

## PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Bachelors degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Honours course in any elective Subject 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 Honours 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 analyses.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation 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 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 part 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.) Manimala Das**  
Vice-Chancellor



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**(Honours**

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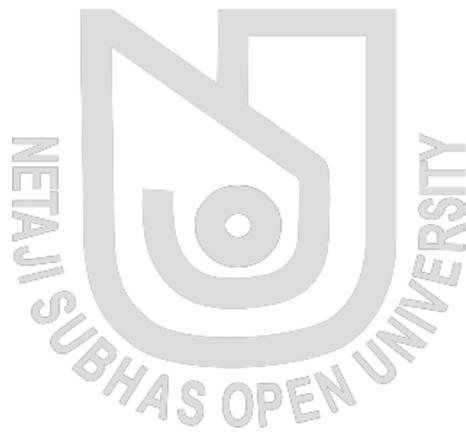
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**NETAJI SUBHAS  
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**E.E.G.–VI  
Elective Course  
in English**

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## **Unit -1    Modernism and Europe : Social, Historical and Economic Background (upto World War-II)**

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### **1.0 Objectives**

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#### **1.2 Modernism : Some key aspects.**

#### **1.3 Social, Historical and Economic Background of the Period.**

##### **1.3.1 Imperialism Vs Colonialism**

##### **1.3.2. The Political Scene**

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##### **1.3.5. Education**

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##### **1.3.7. Conclusion**

#### **1.4 Summing up**

#### **1.5 Glossary of some important names, events and dates**

#### **1.6 Comprehension Exercises**

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### **1.0 Objectives**

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This section deals with the question ‘What is Modernism’ and the social, historical and economic factors that went into giving the age its distinctive characteristics. The literature of any period is not merely a chronicle of authors and their works, but should include a knowledge of the various shaping influences responsible for particular genres, forms, themes and their treatments. For this purpose the background has to be studied.

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### **1.1 Study Guide**

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Various aspects of twentieth century England from 1900 upto the onset of World War-II have been discussed. This should help build up a comprehensive picture of

the social, historical and economic condition of Europe in general, and England in particular, in the first half of the twentieth century. This in turn will help in the understanding of the contemporary literature.

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## **1.2 Modernism : Some key aspects**

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‘Modern’ is a term loosely applied to anything in the twentieth century. ‘Modernism’, however, is a special term applied to a special kind of art and literature produced in Europe and the United States between approximately 1890 and 1940. As there can be no clear cut boundaries as far as art, ideologies, movements are concerned, the seeds of this ‘modernism’ were probably planted as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The full flowering of modernism began about the second/third decade of the twentieth century and continued till the second World War. The nineteen forties to the nineteen sixties is usually referred to as the late Modern period and it manifests some, but not all the characteristics of Modernism. After this a new term was evolved, ‘Postmodernism’ perhaps because the older term was no longer comprehensive enough to encompass all the changes taking place.

The age was characterised by experimentation in both life and arts and a desire for change-sometimes with disastrous results. It has been called the ‘age of the masses’ where the working man has been liberated and “every mechanic has been made a prince”.

This state of affairs was the result of the enormous impact made by the socio-economic changes which were sweeping across national frontiers, creating and recreating boundaries. The movements and their influences could not be contained within previously formed geographical boundaries. Though some of these movements did not originate in England, they definitely influenced the lives of the English people, and in turn their literature.

The age witnessed such diverse happenings as the end of the long reign of Queen Victoria (1901) resulting in loss of stability, the shocks of the Boer War (1899-1902), violent imperialism and the impact of colonisation, massive social reforms, reawakening of nationalism, various political movements, growth of the Labour Party and power for the masses, rise of Trade Unionism, votes for women, growing urbanization, spread of education, the calamity and disaster of the First World War (1914-1918), followed by a period of restructuring before the onset of the Second World War (1939-1945).

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## 1.3 Social, Historical and Economic Background

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The later years of the nineteenth century saw an almost complete breakdown of a pre-industrial way of life and economy. The agricultural depression (1870-1902) brought about significant changes in rural England, resulting in *increased urbanization* and *Free Trade*. The decline of the rural way of life and the corresponding changes in human values have been mourned by writers like Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas and others. The idealization of rural values, a yearning for a simpler society were highlighted by many writers.

The shift from agricultural and rural pursuits due to the loss of farmlands to industries, a process which had been set in motion during the Industrial Revolution, resulted in a concentration of people in towns and cities. Added to this erstwhile rural population, were immigrant workers, resulting in an overwhelming crush of urban population. The Government was faced with the problem of ensuring suitable sanitation, adequate health facilities and suitable working conditions together with maintaining public order. The lower mortality rates, resulting from medical research, added to the population growth. Between 1870 and 1914 the population of the United Kingdom increased by nearly half. With such a large electorate to handle, the Government and administration needed drastic overhauling.

It was truly an *age of the masses*, not only in the importance given to them, but also by the sheer power of numbers. Thus mass movements became a common feature of early twentieth century life, whether the issue was political, social, ideological or even literary.

### 1.3.1 Imperialism Vs Colonialism

In the early years of the century the idealism advocated by Bradley had begun to give way to the realism of Russell and Moore. A widespread scepticism about moral judgements in particular and practically every issue of life was predominant. This scepticism was very strongly felt with regard to the question of 'white superiority'.

The development of Imperial relations tended to strike a contrasting note of uncertainty and moral dilemma. The shift from 'Imperial Mission' round about 1883 to the dissolving of the Empire into the commonwealth, represented a period of remarkable political transformation concerning white supremacy and imperial hegemony.

A discussion of English history would be incomplete without an understanding of her colonial policies. Some of the ideas and concepts which had come into effect in

the nineteenth century and were still being felt in the twentieth, were the advances of Democracy, establishment of Equal Rights, better working conditions, formation of unions etc. Side by side there existed discrimination against ethnic minorities and women, imperialism and grinding poverty. For the West, especially Europe, everything was seen in terms of profit and loss and countries were potential markets for industrialized Europe's products. At this time. Europe and the United States of America accounted for practically all the world trade in manufactured goods which doubled between 1900 and 1913.

Global competition for trade increased colonial rivalry for raw materials and markets. The result was a tug-of-war with prime sites in Africa and Asia. Combined with these economic factors, was the deep-rooted concept of the overall superiority of the White Man.

There were, however, a number of dissenting voices, among them Britain's Gladstonian Liberals, who took up the cause of the indigenous people. Similarly the Boer War (1899-1902) and the colonization of the Philippines by the United States after the Spanish -American War of 1898, gave rise to fierce debates opposing imperialism on moral grounds, but these dissenting voices were not enough to stem the root which had already set in.

The expansion of Western power in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries carried with its own seeds of destruction. By 1900 self-government and separate nationhood had been won by many, either through war or consent. Ironically, the spread of European knowledge undermined the basis of imperialist dominance and other nations could now apply this knowledge for their own benefit. A new sense of nationalism was born, resistant to Western dominance and fighting it with Western scientific knowledge and weapons.

Closer to home, the Irish Question was still a thorn in the English side. In 1900, there were fresh campaigns for the independence of Ulster but it did not materialize. The division between conservatives and liberals was widening and the situation was heading towards a messy showdown. The timely outbreak of the First World War in 1914, temporarily swamped smaller issues.

### **1.3.2. The Political Scene**

On the political front the forces prevalent in the post 1871 period were mainly *socialist anarchist* and *communist* - demanding greater democracy and economic restructuring. This was not merely the case in England, but had a wider range as

German dominance was being challenged by a counter-alliance led by France. A series of international crises bred mutual fear, finally culminating in war.

With the rise of socialist and communist movements, came the rise of Unions. 'Social democracy' became the general pattern of the new socialism in Europe during the 1880s. Even here, the tension between orthodox Marxists and more moderate political socialists coloured the scenario. Surprisingly, in Great Britain, where Marx and Engels spent most of their time, no specifically Marxist party existed until the Democratic Federation was remodelled into the Social Democratic Federation in 1883 by the poet William Morris.

Much more strongly felt were the influences of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party of 1898 and the Socialist Revolutionary Party of 1902 which concentrated on propaganda among the peasants. Lenin applied Marxist theories to the new Russian phenomenon of a large industrial proletariat. This was strongly opposed by Trotsky and others, leading to wide-spread strikes and underground revolutions. All this was put to a brutal end by the Russian Government and culminated in the mutiny on the battleship Potemkin in June 1905.

Within the basic framework of socialism there were inescapable divisions within Marxism or even anarchism, dedicated to overthrowing other political parties, often by violent means. Like other working class movements, parliamentary socialism also flourished where traditions and institutions of liberal democracy had already become fully established -ex -U.K., France, Scandinavia.

### **1.3.3. Social Reforms**

The more radical minded liberals and growing socialist movements and labour organisations were making their presence felt, and widespread legislation came into being extending the activities of governments into new fields. On the positive side laws restricting hours of work in factories, mines and mills were passed between 1878-1901, and regarding general social problems in 1905; introduction of weekly half-holidays in 1911 (the Shops Act), laws against "sweating" in certain trades in 1909 etc. The National Insurance Act of 1911 introduced a vast contributory scheme insuring the whole working population against sickness, providing free medical attention and in some cases even insured them against unemployment. This was modelled on the German Laws of Bismarck. Soon more schemes followed encompassing pensions, education etc. Often involving local governments and voluntary bodies. On the other side, the growth of governmental expenditure on social services

meant that they had to look around for additional sources of revenue, one such being a heightened income tax rate.

