certainly the most complex. It tells the story of Gregers Werle, a young man who returns to his himetown after an extended exile and is reunited with his boyhood friend Hjalmar Ekdal, Over the course of the play the

many secrets that lie behind the Ekdals' apparently happy home are revealed to Gregers, who insists on pursuing the absolute truth, or the "Summons of the Ideal." Among these truths are tht Gregers' father impergnated his servant Gain, and then maried her off to Hjalmar to legitimize the child. Another man has been disgraced and imprisoned for a crime the elder werle committed. And while Hjalmar spends his days working on a wholly imaginary "invention," his wife is earning the household income.

Despite his dogmatic insistence on truth, Gregers never says what he thinks but only insinuates, and is never understood until the play reaches its climax. Gregers hammers away at Hjalmar through innuendo and coded phrases until he realizes the truth; Gina's daughter, Hedvig, is not his child. Blinded by Gregers' insistence on absolute truth, he disavows the child. Seeing the damage he has wrought, Gregers determines to repair things, and suggests to Hedvig that she sacrifice the wild duck, her wounded pet, to prove her love for Hjalmar. Hedvig, among the characters, recognizes that Gregers always speaks in code, and looking for the deeper meaning in the statements Gregers makes and kills herself rather than the duck in order to prove her love for him in the ultimate act of self-sacrific. Only too late do Hjalmar and Gregers realize that the absolute truth of the "ideal" is sometimes too much for the human heart to bear. Late in his carrer Ibsen truned to a more introspective drama that had much less to do with denunciations of Victorian morality. In such later plays as *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *The Master Builder* (1892) Ibsen explored psychological conflicts that transcended a simple rejection of Victorian conventions. Many modern readers, who might regard anti-Victorian didacticism as dated, simplistic and even cliched, have found these later works to be of absorbing interest for their hard-edged, objective consideration of interpersonal comfronation. *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder* center on female protagonists whose almost demonic energy proves both attractive and destructive for those around them. *Hedda Gabler* in probably Ibsen's most performed play, with the title role regarded as one of the most challenging and rewarding for an actress even in the present day. There are a fow similarities between Hedda and the character on Nora in *A Doll's House*, but Hedda's intensity and duive are much more complex and much less comfortably explained than Nora's rather routine protest. Ibsen returned to Norway in 1891, but it was in many ways not the Norway he had left. Indeed,

he had played a major role in the changes that had happened across society. The Victorian Age was on its last legs, to be replaced by the rise of Modernism not only in the theater, but across public life, Ibsin died in Oslo in 1906 after a series of paralytic strokes. On his tomb they set a miner's hammer, in memory of one who had tunneled so deep into the stony depths of life.

3.2 A Doll's House : Synopsis

A Play in Three Acts :

Act One :

Nora appears to be happy with her husband, the lawyer Torvald helmer, and their three children, two sons and a daughter. When the play begins, it is Christmas Eve, and Nora has returned home after doing her Christmas shopping. The affectionate exchanges between her and her husband suggest that they are still very much in love after eight years of marriage. It is clear though, that Helmer thinks Nora is rather careless with his money. She is elated because he has recently been appointed Manager of a bank. Helmer points out that it will be three months before the first pay cheque comes in.

An old friend of Helmer's, Dr. Rank, who visits them everyday, calls and is conducted to Helmer's room. At the same time, and old friend of Nora's Mrs. Kristine Linde, whose husband had died three years earlier, arrives to seek assistance from Nora in finding a job. Nora tells her of Helmer's illness some years ago which required them to stay in a warmer climate. The trip was made possible by Nora who claimed to have obtained the money from her father. She confesses that she had actually got it as a loan from someone else, without her husband's knowledge, and was repaying it in instalments and with interest from her household allowance and from the money she earned from the side from copying documents.

An employee of the Bank, Nils Krogstad, comes in at this point to meet Helmer, and Mrs. Linde recognizes him as an old acquaintance, now a widower. When Dr. Rank emerges from helmer's study, and talks to Nora and Mrs. Linde, he refers to Krogstad as 'rotten to the core." A little later, Helmer comes and thinks

he can provide Mrs. Linde with a job in the bank. Then he goes out, together with Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank.

