

## **Box and Cox**

J.M.Martin's one act play "Box and Cox" belongs to the dramatic genre "Farce". A farce is a form of low comedy designed to provoke laughter through highly exaggerated caricatures of people in improbable or silly situations. Traits of farce include (1) physical bustle such as slapstick, (2) broad verbal humor such as puns. Many literary critics (especially in the Victorian period) have tended to view farce as inferior to "high comedy" that involves brilliant dialogue. The main purpose behind a farcical play is to evoke hilarious laughter from the audience. The language used in a farce is not only faulty but also verges on being bizarre unparliamentarily and abusive. Dialogues used are mostly multifringed ones likely to be interpreted differently by different readers and onlookers.

The genre owes its origin to French Theater where from it made inroads into Italy first and later into England. So far as Box and Cox by J.M.Martin is concerned, it presents a typical example of Farce though initially it was staged as a comic opera in France.

All the three dramatic personae namely Box, Cox and Mrs. Bouncer exhibit the traits of caricatures and not real life like characters. Their every action, every word they speak is enough to evoke hilarious laughter. Their moves are ridiculous and their dealings simply hyperbole. It is really ridiculous even to harbor the idea of letting out a single room to two tenants simultaneously and not to be found out or caught hold of. Yet Mrs. Bouncer the protagonist embarks upon it, is finally found out and put to shame. The dialogues bringing about the finale of the farce evoke hilarious laughter thus fulfilling the purpose of its creation. Mr. Cox's getting his hair cut only to discover later that all the hats in his wardrobe wobble round, is another example of hyperbole making the onlookers laugh over his all the exaggerated remarks about hats, haircuts etc.

### **Character of Mrs. Bouncer**

Mrs. Bouncer is a female component of J.M. Martin's one acts play – a farce "Box and Cox". Though seemingly an insignificant and less important dramatic personal, yet it is she round whom the other two characters Mr. Cox and Mr. Box revolve. She resembles / presents the spectacle of a puppet master who occupies position behind the curtain but whose fingers hold the threads that make puppet revolve and dance. Her part in the main dramatic action and dialogue is just ordinary and trivial, yet if she is removed, the plot will be reduced to not and the entire dramatic action will come to stand still. Though not mentioned, Mrs. Bouncer seems to be middle aged lady full of vigour and wit. She is always found up and doing, vigilant and watchful. She is not so very well off and it is her need for money that makes her resort to underhand and deceitful tactics to do away with her penury. She is by nature covetous lady and it is this trait of personality that makes her let out a single room to two tenants simultaneously taking undue advantage of their callings Mr.Box, a hatter requiring the room to spent nights. Mr. Cox, a printer needing it for days only.

Mr. Bouncer is quite active alert and vigilant to an appreciable extent. It is evident by her not letting even the suspicion dawn on either of the two tenants for quite some time that they are occupying the same room.

At times she presents a miserable spectacle of a tough skinned woman—a shame proof one who can swallow and digest any and every amount of insult and disrespect. She is accused of stealing by both her tenants but she turns a duff ear to their insulting remarks merely to ensure receiving double rent for a single room.

She presents a typical example of a farcical caricature with unparliamentarily and uncivil language; abusive and abusing demeanor and beguiling and deceitful dealings.

As is inevitable in all such farcical plots, her treachery is finally found out/ unearthed and she is put to shame and disrespect quite justifiably.