One prominent feature of socialism was the rise of **trade or labour unions** and the power which they wielded. If this age is accepted as being the age of the masses, nowhere was it more strongly felt than in this field.

What began as co-operative organisations metamorphosed into labour unions. Till the 1880s; labour unions included mainly the more skilled workmen in trades such as building, mining, engineering, textiles, printing—predominantly craft unions—preoccupied with mutual insurance, self-help against accidents, sickness etc. By 1895 this co-operative movement formed the International Co-operative Alliance and by 1913 it became the International Federation of Trade-Unions (IFTU) which represented the bulk of organised labour in nearly every European country.

The unions, like the socialists, faced the problem of whether to stay strictly within the framework of social welfare or try and get political power. This issue split the parties, with one group leaning towards revolutionary Marxist analysis of class war especially during periods of slump and recession and tension between capital and labour.

#### **13.4. Women's Suffrage**

Another important shaping factor of the age was the wider franchise and includes a rural electorate, which, regardless of property qualification, was entitled to vote. The Corrupt Practices Act (1883) which attacked rowdyism during elections and the secret ballot instituted in 1872 - launched Britain on the road towards political democracy. But women were not given voting rights till 1914.

The women's suffrage movement in an organised form had begun tentatively around 1903 in Manchester under Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst who formed the Women's Social and Political Union. Till 1910 they staged processions, heckled political meetings and disrupted debates in Parliament. From 1912 there began a series of more violent demonstrations against the Liberal Government Under Christabel Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline, arrests were courted and hunger strikes undertaken. The cause received a martyr in the form of Emily Davison who threw herself under the King's horse, whereupon some labour leaders took up their cause. Though the situation looked grim, the misfortune of the war in 1914 speeded things up, and women received their voting rights in 1918.

### 1.3.5. Education

The most positive aspect of social reform aimed at bettering the lives of the ordinary people was evident in the spread of education. Expanding public education throughout Europe and campaigns against illiteracy were directly related to wider electorates ensuring more votes, hence more power. Previously, **free schools** were run by Churches but these were in decline by 1914. What hastened this decline was the prolonged controversy between Church and state about education—a struggle evident not only in Great Britain but all over Europe. In many cases, as in Germany, it became the platform for acquiring political power. Expansion of popular education took place at a time when new scientific doctrines, theories of realism, positivism, secularism, nationalism were on the rise. So the clash with existing religious doctrines was all the more severe.

As a result of this shift in the emphasis on education, no longer were the family, village or Church the primary shaping influence on a child. Those that grew-up, worked and voted in the generation before 1914 were the products of this new experience marking a turning point in the social history of modern Europe. By 1914, popular education was the greatest /single force moulding and conditioning public opinion in general. Public opinion in turn played an important role in politics and policy-making. The emergent free-press became one of the most powerful forces of a thinking and vocal populace.

With the spread of literacy to a hitherto uneducated section of the population and the rate at which new branches of knowledge such as mathematics and psychology were growing, it was but natural that a sense of disorientation and dislocation would result. The behaviour of man in society and various aspects of community life came under close scrutiny and analysis.

One of the greatest achievements of nineteenth century Europe was the progress of *Science*. The early years of the twentieth century strengthened this pride. However, this euphoria was shortlived as the honors of the war in 1914 dispelled this sense to a great extent. In 1914, scientists diverted all attention and funds to research having immediate military usefulness. The precision of modern engineering was geared to war efforts. The prosperity and optimism that science had promised collapsed with the experiences and devastation of the First World War, prompting a hatred of the developmental trends that led to the catastrophe.

The preoccupation with social and national problems, social criticism, impact of new ideas on human problems left their mark on contemporary literature. Writers like

Balzac, Hugo, Dickens, Tolstoy had established social criticism as a function of the novelist in the nineteenth century. This tradition was continued by Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Anthony Trollope, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy among others.

The developments in science found expression through the futuristic world portrayed in the works of H.G. Wells, the psychological concerns through Samuel Butler and so on. The old romances found a new realism in Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling. Thus, beginning from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Not only in literature, but in all other fields of artistic creation were felt the influences of contemporary ideas, beliefs and issues.

### **1.3.6. The First World War**

The turmoil in the world resulting from conflicting ideologies and a race for superiority and power could have but one inevitable end—war.

The war was essentially between the great powers. The original issues were the German ultimatum and invasion of Belgium. Britain, in its interest to safeguard European peace, joined the war. For Belgium, France and Britain it was thus more of an act of self-defence, while Russia was attempting to protect her economic lifeline by keeping Austria out of the Balkans. Fear, rather than greed dominated the decisions of most powers in 1914.

Consequences :

More than four years of ordeal by battle bore lasting scars, the greatest perhaps the loss of millions of young & fit men and the permanent disabling of many. This was not due just to the actual war, but also due to the outbreak of disease and deprivation that followed. The problem in Great Britain as elsewhere was one of ‘surplus women’ or ‘deficit men’ e.g. in 1911 there were 1,067 women to 1,000 men, in 1921 there were 1,093 women to 1,000 men. The birth rate dipped sharply during the war and rose equally rapidly afterwards, reflecting a disruption of family life during the war years.

On the positive side the war accelerated emancipation of women and in Great Britain women over thirty were given parliamentary vote in 1928. Also their claim to equality of status was recognised in work places such as offices, factories, schools, hospitals, voluntary services etc.

Barriers of class and wealth were weakened by the 'fellowship and brotherhood' of the trenches as man and master fought side by side, facing the same hardships,

Nationalism & patriotism were at an all time high. War profiteers were scorned and so national enterprise got a boost over private enterprise. National economic self-sufficiency was born of the needs of war.

For the thinking man, hopes of a brave new world, justly won, soon died down at the sight of the waste and destruction of life. It was replaced by disillusionment and despair brought out vividly in the works of poets such as T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and others. In their desperation to seek a solution, they often took refuge in such diverse fields as religion, politics or psychology. Whether their attitude was optimistic or otherwise, they were all acutely aware of the hollowness of the post-war world, the disintegration of cultural values and the uncertainty that beset them all. Gone were the poems of Rupert Brooke extolling patriotism and glorifying death in the cause of the motherland. Sassoon, Owen and Spender with their description of the horrors and brutality of warfare, their pictures of the pity and waste, seemed more real and left a more lasting impression.

The writers, thinkers and ordinary men were desperately trying to bring stability back into their lives. Public morale and national disunity were the primary concern of the Government. The winter of 1916-17 brought a national crisis and with it important political changes, the most extreme manifestation being the *Bolshevik Revolution* (1918-24) in Russia. Probably the collapse of the social and economic structure, breakdown of government & losses incurred during the war were greater in Russia than in any other state, resulting in such a manifestation as the Revolution.

The First World War had been advertised as one 'to make the world safe for democracy' and this was felt to have been achieved in 1919. Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, The United States, Canada, triumphed in this aspect. However, the feeling of complacency was shortlived and the seeds to undermine this were already present in 1920.

In Germany, there was a revival of anti-Semitism and feelings against Jews ran high. Adolf Hitler—the key player in world politics had by this time joined the National Socialist German Workers' party (N.S.D.A.P.) which was anti-communist and anti-parliamentary in nature. On the other hand in Italy the Fascist Revolution of 1922 under Mussolini and his Blackshirts' led to the overthrow of the much-cherished democracy in 1924.

Thus the fragility of the existing democracies in most states, together with the

economic dislocation, huge expenses and national debts incurred during the war and post-war reconstruction led to a strain in political and diplomatic relations. Conflicts between idealism and realism, both misapplied in many cases, led to a temporary redistribution of the balance of power. Basically it was an alliance of Western nations together with the over-seas powers United States, Japan and South America against German resurgence.

The League of Nations, formed to shoulder the responsibilities of world problems could not fully serve the world due to disagreement among its members. So its effectiveness was compromised.

The constant disparity between purpose and achievement highlighted the period between 1914 and 1923. The optimism of the early years was dispelled by the crisis of the thirties. Even in the field of economic recovery there were maladjustments resulting in the economic crash which began in the autumn of 1929. This was accompanied by social unrest both culminating in the general strike in Britain in 1926. Among the allies, the United States had become the supreme creditor nation of the postwar world, but world trade as a whole was stagnating. The economic crash of 1929 led to ruin for producers of wheat, cotton, coffee, cocoa, sugar and meat. The great depression that resulted can be compared to the Great War itself in terms of deprivation & horror. International efforts to arrest the crisis failed and governments went back to internal national action. In 1934, there was a gradual recession of the crisis, but the harm had already been done.