Krogstad returns when Nora is playing with the children, and reveals that Helmer intends to dismiss him. He asks Nora to prevent this under threat of telling her husband that the loan she had taken is from him against an IOU, for which her father was supposedly the security. Krogstad suspected that Nora's father had died before signing as security and that she had forged his signature. Nora admits that without realizing the legal implications. Krogstad tells her that his own offence for which he had ruined his reputation was the same that Nora had committed. If he produced in court the document on which Nora had forged her father's signature, she could ne condemned according to the same laws which had condemned him. He had done it to save the life of his wife for whose treatment in an illness the money was needed, just as nora had done it to raise money for her husband's health.

Krogstad leaves, Helmer comes back and guesses what Krogstad had been up to. Without knowing that Nora is in the same position as Krogstad, he describes the latter's crime and its moral consequences. He has decided to dismiss Krogstad because he feels 'physically sick in the presence of such people.' Krogstad, according to Helmer's exaggerated moral revulsion, has corrupted his children and poisoned his home. The first act ends with Nora wondering whether she is responsible for the same effect on her home and children.

Act Two :

The next day (Christmas) Nora prepares to attend a fancy dress party 'upstairs tomorrow evening' in the appartment of their neighbours the Stenborgs. Helmer wants her to go as a 'Neapolitan fisher lass' and to dance the tarantella. Mrs. Linde calls and Nora tells her, among other things, that Dr. Rank has tuberculosis of the spine, because of his father's moral corruption. Mrs. Linde suspects that there is more to Nora's relationship with Dr. Rank than appears on the surface. Nora confesses to Mrs. Linde that the loan was from Krogstad. Nora is afraid Krogstad will write to Helmer about it. She tries to persuade Helmer not to dismiss Krogstad but Helmer tells her he's going to hgive Krogstad's job to Mrs. Linde. He has an additional reason for wanting to discharge Krogstad: they were friends when they were younger and Krogstad treats him with excessive familiarity. When Nora rightly calls this 'petty,' Helmer is provoked and sends off Krogstad's notice to him immediately.

Helmer returns to his study and Nora has a talk with Dr. Rank who has reason to believe that he will die soon. When he's certain of this he will send Nora a visiting card with a black cross on it. Nora hears from him that he has been in love with her all these years, Krogstad visits Nora again and says he intends to keep her IOU and use it to make Helmer give him a better job at the bank. If Nora tries to prevent this she will have to pay the price with her life. As Krogstad leaves. he drops a letter to Helmer in the letter box.

Nora tells Mrs. Linde about his letter and wants her to testify, should it become necessary that Nora was 'responsible for the whole thing.' Mrs; Linde offers to persuade Krogstad to ask for the letter back, unread, but it turns out that Krogstad had left town and is expected back the following evening. Mrs. Linde leaves a note for him. When the second act ends, helmer had not yet read Krogstad's letter.

Act Three :

In the last act, Krogstad meets Mrs, Linde in the Helmers' apartment and it becomes clear that the two were once engaged to be married. Mr. Linde had married another man for his money, in the interests of her helpless mother and two young brothers. Now she is a widow, Krogstad a widower, and both are merely clinging to their respective empty lives. She proposes to him and he accepts and wants to take back his letter to Helmer but Mrs. Linde wants he whole business to come out in the open,

Nora and Helmer return home after the party upstairs and meet Mrs, Linde who tells Nora to make a full confession to Helmer opens the letterbox and finds two of Dr. Rank's visiting cards with 'a black cross above his name' among the letters. Nora explains to him the meaning of that message, and Helmer retires to his room to read his letters. Helmer then finds Krogstad's letter and confronts Nora with it. he calls her 'a hypocrite, a liar, worse than a criminal.' He thinks he must hush up the matter 'at all costs' and also keep up appearances between husband and wife. He says: "But you will not be allowed to bring up the children, In can't trust you with them."

At this point a note from Krogstad for Nora is delivered to her, which Helmer reads first. It informs her that he regrets what he had done and returns her IQU.

Helmer is delighted, tears up both the note and the IOU, and offers to forgive Nora everything. She however, points out the irony of his forgiving her, blames Helmer (and her father) for never understanding her and accuses Helmer of never truly loving her. First her father, and then helmer, she insists, had treated her as a doll, a plaything, and not allowed her to make anything of her life. She had not been happy, 'only gay.' She had been to Helmer only a 'doll wife.' Rejecting Helmer's offer to make it different therafter, she announces her intention to leave him. He pleads with her and then makes various accusations against her, nora reaffirms her decision. She will not even see her children again, not permit Helmer to write to her or send her help. She says: "I don't accept things from strangers." Helmer hears the door being slammed behind her.

3.3 Main Characters in the play

Nora :

Nora is not extravagant for herself but only for the children. She thus is self-sacrificing, but her attitude to her husband is not strainghtforward. She pretends to be absolutely subservient to him, even in such a simple matter as the eating of macaroons, which he had forbidden. 'I would never dream,' she says 'of doing anythin you didn't what me to.' Yet their friend Dr. Rank calls on them everday.

Dr. Rank would hardly have done so without Nora's encouragement. No wonder Mrs. Linde advises her, as she learns more and more about it, 'to give up all this business with Dr. Rank.' Ibsen implies that Nora is using Dr. Rank as an emotional substitute for her husband when she tires of his company. She says almost as much to Dr. Rank when he tries, in desolation at the prospect of an early death, to bring their relationship into the open. She would prefer not to acknowledge it and faced with a virtual declaration of Dr. Rank's love; all she wants is that he should 'keep coming as you have always done.' Nora tries to justify such a relationship by making a distinction between 'those people you love and those people you would almost rather be with.'

Nora is incapable of being sincere and natural with her loved persons. This is definitely Nora's problem with Helmer. She tells Dr. ank, for example, that she would' simply love to say "Damn" in front of her husband, but she dares not say it; he would be shocked.

The 'crime' Nora commits, in all innocence, for her husband's sake, has given her 'something to be proud and happy about.' She thinks she may keep it 'in reserve' and use it some day, when her husband loves her less to increase that love. This is a sign that she knows that her husband loves her less to increase that love. This is a sign that she knows that her husband's love depends on pleasing him all the time. It is not self sustaining.

Nora has many weaknesses. She talks childishly about money and power. She is rather thoughtless and inconsiderate-she hears about the death of Mrs. Linde's husband, and often thinks of writing to her but fails to do so for three years. She acts the feelings she ought to experience but doesn't.

Nora's first duty, she realizes, is her duty to herself, as an individual, to think things out for herself. If this brings her in conflict with society she must face the dilemma. These are typical Ibsentie ideas, the driving force of all his plays.

Helmer :

Helmer is in every way the dominant male in a male-dominated society. It is impossible for him to see any situation for Nora's point of view. His kindness to her which she acknowledges requires her to accept his lead in all matters. More important, Helmer has no ideas other than those which society considers valid. It never seems to strike him that there may be things in life more precious than 'a nice safe job and a good fat income.' However, Helmer is not a typical villain here. He is simply the ordinary bourgeois man, having values that fit with his idea of socio-economic well-being.

Helmer is very hard on those who break the moral and social laws of society, even if circumstances provide them with no choice. His 'forgiveness' requires that the guilty person confesses his guilt and takes his punishment. There is no softness of heart, no generosity of spirit in him. He sees himself as a model of moral uprightness, and he is very upset when Nora, on one occasion, finds that he is motivated by 'petty' considerations.

The remarks Helmer makes when he hears that Dr. Rank is likely to die soon, prove how insensitive he can be to other people. He sees Dr. Rank's suffering and loneliness only as 'a background of dark cloud to the sunshine' of his life with Nora.

When Helmer reads Krogstad's first letter, his violent reaction is a measure of the man. He condemns Nora without the slightest attempt to hear her side of the story. His references of Nora's father are particularly offensive and so is his instant decision that she cannot be allowed to bring up the children-in the interest of the children, His cry of joy, 'I'am saved' shows that he sees only himself at the center of the drama. He is ready to forgive Nora, but cannot imagine that he has said or done anything which requires forgiveness fromher. There is a kind of moral blindness in that, which is a major factor, is driving Nora to leave him forever.

Mrs. Linde :

Of the other characters, Mrs. Linde is first presented to us as a woman who has lost everything. Her husband is dead, she has no children and no money, and 'not even a broken heart too grieve over,' Yet from the very beginning we see her in a better light than we see Nora Asked by Nora to talk about herself, she is strong enough to say, 'No, no I want to hear about you.'

We soon discover that Mrs. Linde has the will to start her life afresh. By boldly linking up with Krogstad, who is in a position somewhat similar to hers, she succeeds in that enterprise. She also succeeds in rescuing the Helmers from a possible scandal. Her moral outlook is demonstrated at a crucial moment in the play when she allows Helmer to get hold of Krogstad's letter which she could have prevented. Her motive is to end the 'secrecy and deception' between the Helmers.