The resulting moral crisis coupled with a universal sense of helplessness, loss of direction, subjection to blind impersonal forces beyond the control of men or nations set the scene for the rise of individuals who could offer hope of overcoming this inertia. Such a man was Hitler. Under him, Nazi Germany came to dominate Europe, because barricaded behind their individual walls of Government, nations shut their eyes to the fact that such a regime could exist or succeed. Pre-occupied as they were with themselves, they could not take collective action against aggressors. The rise of Hitler was thus predestined—"he was both the apostle and prophet of crisis".

When belated realization of an impending world crisis dawned, a policy of appeasement was attempted between March 1938 and March 1939. Britain and France were especially keen to avoid another war. Unfortunately, Hitler went back on his word given to Neville Chamberlain of jointly renouncing war. The Second World War began as a belated but brave concerted effort of Western Europe's two oldest nations, Britain and France, to defy and destroy this new threatening power—Germany. With the joining of the United States after the bombing of Pearl Harbour by the

Japanese on 7th December, 1941, the war became a global phenomenon and was no longer restricted to Europe.

The war years—1st Sept. 1939 to 2nd Sept 1945 saw a repeat performance of the First World War on a much larger scale. It was more a war of machines than men, more prisoners of war, more sophisticated inhumanities. It brought in its wake political upheavals, economic and social transformations, uprooting and displacement of people, war orphans and refugees.

Once again there would come a time for national reconstruction, concentrating on relief and rehabilitation, and a planned economic recovery. There would be a construction of European imperialism with many erstwhile colonies getting self rule (e.g. India) as the attention of the masters had to be concentrated on their own home grounds, leaving them with no option but to cut short their distant boundaries. The colonies were becoming too much of a drain on their exchequers.

### **1.3.7. Conclusion**

The years between 1900 and 1940 saw many diverse pictures—stability and turmoil; reconstruction and destruction; loss of faith and strong political beliefs; nationalism and imperialism; rights of the ordinary man, suppression of the weak; heights of industrial and economic prosperity, the great depression and economic slumps; and above all war and peace. It was but natural that all these aspects would find expression through man's creativity. Literature in particular & the arts as a whole also went through experimentation & innovation in an attempt to capture and reproduce the changes that were taking place.

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## **1.4. Summing up**

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- i) By 1890, industrialized Europe was one unit with five major powers—U.K., Germany, France, Italy and Austria-Hungary plus smaller states of Europe.
- ii) The common pattern was establishment of commercial connections; development of roads and railways; concentration of urban population, labour union, conflicts concerning religion, wealth, politics, nationality, clashes between organised labour (or unions) and the state, imperialism & colonialism.
- iii) There was a mass movement towards urbanization.
- iv) The years saw the spread of education, resulting in a wider literate population.

- v) There were various political and social changes and protests against the existing economic and political orders—Labour unions suffragette campaigns for women’s franchise.
- vi) There was a strong movement in Asia and Africa against colonialism and imperialism Britain also faced political unrest in Ireland.
- vii) Outbreak of First World War, leading to displacement of populations, economic deprivation and disillusionment
- viii) Despite subsequent restructuring, there was a renewed movement towards a second world crisis.
- ix) Outbreak of the Second World War.

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### 1.5. Glossary of some important names and events (in the order of their appearance in the text) :-

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#### Sec. 1.3.1 :

**Gladstone**, William Ewart (1809-'98) English liberal statesman, P.M-1868-'74. Advocated Home Rule for Ireland.

**Conservatives**—Replaced the older term Tory-after 1834.

**Liberals**—Successors of the whigs-moderately radical and progressive in terms of social change.

#### Sec 1.3.2 :

**Socialism**—advocated that there should be no divisions in society based on economic differences.

**Anarchism**—A political philosophy which holds in the words of the American anarchist Josiah Warren (1798-1874) that “everyman should be his own government, his own law, his own church.”

**Communism**—ideally refers to that type of society, in which all property belongs to the community.

**Marx, Karl** (1818-83)—German founder of modern International Communism, with Engels wrote the ‘Communist Manifesto’.

**Engels, Friedrich** (1820-95)—German Socialist and friend of Karl Marx.

**Lenin, Vladimir Hyich Ulyanov** (1870-1924)—Russian revolutionary leader and statesman, leading spirit of the Bolsheviki-an uncompromising group of the Social Democratic , Party.

**Trotsky, Leo** (1879-1940)—Russian revolutionary who differed from Stalin on policy.

**Sec 1.3.3 :**

**Bismarck, OHo Eduard Leopold Von**, (1815-98)—Prusso-German diplomat and,states- man; chief architect of the German empire.

**Sec. 1.3.5 :**

**Balzac, Honore'de** (1799-1850)—French novelist.

**Hugo, Victor Marie** (1802-85)—French Romantic poet, dramatist and novelist. Author of 'Les Miserables' etc.

**Dickens, Charles** (1812-70)—English novelist. Author of 'David Copperfield', 'Oliver Twist', 'Hard Times' etc.

**Tolstoy, Leo Nikolayevich, Count** (1828-1910)—Russian writer. Novels include <sup>4</sup>'War and Peace' 'Anna Karenina' etc.

**Hardy, Thomas** (1840-1928)—English novelist and poet. Novels include 'Far from the Madding Crowd', 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' etc.

**Moore, George** (1852-1933)—Irish novelist. Author of 'Esther Waters' etc.

**Trollope, Anthony** (1 815-82)—British novelist; author of the 'Barchester Towers' series of six novels exposing the social problems of the times.

**Bennett, Arnold** (1867-1931)—British novelist, author of realistic novels of social criticism e.g. 'Anna of the Five Towns'.

**Meredith, George** (1828-1909)—English writer. Novels include 'Diana of the Crossways', "The Egoist'

**Galsworthy, John** (1867-1933)—British novelist and playwright, author the 'Forsyte Saga'.

**Wells Herbert George** (1866-1946)—English authors and one of the founders of modern science fiction - 'Tono Bungay' etc.

**Butler, Samuel** (1835-1902)~English novelist and satirist. Works include 'Erewhon', 'The Way of All Flash' etc.

**Stevenson**, Robert Louis (1850-94)—Scottish author - 'Treasure Island', 'Kidnapped' etc.

**Kipling**, Rudyard (1865-1936) British writer born in Bombay.. Nobel prize for literature in 1907.

### **Sec 1.3.6;**

**Eliot**, Thomas Stearns (1888-1965)—Poet and critic; 1948-Nobel Prize for literature.

**Auden**, Wystan Hugh (1907-73) English poet, naturalized American.

**Bolshevik Revolution** in 1917 led by Lenin who became the first Head of State of the Soviet Union.

**Hitler**, Adolf (1889-1945)—German dictator, founder of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party.

**Mussolini** Benito (1883-1945)—Fascist dictator of Italy; entered w.w.II on the side of Germany.

**The League of Nations**—First meeting in 1920 (Germany, Austria, Russia, Turkey excluded & U.S.A. not represented). 1946—April 19<sup>th</sup>—League of Nations formally wound up.

Chamberlain, Neville (1869-1940)—British Prime Minister, 1937-40.

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## **1.6. Comprehension Exercises**

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Modernism has not been defined in this unit

1. In which fields do you feel, was the importance of the masses most strongly felt?
2. Give an account of the spread of education and its consequences during this period.
3. What do you understand by 'Women's Suffragette Movement'? Give an account of this movement in the first twenty years of the twentieth century.
4. Give some examples of important social reforms or development in the political field before the First World War—with reference to Europe in general and England in particular.
5. What were the general consequences of the First World War ?

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## 1.7. Select Reading List

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1. The Pelican guide to English Literature—The Modern Age—Vol 7—ed. by Boris Ford.
2. Alistair Fowler—*A History of English Literature*
3. J.A.S. Grenville—*The Collins History of the World in Twentieth Century*
4. David Thomson—*Europe Since Napoleon*



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## **Unit -2 Postwar Europe : Social, Historical and Economic Background**

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### **The Fifties**

Immediately after the Second World War the British Labour Party was voted to power in 1945 and started building the 'Welfare State' with emphasis on public funding of health and education. At the 1950 general election the Labour Government was returned but with a much-reduced majority and by 1951 it had been replaced by a Conservative one. This was because the austerity caused by war continued in spite of welfare policies and made labour unpopular. For the next decade British politics came to be characterised by what observers of the political scene called a remarkable consensus between both main parties. Labour Prime Minister Atlee's policies were generally continued by conservative Prime Minister Churchill.

The Ministry of Housing set itself ambitious public-housing targets throughout the early to mid 1950s. The government did not make much effort to reprivatize the 'mixed economy'; (though iron and steel and road haulage were privatized). Furthermore, both major parties were committed to Keynesian 'demand-management' economic strategy. This included the use of public spending to ensure relatively full employment. The general elections of 1955 and 1959 were (both resulted in Conservative victories) fought not on the issue of capitalism vs socialism but on the question what party could better administer a society organised on the principle of welfare capitalism.

King George VI died in 1952 and his daughter became Queen Elizabeth II; It seemed as if for a few years at least Britain had entered a new era of Elizabethan stability and affluence. Many felt that the problems of the interwar years—unemployment, class antagonism and widespread poverty - had at last been overcome. Academicians such as Daniel Bell proclaimed 'the end of ideology' while politicians such as the Labour MP Richard Crossman spoke of the dawn of a 'pre-capitalist society'.

Everything seemed to be at its best in the best of all possible worlds: Harold Macmillan, then Prime Minister, told the British people in 1959 that they never had it so good. It was true for some. Although Britain's economy was growing at a much slower rate than her major competitors (The US, West Germany, and later Japan) it was evident that conditions were improving. The middle class and sections of the

skilled manual working class were able to afford consumer goods that their parents could never have afforded, and were thus able to improve their standard of living. In the space of a few years most homes were seen to own refrigerators, washing machines, TV sets and other consumer durables. Car ownership spread among the working class and house ownership went up from one fourth of households at the end of the war to half by 1970. There was almost full employment and gradual but steady rise in real average incomes.

The Conservative Government was returned in three successive elections ('51,55 and '59) and the general opinion was that the old class divisions had been broken down once the working class had been swept into consumerism putting an end to socialist loyalties. In the fifties it seemed that the old' problems of poverty and ignorance were at last at an end and those who disagreed were not heard. It was only in the sixties that poverty and hardship was, as it were, 'rediscovered' although they had been there all the time.

However, the problems that preoccupied the country's political intellectual and moral opinion-leaders had more to do with affluence than poverty. The younger generation with more time and money in their hands than they had ever before seemed to lack direction and purpose in' life. Family cohesion, something that is evident in hard times because survival depends on it, suddenly seemed a thing of the past. The media frequently questioned Church leaders, academics and politicians about the causes of the 'decadence' of youth and the possibilities of overcoming it and most of the answers would blame it on the growing 'materialistic society' and to the attention inherent in it.

Alienation was indeed a reality. The 'teddy boys' with their fantastic hairstyles and clothes hanging around Espresso bars sought identity in gang fights and found a hero in James Dean's 'rebel without a cause'. Assembly line workers in new light-engineering firms—the car industry, for instance—paid for their new homes stuffed with consumer goods with hours of numbing tedious work. Young mothers and elderly people, initially relieved at being relocated from crumbling inner-city back-to-backs, found themselves either in far away new housing estates with no facilities, or in towering blocks of flats miles away from family and friends, in areas that tended to be crime prone. Immigrants from the Indian sub-continent, who lived by the promise of employment and affluence, were soon disillusioned by the racial antagonism they had to face from landlords, employers and fellow-workers. White racism was often the reason behind the official hostility towards immigrants sometimes leading to stirs among them as in the Notting Hill riots in 58.

The boredom and frustration of those times have been captured by writers such as Colin MacInnes and Alan Sillitoe in their novels. However, they do not attempt to probe deeper into the social cause for this.

Yet, in spite of this, the optimistic outlook at the beginning of the decade was still evident. Youth clubs and organisations, compulsory national service, community activities and social work were some of the solutions that came forth. Even racial tension was seen as a temporary problem that would disappear by the third generation when they would be fully assimilated into British culture.

The attitude of the political leaders and civil servants was quite complacent. This was not, however, reflected in the literature of the period. Many British writers on the Right saw the immediate post-war period as a time of decline. Evelyn Waugh in his trilogy *Sword of Honour* (*Men at Arms* - 52, *Officers and Gentleman* - 55, *Unconditional Surrender*-61) traces the growing disillusionment of the Catholic aristocrat, Guy Crouchback with the conduct and outcome of World War II.

Stalinism came to be equated with a Satanic thirst for power and many authors such as Wyndham Lewis expressed their fear of Bolshevism engulfing British society with the collusion of the intellectuals and the willing subservience of the populace to a welfare state.

Other writers such as Anthony Powell in his twelve volume *A Dance to the Music of Time* traces the decline of the English upper class in a gentler, more urbane tone.

It is important to note here that those of the nominally Left were by no means satisfied with the welfare state. Disillusionment with Marxism on account of Stalinism and with the Labour Party's ineffectuality after the fall of the Labour Government in 1951 left the young and radical left intelligentsia no ideology to propagate. The welfare state was criticised both for not being revolutionary enough and for creating a class of oppressive bureaucracy. Above all, they were wary of egalitarianism being of elitist Oxbridge education. Yet, they were also uncomfortable with the traditionalism of Eliot and Waugh. This section of the radical young appealed to Orwell who became a symbol of non-partisanship, common sense, decency and honesty in both political and literary perspectives. These were 'the angry young men' and included John Wain, Kingsley Amis, John Osborne and Thorn Gunn. Orwell was the only left-wing writer from the 30s to have any influence on the new postwar generation. Auden and Isherwood had lost credit by remaining in America during the course of the war. Macneice and Day Lewis were considered worthy but dull, while Spender was rejected even though he had long abandoned his pro-soviet views.

Orwell's analysis of the Russophile British Left of the 30s and 40s as possessing under the surface a barely hidden lust for power was appreciated. They felt that this class was now in control of British political and cultural life. It deliberately repressed any genuine feeling and experience and propagated in their stead what was abstract, inauthentic and avante garde.

One last abortive attempt was made by Britain to recover its image as an imperial power when she collaborated with the French and Israeli governments in the invasion of Egypt in relation of that country's nationalisation of the Suez Canal. This aggression was condemned by the rest of the world including America, and British troops were hastily withdrawn. The Suez campaign was opposed at home by the radical left who found this just the kind of foolish arrogance Conservative politics were characterised by and what they were antagonistic towards. At the same time they were drawn to oppose the increasing pacifism of the Labour Left for Suez had been accompanied by the Hungarian invasion to crush the Communist uprising. The Angry Young Men were loud in their assertion that the retreat of the empire should not give advantage to Russia nor weaken the resolve to oppose totalitarianism.

The Suez experience taught the British that they were no longer a super power. Her place had been taken by America and Russia. However, this was not the opinion of British politicians who felt that by forging a 'special relationship' with America (which would survive the strain of Suez) they could still play a major role in world affairs. This was a belief that even the Angry Young Men shared and they moved sharply to the Right after the Hungarian invasion. Their commitment to America was, however, not ideological but political. Unlike British painters who from the mid '50s started emulating American pop art. British writers still remained sceptical of American literary innovation.

The position was reversed in the '60s when British writers readily adopted American literary forms while remaining hostile to American power and the American way of life. What the Angry Young Men found in the American alliance was a ready and credible means of defence for their country to decline against the threat of communism both of the Russian and Chinese variety.

Meanwhile America became involved in a number of 'interventions' in Asia and Latin America—in Korea (early '50s), Cuba (the abortive Bay of Pig invasion following Castro's communist revolution in 1958), Central and South America (where neo-fascist regimes in Argentina, El Salvador and Haiti were given full support) and Cambodia and Vietnam (where the Americans suffered the most costly and jiumiliating defeat). The logic behind these interventions was the 'domino theory'. According to

this theory Russian and Chinese communism was moving towards world domination. The West could not afford to let even one more country fall under communist influence for that would spell disaster for capitalist world markets as well as American industries that relied on these countries for production of cheap raw materials. The countries of South East Asia were likened to a set of dominoes standing each on end, which would successively collapse once the line began to fall.

Throughout the 50s and 60s the superpowers 'tangled' with each other, directly or indirectly though holding back from open aggression on their homegrounds. What held each of them in check was the constant threat of a nuclear holocaust. The image of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lingered in people's memories as the inevitable outcome of a Third World War. The imagery and the vocabulary of nuclear warfare entered the popular consciousness—the finger on the button, or the 4 minute warning—while political and military leaders in America and Russia strained to keep the Cold War cold. Nationalism, chauvinism and jingoism were the catch words of the period, and the spirit of national aggressiveness and antagonism in the West received incitement by a constant stream of stories of spy scandals, of the build-up of nuclear arms in the communist countries, and refugee fleeing from the grey repression of eastern Europe at terrible personal risk.

The decline of Britain's influence in world affairs was further evident in Britain's silence in '62 when Kennedy issued an ultimatum to First Secretary Krushchev to withdraw Soviet missiles from Cuba. When Prime Minister Harold Wilson offered to act as mediator and peacemaker between America and Vietnam as the war escalated he was greeted by an 'embarrassed' silence from both nations. When the USSR again asserted its control over Eastern Europe this time in Czechoslovakia in '68 the British response was as ineffectual as it had been twelve years earlier in Hungary. The locus of power had obviously shifted from Britain to America Britain's aspirations had to be confined to the preservation of an independent nuclear force which was neither independent (since it was bought from America) nor affordable (given the decline in economy) and an unshakeable belief in the existence of a special relationship with America.

However, the most immediate outcome of Suez was the emergence in Britain of the campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In November, 1957, J.B. Priestley, in an article in the *New Statesman* called 'Britain and the Nuclear Bombs', suggested that Britain should now recognise her changed-status and take the opportunity to act courageously and creatively by abandoning the arms race. Although the campaign for Nuclear Disarmament found support from all classes, its main political direction was

given by left-wing members of the Labour Party. Many of the left felt that British political, economic and intellectual life had been transformed by wartime participation in the development of the atomic bomb and by the decision taken in secret by the first post-war Labour Government to establish an independent nuclear force. 1964 represented a watershed. This was the year in which the Labour Party returned to power. As in '45 so in '64 there was a popular urge for change and a revolt against complacency. Gradually academic, journalistic and dramatic work began to reflect the view that the old problems of the inter-war years had not been overcome after all: TV programmes such as *Cathy Came Home* alerted the national consciousness to the continuing housing problem. Fabian socialists carried out research that showed millions still below the poverty line and that society was still divided between the rich and the poor years before the war. The problems were sought to be resolved through the reforms the post-war Labour Government had introduced.