Mrs. Linde is not responsible for Nora's leaving her husband. That decision is wholly Nora's. But she is instrumental in creating he confrontation between Helmer and Nora, which leads to breakup of their marriage. To that extent she serves the cause of truth. This is among Ibsen's recurrent themes: one must serve the cause of truth however painful the consequences.

3.4 The Title of the play

It is important to note hat the title of the play is *A Doll's House* ('Et dukkehjem' in the original) and NOT *The Doll's House*. The phenomenon of infantilizing an adult woman so as to restrict her persona within the parameters defined by society is not only existent in the Helmer household, but can be found would wide in families belonging to any modern bougeois society. In *A Doll's House* Henrik Ibsen primarily addresses issues not only relating to women in Norway, but to women embarking on twentieth century life in general. To achieve his desired effect, he employs the use of contextual dialogue and places Nora as the central character, which gives her a great edge. With the lone exception of the exchange between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad at the beginning of Act III, there is not single scene that features of dialogue that in some way does not include a prominent part from Nora. In Act I the stage is set, bringing the meaning behind they plays' title into sharp focus. Here, Ibsen uses contextual dialogue to demonstrate that Nora is indeed, as the title implies, little more than a doll in a toy house, a plaything that Helmer doesn't take seriously. For instance, Helmer asks: "Is that my little lark twittering out there? Is it my little squirrel bustling about?" A little while later, he calls her "a poor little girl." and then adds "you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands." Nora appears too willingly—if not a little naïvely—playing into this role; after clapping her hands she replies, "No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so."

A second issues Ibsen presents for consideration in the first scene is a discussion of money, Nora appearing to play the role of the pampered child with a penchant for shiny coins clinking together :

Nora (playing with his coat buttons and without raising her eyes to his). If you really want to give me something, you might—you might—

Helmer. Well, out with It!

Nora (speaking quickly). You might give me money, Torvald. Only just as much as you can afford; and then one of these days I will buy something with it.

Helmer. But, Nora—

Nora. Oh, do! Dear Torvald; please, please do! Then I will wrap it up in beautiful filt paper and hang in on the Christmas tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

Helmer. What are little people called that are always wasting money?

Nora. Spendthrifts—I know. Let us do as you suggest, Torvals, and then I shall have time to think what I am most in want of that is a very sensible plan, isn't it?

For all appearances sake, we are led to believe tha Nora has her every whim indulged by her husband, the two engaged in a mutually dependent game—just as one might expect when playing a game of tea time with the frilly dolls arranged expectantly around the table. At the end of the third act Ibsen shows the gradual disintegration of the doll's house. When Nora wants to proclaim her crime, afraid that her husband would want to take her burden, Helmer says "Stop Playacting." However he never felt it necessary to say this before when both of them had been acting the roles which relegated their home into a doll's house. Right after this Nora seems to have gained a sudden epiphany and a rush of maturity along with it.

Helmer. You think and talk like a heedless child.

Nora. Maybe. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over—and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you—when the whole thing was past, as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in [the] future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. Torvald—it was ten it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man,and had borne him three children—Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into bits!

This scene represents the beginning of the end, in which Nora walks out on Torvald: the doll's house lie shattered and the 'reality' is revealed.

3.5 Feminism or Humanism? The Controversies Surrounding Nora's Action

"*A Doll's House* is now, as it has always been, a social rather than a literary phenomenon. Its excitement lay in it relation to feminism, and, although Ibsen rejected the ascription to support for feminism, in partical terms this hardly matters."

Raymond Williams (1968 [1952]), *Drama from Ibsen to Brcht*, London: Chatto, p47-8

In *Pillars of Society* (1877) the criticism of commercial morality, the feminist argument was only slightly developed and relegated to fuller treatment in its successor, *A Doll's House*. Among Ibsen's preliminary notes to the last named play, occurs the following : "There are two kinds of spiritual law, two kinds of conscience, one in man and another, altogether different, in woman. They do not understand each other; but in practical life the woman is judged by man's law, as though she was not a woman but a man... A woman cannot be herself in society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society..."