The election campaign in '64 showed a contrast between the 50s and 60s. Harold Wilson campaigning on the slogan of 13 wasted years under the Conservatives' seemed the very symbol of youth, energy and optimism, while the incumbent Conservative PM, Alec Douglas Home seemed, decadent by comparison. The Conservative government was also at this time trying to live down the Profumo scandal, involving a Conservative minister's sexual indiscretions.

Socialism had been replaced by corporatism and the odds were piled against Home. The Labour Party came in with a majority of four. Eighteen months later Wilson won a landslide victory and remained in office till 1970.

Britain's economic decline and weakened position in international politics spurred the new government to make a series of attempts in the 60s to join the six-member European Economic Community. The EEC at that time comprised the richest nations of Western Europe containing, therefore, a vast market for British goods that might regenerate British industry. Europe of course, was always considered an ideal of international co-operation in which material self-interest would gradually be eclipsed. It also represented a power bloc that could potentially come to rival USA and USSR. If Britain was to regain a voice in the modern world it could only be as a member of a united European 'supernation'. Those who still shared Orwell's hope for a socialist Europe were particularly enthusiastic.

As it happened the first two applications to join the EEC were rejected by the French President de Gaulle's veto and throughout the 60s there remained considerable opposition to membership from within Britain as well, particularly from the nationalists who argued that the EEC consisted of Britain's old enemies and rivals while their

friends were North America and the White Commonwealth. This argument was somewhat undermined by the fact that the US Government itself was keen to see Britain as a member of the EEC in order to strengthen Europe in opposition to the communist bloc in the east. In spite of the spread of foreign language teaching in schools and the growing popularity of continental package holidays there was, according to most critics in Britain in the 60s, a strong sense of separation from the continent kept alive by newspapers like *The Daily Express*.

On the other end of the political spectrum were the internationalist Left who also opposed Britain's membership of the EEC but for different reasons. For them the Common Market represented a rich countries coterie for furthering their self-interest without any concern for the Third World which they exploited for their own ends. They felt that this group was devoid of genuine internationalism. Such views were widely shared by the population as a whole although they found a voice only among trade unionists, the Labour Left and the *New Left Review*.

### **The Sixties**

The 60s - the swinging '60s' - as the decade was called is one that is characterised by 'youthful rebellion and rapid social change'. It was a time of optimism when the future seemed brighter than it had been in the last two decades. The complacency, the double standards and the hypocrisy of the older generation were challenged and the young set their own standards and attitudes symbolised by the way they wore their hair and clothes, the music they listened to and the films they popularised.

As working class youth in England became caught up in what was called the Mod phenomenon their middle class counterparts in America started in San Francisco 'the hippie movement' preaching peace, denouncing the war in Vietnam and defying in their life-styles the codes of conduct laid down by family, school and the greater authority of the state. This was accompanied by an interest in the mystical 'cast' and, at least in America, took on the armed might of the state with flowers.

In many ways the 60s with its spirit of rebellion, its search for self-expression and liberation which led to experiments with new forms and subjects seeking to represent the truth resembled the early 19th century.

The problem with British economy did, however remain. In the early years of the Wilson government Britain's economic policy had been governed by a concern for the foreign exchange rate of the pound sterling, and the question of the balance of payments. In retrospect it appeared that the British pound had been overvalued given

the declining relative productive capacity of the British economy. Bouts in the world's money markets necessitated the repeated intervention by the Bank of England in an attempt to prop up its value.

For about two years Britain struggled to maintain the value of the sterling by aiding institutions that held the currency. However, this effort crippled British industry as British products became overpriced in foreign markets. In 1967 the pound was devalued but not early enough to revitalise the industry which was in any case weakened by perpetual problems of under-investment and obsolete labour relations. In comparison West Germany and Japan were far ahead.

The government finding itself unable to control fiscal policy turned against organised labour. Wage raises had already been regulated by the Prices and Incomes Board. This was followed by a strategy for regulating trade-union activities in the form of a White Paper. *In place of Strife* (68). The aim of the proposed legislation was to outlaw unofficial strikes to shift the balance of power in the unions from the influential shop stewards back to national leadership. This strategy agreed completely with the government's centralised corporatist philosophy. The economy was to be managed by the tripartite collaboration of big capital, organised labour and the state.

The proposals in *In Place of Strife* were never realized because of the hostile reaction within the unions themselves who saw government intrusion as being unwarranted and illegitimate.

This clearly demonstrated the Labour government's complete alienation from its working class base. Ironically, many of the proposals were later revived by the Conservative administration of Edward Heath in the equally unacceptable Industrial Relations Act of 1971. Disenchantment with the Labour Party was prevalent even among the Left with each successive failure since 1964.

In '68 students and workers in Paris rioted and nearly toppled the French government. The anti-Vietnam-war movement came to a head in America with street battles fought between police and demonstrators in Chicago, and in England radicals generally lost faith in parliamentary socialism. A variety of left 'fringe' parties came-into being - IMG, SWL, RWP, RSL and many more. Student leaders like Tariq Ali argued that revolution was impossible without arms and urged for an insurrection with students in the vanguard of the struggle. A number of occupations and demonstrations on issues at home and abroad put an abrupt end to the era of flower power.

The optimism that heralded the 60s soon disappeared. Conservative politicians began to use racial issues in their bid to establish supremacy and their bid to establish supremacy and neo-fascist groups immediately started organising through white

supremacist groups such as the National Front.

In Ireland the Civil Rights campaign among Catholics in Derry and Belfast developed into riots and civil unrest reminiscent of the situation fifty years ago. In '68 James Callaghan, Home Secretary sent British troops to Ulster as a 'temporary measure' to help the Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary to 'keep the peace'. This incited fresh bouts of terrorist activity among both republican and loyalist groups, and troops remained there.

At the end of the decade the Labour Government's programme had been totally discredited. When Harold Wilson left office in June 1970 his administration could boast that it had finally got the balance of payments into surplus, although this did not at all change the situation. Centralised corporate planning had failed. The technological revolution had not materialised, the housing and comprehensive schools for working class children were both obviously not aimed at protecting the interests of the working class, the fiscal and social policy had failed to reduce the division among the rich and poor.

### **The Seventies**

The '70s heralded the so called 'me' decade. It denied collectivism, centralism, corporatism, and statism. The slogan was 'small is beautiful'. Politically this move from hope to 'hard-nosed realism', from altruism to egoism is seen in the emergence of the 'Selsdon man'—a new breed of political animal heralded by a Conservative working party at the Selsdon Park Hotel, Croydon in 1970. The new Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath, was one of the type. Later, Margaret Thatcher was to prove an even more ruthless example. Heath appealed not to the electorate's principles but to its pockets; committing his government into rolling back the state, controlling the unions, reprivatizing the mixed economy, cutting welfare and abandoning Keynesian policies aimed at maintaining low levels of unemployment.

*Thatcher* determined to end socialism in Britain. Her most 'dramatic' acts consisted of a continuing series of statutes to denationalize nearly every industry that Labour had taken under government control in the previous 40 years as well as some industries, such as telecommunications, that had been in state hands for a century or more. But her most important achievement, helped by high unemployment in the old heavy industries, was in winning the contest for power with the trade unions. Instead of attempting to put all legislation in one massive bill, as Heath had done, **Thatcher** proceeded step by step, making secondary strikes and boycotts illegal, providing for

finances, as well as allocation of union funds, for the violation of law, and taking measures for ending the closed shop. Finally, in 1984, she won a year-long struggle with the coal miners, which had been accompanied by continuing violence. Here **Thatcher** was helped by a revival of world prosperity and lessening inflation, by the profits from industries sold to investors, and by the enormous sums realized from the sale abroad of North Sea oil. She achieved popularity by sending the armed forces to expel an Argentine force from the Falkland Islands in the spring of 1982. A note on this is added at the end of this chapter. On the strength of this she won a triumphant reelection on June 9, 1983. **Thatcher** was, however, unable to end the strife in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, she succeeded in 1987 in winning an unprecedented third general election, and in January 1988 Thatcher surpassed Asquith as the longest continually serving prime minister since Lord Liverpool in the 19th century.

**Thatcher's** premiership, however, did not survive her third term. She alienated even fellow Conservatives with her insistence on replacing local property taxes with a uniform poll tax and with her unwillingness fully to integrate Britain's money into a common European currency. By the end of 1989 voter discontent was evident at by-elections, and in November 1990 **Thatcher** faced serious opposition for the first time in the Conservative party's annual vote for selection of a leader. When she did not receive the required majority plus 15 percent, she withdrew, and **John Major**, the chancellor of the Exchequer since October 1989, was chosen on November 27. **Thatcher** resigned as prime minister the following day and was replaced by **Major**. Amid the longest recession since the 1930s, the Conservatives won general elections in April 1992 to return for a fourth term, although with a diminished majority in Parliament. As the recession lingered, however, **Major's** and the Conservatives' popularity continued to diminish, though the party remained in power for another five years. In general elections in May 1997, the Labour Party won a landslide victory, and Anthony Blair became prime minister.

On May 1, 1997, Tony Blair led Britain's Labour Party to its biggest-ever election victory. The following day he became the UK's youngest prime minister since William Pitt the Younger at the end of the 18th century. Blair was just 43. Anthony Charles Lynton Blair was born in Edinburgh on May 6, 1953. After graduating from the University of Oxford in 1975, he became a barrister. He was elected to the House of Commons for the safe Labour constituency of Sedgefield, in the county of Durham, in the general election of 1983, when Labour sustained its heaviest defeat since 1935. Blair belonged to a generation of young, open-minded Labour MPs who wanted the party to abandon its traditional devotion to state socialism. Pro-European unity and

pro-NATO, he was one of the keenest supporters of Neil Kinnock, who, as party leader from 1983 to 1992, sought to modernize Labour. Blair was elected to the shadow cabinet by his fellow Labour MPs in 1988, when he was just 35. In 1992, after Labour's fourth successive election defeat, Kinnock resigned and John Smith became party leader. As shadow home secretary, Blair sought to jettison Labour's image of being "soft" on criminals. He employed the phrase "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" to summarize Labour's policies and attacked the Conservatives for their failure to tackle the underlying social causes of rising crime. While bolstering his public image, Blair sought to speed up the process of party modernisation and was frustrated at what he felt was Smith's unwillingness to bring the party's constitution and economic and industrial policies up-to-date. In May 1994 Smith died suddenly of a heart attack. There was little doubt who would win the contest to succeed him, and on July 21 Blair became party leader. About two months later he told Labour's annual conference that he wished to rewrite the party's constitution and abandon its commitment to "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange." At a special conference in April 1995, he secured agreement to a new set of party objectives that explicitly acknowledged the virtues of market competition. Blair also sought to woo the middle classes by promising not to increase the standard rate or higher rates of the income tax. Within the Labour Party he acted to make it a more effective election-fighting force. He borrowed a number of techniques developed in U.S. Pres. Bill Clinton's 1992 and 1996 election campaigns; for example, he established a "rapid rebuttal" unit, employing the most up-to-date information technology, to respond swiftly to statements made by Labour's rivals. Blair summed up his reforms by describing his party not as Labour but as New Labour. On the morning of May 2, following his landslide election victory, Blair said, "We were elected as New Labour; we will govern as New Labour." Fears that the party might break its pre-election promises, especially on taxation, were quickly quelled. Labour, and Blair personally, entered an extended honeymoon period with an electorate mostly delighted to see the end of the Conservative regime. Blair's opinion-poll ratings during the second half of 1997 were the highest for any prime minister since Winston Churchill, though late in the year his support was somewhat eroded by cuts in welfare benefits and reports of a tax haven for wealthy government ministers.

### Select Reading List

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2. Cook Christian, Stevenson John, ed. : *Longman Companion to Britain since 1945* : England 2000.
3. Holmes Geoffrey, ed. : *Eclipse of a Great Power : Modern Britain • 1870-1992* Robbins Keith. Longman, N.Y. 1994.
4. Sinfield Alan : *Literature, Politics and Culture in Modern Britain*. Basil Blackwell Ltd.U.K. 1989.
5. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* - 2001.

**Extracts from :**

**CHANGE : A MODERN BRITAIN IN A MODERN EUROPE THE RT  
HONOURABLE TONY BLAIR MP  
THE REDDERZAAL, THE HAGUE  
TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 1998**

When I came to make a speech on social policy—almost exactly a year ago—in the Rijksmuseum with Rembrandt's great painting of the Night Watch as backdrop, I was Leader of the Opposition.

Today I find myself in the magnificent Riddezaal at the heart of Dutch democracy, this time as Prime Minister of the new Labour Government. I am delighted to have this opportunity of speaking in The Hague at the beginning of the UK Presidency.

Geography and History have made our two countries friends and allies, despite a few tittle naval misunderstandings in the 17th century. The Second World War brought us particularly close together. Our common trading interests and our common approach to global issues now make us natural parceners in almost every area. I am personally determined to turn this into a still closer partnership, working together in the European Union and NATO. I have had an excellent discussion earlier today with Wim Kok to this end.

Let me first state clearly the vision of the new British Government: it is to find a new say, a third way, between unbridled individualism and laissez-faire on the one hand; and old- style Government intervention—the corporatism of 1960s social democracy—on the other. To find the route to social justice in a modem age. Traditional goals; modern means. We know ever-high tax and spending by Government isn't on. We know Government running industry or state subsidies doesn't work. We know protectionism and isolation won't deliver lasting prosperity in a global economic age.

‘But we don’t want to live in a society without rules, without compassion, without justice, without any sense of obligation to our fellow citizens. I want the politics of Britain and of Europe to be based on solidarity, on the common good. But I know that the world has changed. We must change the way of achieving our goals for today.

And the change needs to be fundamental. Some paring here; some trimming there. Muddling along. That won’t do.

We need to reform the European social model, not play round with it. Make it work in the long term to achieve the values it stands for. That’s what we mean by New Labour. New in our means. But Labour is our aims.

First, we have tightened public finances sharply. Next year, we will have one of the lowest levels of deficit of any major world economy. Two years after we may eliminate it. But we have tightened the deficit without raising income taxes and whilst still getting more cash to poor pensioners and to the unemployed.

Second, we have started to squeeze the inflation we inherited back out of the system. But we did it by giving the Bank of England independence over the setting of interest rates. And we have continued that with far-reaching reforms of our financial system, to make it more open and secure.

Third, we have made a firm commitment to more investment in our education system, which we have put as the top priority of the new Government. There is a huge investment going in.

But, it is a deal: investment for reform. Schools are going to have to raise standards sharply. There is a strong emphasis on discipline, high quality in teachers, and schools are being encouraged to be more flexible and imaginative in the way they work. Education Authorities are there to help schools, not control them. Teachers’ unions do not set the agenda. We want partnership with those that work in our public services. But they are run for those that use them.

Fourth, we are embarking on reform of our welfare state. It is not simply the size of the budget. It is that it isn’t doing the things it was established to do. We have more workless households, more people dependent on benefit, more socially excluded. We are instituting a Welfare to Work programme, giving young and long-term unemployed people the chance to work or get a skill. But in return there is an obligation to take work. There is a new emphasis on services like childcare and less just on extra cash benefits. Student finance is being reformed. Universities will get more money for investment, students numbers will be increased, but students will be expected when they start to earn reasonable sums of money after leaving university,

to contribute back some of their fees. Our NHS is being reformed, with a new emphasis on better primary health care and more health prevention and less bureaucracy, in return, greater investment.

Fifth, there is an attack on crime, not just serious crime, but vandalism and juvenile offending. Parents are being held responsible for the actions of their children, in certain circumstances. Crime is the scourge of modern-day living. It often affects the poorest in our society. We are determined to bear down on it in all ways possible. But, again, in balance, we are working strongly on rehabilitating and helping offenders to regain responsible lives.

Sixth, there is a fundamental change to Britain's constitution under way, devolving and decentralising power to the nations and regions of the UK and re-vitalising local government. We are also reforming our system of voting in the European elections, incorporating directly the European Convention on Human Rights and introducing Freedom of Information legislation to open up the old-fashioned and secretive system of Government. And we are reforming the House of Lords.

Add to this the search for peace in Northern Ireland—difficult and fraught though it is—and you can see we have a full and ambitious programme.

Of course, it will take time to deliver. That is frustrating for us and for the electorate. But the work in progress is there. The course is clear. And we will get to our destination. I have no doubt of it.

However, nowhere has change been more important or decisive than in respect of Europe.

For the first time in many years there is a growing consensus in Britain in favour of constructive engagement with Europe.

It is a change of attitude that comes from results. Results at the Amsterdam summit including the protection of our border controls, ensuring that jobs are at the top of the EU's agenda through an Employer Chapter with free Trade, strengthening Treaty provisions on the environment, on consumer affairs, on subsidiarity, extending qualified majority voting where it made sense, but maintaining the veto in areas of essential national interest.

The issue of Europe is beginning to break down the old political barriers in Britain.

Politicians from all parties are slowly coming together in a patriotic alliance in favour of Britain's central place in Europe.

It is an alliance of people who believe that British values of creativity, tolerance, fairness and democracy can influence the shape and destination of Europe. It is an

alliance of people who believe that our future prosperity can be shaped by a successful Europe. It is an alliance of people who are hard headed about the future and hard headed about Europe's faults. People who are in favour of Europe, but in favour of a reformed Europe.

I come to this with my own perspective. I am not marked by personal experience of the scars of war. Or by painful memories of British post-war readjustment to a new world. Britain has been a member state for the entire period of my adult life. To me and most of my generation, Europe is simply the political, economic and commercial world in which I have naturally lived. When younger, I worked on the Continent, I have friends here, I want my children to grow up comfortable as both British and Europeans.