The disagreement on which the drama of *A Doll's House* is built accordingly is not so much between a wife and husband as one between a woman and the society in which she lives, the society which imposes its law upon her; Nora leaves her home and family in the last act not as a declaration of war, but in order that she may meditate in peace upon her position as a woman and member of the human community. The prominence which Ibsen gave to women in his plays is due not to any preponderting interest he may have taken in them as a sex—there is no hint of this in any of his biographies—nor because, like his northern colleague Strindberg, he thought the private relations of women and men and the antagonisms to which they give rise to be of special dramatic interest, but because women afforded him specimens of human peculiarity trammeled by their conventional disabilities in the struggle for personal emancipation which formed his passionate preoccupation. Nora helmer becomes the typical representative of the individual whose free development has been checked and

who has been driven into courses which both society considers criminal and the individual eventually finds uncongenial. The claims of freedom and personality in general could best be vindicated in women, because in women they are most persistently denied. The word 'slaves' which Mill had applied to the female half of humanity must have evoked the loudest echo in Ibsen. In a speech at the Festival of the Norwegin Women's Rights League, Christiana (Dsb), 26 May 1898, Ibsen had said :

"I am not a member of the Women's Right League, Whatever I have written has been without any conscious thought of making propaganda. In have been more the poet and less the social philosopher than people generally seem inclined to think. I thank you for your toast, but must disclaim the honour of having consciously worked for the women's rights movement. I am not even clear as to just what this women's rights movement is. To me it seemed a problem of mankind in general...My task has been the *description of humanity."*

On a side issue it can be pointed out here that in meditating upon the hindrances to freedom and happiness, as well as on other occasions, Ibsen also took into account hereditary disease and degeneracy. If certain strains improved and proliferated, others deteriorated and languished; congenital disability could by itself stulify every striving after happiness and freedom. Ibsen presented the case of Dr. Rank, the family firend of the Helmers, where Rank himself attributes the illness entirely to his paternal excesses. Ibsen uses the metaphor of this moral affliction inherited from one generation to the other most overly in *Ghosts* by showing Oswald to be a victim of Captain Alving's promiscuous youth. Ibsen used contagious disease thus as an illustration of an argument about private and public morality. He did not intend to suggest physical loathsomeness or to construct any argument, as one of the naturalists might have done, to exonerate a malefactor on account of impairment of the faculties throgh inherited or acquired disease, however a few critics, including Strindberg, argue that Ibsen meant to acquit Nora helmer of forgery, on the grounds that she had inherited her father's irresponsibility.

3.6 Questions

1. Would you call *A Doll's House* a Feminist play? Justify you answer.
2. What are the elements of Naturalist drama present in Ibsen's *A Doll's House?* Discuss.
3. How does Ibsen illustrate the inequalities of gender in a typical bourgeois family in *A Doll's House?*
4. Comment on the fact that Ibsen homogenizes the notion of the doll's house by using the article 'A' in he title.
5. At which point of the play does the mood turn serious? How does the playwright lead up to this point in the final act?
6. *A Doll's House* has often been referred to a "drama of gestures." Do you agree? Illustrate your answer in details.
7. Do you think Nora matures as the play proceeds or do you think she deliberately behaves childishly at the beginning of the play? Discuss.
8. What is the significance of Mrs. Linde and Krogstad's characters and relationship in the play?
9. How is Dr. Rank's presence and death relevant to the theme of the play?
10. "Nora's slamming of the door reverberated through Europe." Analyse details.

3.7 Recommended Reading

Archer; William, ed. *Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen.* 12 Volumes. London : 1910-1912.

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NOTES

মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

— রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

ভারতের একটা mission আছে, একটা গৌরবময় ভবিষ্যৎ আছে, সেই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উত্তরাধিকারী আমরাই। নূতন ভারতের মুক্তির ইতিহাস আমরাই রচনা করছি এবং করব। এই বিশ্বাস আছে বলেই আমরা সব দুঃখ কষ্ট সহ্য করতে পারি, অন্ধকারময় বর্তমানকে অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারি, বাস্তবের নিষ্ঠুর সত্যগুলি আদর্শের কঠিন আঘাতে ধূলিসাৎ করতে পারি।

— সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

Any system of education which ignores Indian conditions, requirements, history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support.

— Subhas Chandra Bose

Price : ₹. 150.00

(Not for sale to the Students of NSOU)

Published by Netaji Subhas Open University, DD-26, Sector-1, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700 064 & printed at Printtech, 15A, Ambika Mukherjee Road, Kolkata-700 056