We live in a multilateral world where influence comes from working with others. We willingly pay the price of pooled sovereignty in defence, for the greater prize of collective security through NATO. We should be ready to pay a similar price in the European Union for the prizes of political security and stability, liberal and open markets, higher incomes and more jobs. Security used to come from self-reliance and defensive barriers. Today, it comes increasingly from openness and the removal of barriers.

The challenge which Europe faces today is above all how to bring European issues closer to the people. We must be able to show that everything that is done in the name of Europe is only done insofar as it meets those concerns and improves Europe's quality of life, while respecting and encouraging national regional and local diversities which are part of Europe's strength.

This is the over-riding priority of our Presidency—to help create a Europe working for the people to make them feel more prosperous, safe and free because of what the European Union is doing.

—Take the Environment as an example. There is a huge amount to do: follow-up to Kyoto; action on vehicle emissions, air and water quality; adoption of an EU strategy on biodiversity; and integrating environmental concerns fully into EU policies, for example in transport, fisheries and animal welfare. Few issues are of more concern to our people.

—Then again, take another Presidency priority. Crime and Drugs—building on a programme the Dutch Presidency developed. There is increasing public concern about organised crime, drugs and illegal immigration, and their international scale. We have a formidable set of objectives. Fighting organised crime is top of the list. One key

is getting Europe up and running. Member States which have not yet ratified the European Convention should get on with it. We must also do better on fraud and corruption. On drugs, we need to carry forward the EU's present comprehensive action plan and give it more teeth in the future. We will also be vigorous in our programme against the cancer of racism and xenophobia.

—On External Policy, the EU must be both effective and seen to be effective internationally. Political will, not hot air. We need to project our values on the world stage, to be open, outward-looking, supportive of free trade, human rights and democracy, and playing a major role in the great international issues of the day. We must equip Europe with better machinery. This means the right candidate to be the EU's voice on common foreign and security policy issues, and the right back-up. It also means enabling Europe to act in a sensible and co-ordinated way both politically and economically. I will not abandon Britain's freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre where this is essential, any more than Wim would abandon his. But arcane disputes must no longer stand in the way of effective action.

Of course the two great challenges Europe faces are how we enlarge Europe to take in the aspirant countries wanting to join the Union, and how we build an economically competitive and prosperous Europe for the future. In both areas the British Presidency will, I hope, have much to offer.

A Europe of two halves—haves and have-nots—is both morally unacceptable and economically and politically dangerous. Britain has long championed the cause of EU membership for all these countries, including Turkey, as well as opening up EU markets to them before they join. We continue to do so.

Who would have thought even ten years ago that we would today be on the verge of reuniting Europe, with the cold war a rapidly fading, even faintly unbelievable memory? So let us keep in mind the historic importance of this transformation. The process must not be held hostage to internal wranglings. That would demean Europe.

Nonetheless, for enlargement to be successful there must be reform. The CAP must be modernised. Of course governments will have to go on spending money to keep people in rural areas, and preserve our rural environment. But the present system is a manifest absurdity, which discredits Europe and its institutions. It does not encourage competitive farming or serve our consumers well. It is time to grasp fully the nettle of reform.

Reform of the Structural and Cohesion Funds also cannot be ducked. We have to free resources for the inevitable needs of the much poorer new members. We cannot

afford to exceed the present spending limits. The results need to be fair and equitable for existing and new member states alike, durable through and after enlargement, and affordable.

However there can be no doubt that the most significant event of our Presidency is the launch of EMU. We want it to succeed, and we will work hard to make its launch successful, Britain has set out its own position clearly. We believe a single currency can make sense in a Single European market. There is no insuperable constitutional barrier to our joining. The test is whether the economic benefits of EMU are demonstrably clear and unambiguous. Barring unforeseen circumstances, we want Britain to be in a position to take a decision on whether to be part of a successful single currency early in the next parliament, should the economic conditions be met. All this is settled. It is a practical and constructive approach well in line with mainstream British opinion.

The creation of a single currency is not, however, in itself alone the route to prosperity. It brings to the fore more urgently than ever how Europe prepares itself for the new economic and social challenges it faces.

EMU can be a great help to trade and to business.

But the creation of EMU will present the European economy with a significant structural shock. Price differentials will become more transparent to consumers. Huge economies of scale in production will become realisable.

Exchange rate flexibility will no longer be there. Labour mobility and fiscal transfers are not realistically available as in, say, the USA, to compensate different parts of the EU whose economies may move in different directions or economic cycles. There will be a very high premium on genuine and sustainable convergence and on the adaptability of our industry and the employability of our workforce.

Europe has to find its own way—a new Third Way—of combining economic dynamism with social justice in the modern world. This Third Way is more than the free market plus decent public services—laissez-faire economics with a warm heart. It is about active government working with the grain of the market to ensure a highly adaptable workforce, good education, high levels of technology, decent infrastructure and the right conditions for high investment and sustainable non-inflationary growth. It is about securing the flexibility that the market offers with the “pluses” that only an active government can add.

The New Labour Government is committed to the Social Chapter and a minimum wage. But, subject to basic minimum standards of fairness being in place, the best

way for Governments to provide job security is through education and an employment service that helps people to new jobs and re-training throughout their working lives.

Even in the sensitive area of labour market reform, Europe has made some limited progress. Spain, Italy and Sweden have eased their employment protection legislation to encourage temporary work. France, Italy and Spain have introduced tax incentives for part time work and together with Austria and Greece have eased legal restrictions on it. Finland France, Greece, Italy and Spain have relaxed restrictions on working hours. The aim is not to undercut social protection, but to make a modern labour market work better. High levels of unemployment are not social protection.

Reform of labour market regulation is primarily a matter for Member States. But at Luxembourg there was a breakthrough in agreeing that Europe-wide regulation would be subject to new tests of its impact on jobs. We shall pursue the implementation of this criterion during our Presidency.

And we must ensure that the next generation of EU Education, Training and Youth programmes and the European Social Fund after 2000 focus on lifelong learning, social inclusion and employability.

Fourth, that the priority in social expenditure to tackle unemployment should be for active labour market policies that offer opportunities matched by obligations to the youth and long-term unemployed, not for welfare systems that lock people in idleness and dependency.

Fifth, that the best long term policy for new job creation is to get the conditions right in order to enable small and medium enterprise to flourish, not rely on unfocused expansion of the public sector which has led to high taxes and high deficits.

We need the right climate for the growth of small high-tech businesses which can create the jobs of the future. During the Presidency we will be putting forward ideas for improving access to venture capital. At the same time we must improve the quality of European legislation and simplify the burdens on small business that it can impose—to help, not hinder, competitiveness. We will also take forward the suggestion made by Wim Kok of work to deal with the problem of the so-called Millennium Bug, the technology challenges of the year 2000.

Sixth, welfare systems need reform to curb spiralling costs and make work the most attractive option, as well as tackle more effectively the root causes of poverty and thereby sustain the social cohesion that is a necessary underpinning of economic success.

Many EU countries, including the Netherlands, have recognised the need for radical welfare reform which in your case has involved big changes. Many European

governments France, Austria, Greece, Germany, Italy—accept that the cost of unreformed pensions, for example, is unsustainable and have taken the first steps necessary to address these deepseated problems.

Seventh, that we need the right balance of investment plus concern for the protection of the environment to govern our policies for growth. High quality infrastructure, better public transport cleaner air, investment in the environmentally friendly new industries. All these have a part to play in securing the twin goals of higher living standards and social justice.

These are the seven principles of the new European consensus we are step by step edging towards—the shared understanding that will be the foundation of a reformed European social model of which Britain can not only be part, but take a lead in helping to create.

Margaret Thatcher and the Rebirth of  
Conservatism  
On Principle, vln2 Summer 1993  
by: Stephen Davies

Most politicians enjoy a brief moment in the public eye and then are gone, so soon forgotten that within ten years few can remember what they did or what they stood for. Some however make such a deep impression, for good or ill, that they will remain alive in the popular memory long after their career is over, even after their death. Margaret Thatcher is one of these.

By any standard Margaret Thatcher is an extraordinary politician. During her period as Prime Minister she had a profound and permanent impact on British politics. She changed the rules of political debate, transformed her own party, and altered and amended aspects of British life which had seemed fixed and permanent. Love her or hate her, no one could be indifferent to her. No one could mistake what she believed in and what she stood for. A “conviction politician,” she had the rare distinction of having an ideology named after her—Thatcherism.

Today it is easy to forget how extraordinary her career and achievements have been. For a woman to become the leader of the Conservative party and then Prime Minister was unthinkable before she did it. More important, she challenged, and changed the definition of what was politically feasible, not only in Britain, but around the world. Pundits could see no future for a leader who so sharply questioned the conventional wisdom. When she became a party leader, the Economist, later one of

her warmest admirers, declared that the Conservatives could be condemning themselves to years in the political wilderness. How differently things turned out! By confronting established institutions and set ideas of what was proper and possible, she was able both to bring about radical change and to change the terms of political debate. The power of trades unions, which had so dominated British political life before 1979, was sharply curtailed. The privatization of state owned industries, unthinkable before, became commonplace and has now been imitated all over the world. This all went with unprecedented political success. Elected in 1979 with the biggest switch in votes since 1945, she went on to win two further general elections by landslide margins. In fact she never lost an election. A radical in a conservative party, she was ejected by her own MPs when her radicalism and willingness to confront the accepted beliefs of the elite became too much for them.

Indeed, the very qualities which brought her success and then led to her fall mean that Margaret Thatcher is still a relevant and important figure. Her standing and her ability to present the views and beliefs of ordinary people as opposed to those of a detached elite mean that her words and arguments are still listened to. Over the Maastricht Treaty and the future of Europe—the issue that more than anything else led to her ejection from office—her critique of the project (obvious but never openly admitted) of the creation of a federal and enclosed European state, has articulated the fears of ordinary people, against the wishes of the elite and the leadership of both main parties who want to avoid a debate at almost any cost. Other qualities which give her a continued relevance are her interest in ideas, an unusual feature in a politician, and above all her capacity to get to the nub of an issue and face up to tough decisions. Nowhere was this clearer than over Bosnia where her dramatic and forceful interventions, in the form of an electrifying series of television interviews, highlighted the issues at stake and exposed the handwringing equivocation and moral cowardice of the official “line”. Would this have been put so forcefully or received such attention if it had not been Margaret Thatcher who was speaking?

When the history of the twentieth century is written Margaret Thatcher is sure to have a prominent place. In the collapse of communism and the creation of what the late Peter Jenkins has called the “post socialist era,” she has played a major part. However, right now she is still very much alive, still very active, and still fighting for her convictions and what she believes to be right.

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and is author of the forthcoming, *Private Goods, Public Benefit: The Voluntary Supply of "Public Goods."*

## **Immigration**

Between 1948 and 1970 nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  million people left their homes in the West Indies and came to Britain. Their arrival changed the face of modern Britain. They were all British citizens and although they had never lived in Britain before, they had the right to enter, work and settle here if they wanted to.

West Indians came to Britain for many different reasons. Some were seeking better opportunities for themselves and their children. Some came to work for a while, save money and return home. Some had been recruited because Britain was short of workers to run the transport system, postal service and hospitals. Other West Indians were returning soldiers who had fought for Britain during the Second World War (1939-1945).

### **Bound for Britain**

Not all white Britons welcomed the black Britons. Many found that the colour of their skins provoked unfriendly reactions. For example, despite the desperate shortage of labour some West Indians still found it difficult to get good jobs. Often they were forced to accept jobs which they were over qualified for, or they were paid less than their white colleagues.

West Indians also experienced difficulties in finding suitable places to live. Since few had much money, they had to find cheap housing to rent near to their workplace. This was often in the poor inner-cities. Even if they did have enough money to rent better quality housing. West Indians had to face the fact that some landlords refused to rent to black people. They would be confronted with insulting signs in house windows that said 'Rooms to Let: No dogs, no coloureds'. This meant that West Indians had little choice but to rent homes in a slum.

In 1958, in areas where bigger numbers of West Indians lived, there were outbreaks of violence against them. In particular, in Nottingham and London mobs of white people attacked black people in the streets, smashing and burning their homes.

West Indians had been invited to come to Britain, so they also felt that it was their home too. To be discriminated against was a shock which they had not been prepared

for. Some returned to the West Indies, but many remained—despite the difficulties they faced. They have worked hard and made a contribution to British life.’

### **South Asian Immigrants.**

In Britain : Revolution in the high street

**FRIDAY AUGUST 1 1997**

Khozem Merchant says immigrants of Indian origin are at the heart of the UK’s enterprise economy.

Mr. Patel would barely have given the idea credence when he first settled in Britain. His family’s eight shops, side by side on a previously vandalised London street, would, within a decade, earn applause from fashionable business school gurus.

The row of terraced shops would be feted as a model family business, benefiting from ‘economies of scale’, the gurus would say. It was simply good business, said the baffled Patels, a way of earning a living that put a roof over their heads.

In any event, being hailed as exemplary was recognition. It is 25 years since the Patels and some 20,000 Ugandan Asians, mostly Gujaratis originally from north-west India, landed on Britain’s shores, expelled by the regime of Idi Amin.

Together with thousands more immigrants from the sub-continent running newsagents, food stores and restaurants up and down the land. Asians have redefined retailing in the UK.

And, on the way, they have emerged as the country’s most successful ethnic minority with a record of extraordinary achievement in business. “The new Jews”, was how they were controversially described after the publication of a report last year on the 1991 census entitled The Ethnic Minority Populations of Great Britain.

Today, Asian immigrants drawn from the sub-continent and east Africa form the largest single minority group in the UK, 840,000 or 1.5 per cent of the total population. Of course, the road to recognition has not been easy. Initially, Asian businesses were the target of disdainful caricature. Today, they are courted by Britain’s governing classes, but attract the occasional brickbat as well as bouquets.

Politicians have aligned themselves with immigrants whose family values, thrift and entrepreneurship have exemplified, and ultimately outlived, the Thatcherite principles fuelling 18 years of Conservative government

This courtship reached an apex last May with a shopkeeper’s passage to

Westminster. Mr. Mohammed Sarwar, an immigrant from Pakistan with a fortune built from his cash-and-carry business, was elected to parliament after winning a safe Labour seat in Scotland. The Labour party has since taken steps to discipline Mr. Sarwar following allegations—which he denies that he bribed another Asian candidate to scale down his campaign.

Earlier, Lords Paul and Bagri, both Indian immigrants, were nominated to the upper house after distinguished business careers in Britain.

Banks and the financial institutions, however, have been distrustful of the supremacy of the family in Asian management and apparent Asian financial opacity. Suspicion reached a peak with the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International in June 1991, an institution managed by, and almost wholly geared towards, Asians. Its collapse under the weight of corrupt practices was a defining moment for Britain's Asian community.

But any Asian audit would end up handsomely in credit. Britain's Asians have outgrown their retail roots. The diversity and depth of their commercial activity was reflected in a recent survey of Britain's top 100 Asian businesses by Eastern Eye newspaper, which estimated their aggregate wealth at Pounds 5bn—more than the gross domestic product of Uganda.

The survey revealed a second and third generation making its mark in new businesses such as the production of television programmes, manufacturing industry and computers. A decade back these were no-go areas, ruled out because of poor access to funding and higher education. Remarkably, the survey found that a 21-year-old retail millionaire, Mr. Reuben Singh, squeezes the management of his growing retail empire between lectures at Manchester university, where he is studying for a business degree.

For more than two decades, the British Asian success remained a UK domestic phenomenon. But it took on a sharp international focus after 1991, as India, the 'homeland', liberalised its economy.

As with the Chinese diaspora, patriotic capitalism became a rallying cry.

Although this has yet to lead to a flood of investment by British Asians in the subcontinent, many are trying to diversify from mature UK markets.

Typical is Lomamead, a London cosmetics company, which is ambitiously surveying the Indian market.

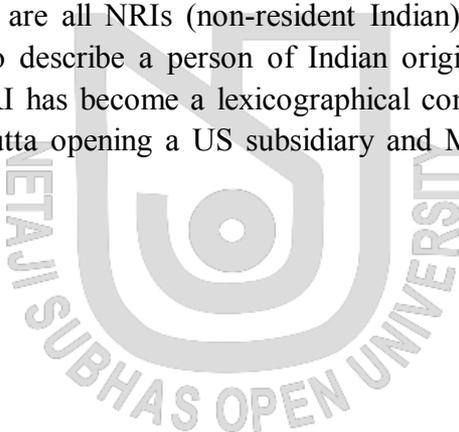
At the same time, economic liberalisation in India has allowed businesses from

that country to explore overseas markets. Many have turned to London in order to gain access to international capital markets.

The British capital is now home to dynamic companies from Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, and Indian businesses that are already global in operation and ambition. London is a strategic tax-induced base for this small band, which includes Ispat, the massive steel group owned by the Mittal family, the Hinduja trading and finance group and the Madhvani trading empire.

These companies dwarf the interests of their British brethren, such as the textile magnate Mr. Tom Singh, the industrialist Mr. Nat Puri and the rice importer Mr. Rashmi Thakrar, who run businesses that are largely UK focused.

Whether they have established their businesses at home or abroad, however, Indian entrepreneurs in Britain are all NRIs (non-resident Indian), a term invented by the Indian tax authorities to describe a person of Indian origin living overseas. In the global economy, the NRI has become a lexicographical convenience to embrace the textile magnate in Calcutta opening a US subsidiary and Mr. Patel in east London.



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## **Unit - 3    Modernism and Literature in English**

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### **Structure**

- 3.0 Objective**
- 3.1 Study Guide**
- 3.2 Modernism and Literature in English**
- 3.3 Poetry in the Twentieth Century**
  - 3.3.1 Imagism**
  - 3.3.2 Symbolism**
- 3.4 Poetry : Some major schools**
  - 3.4.1 The Georgian Poetry**
  - 3.4.2 W. B. Yeats**
  - 3.4.3 Poetry of the First World War**
  - 3.4.4 Poetry of the 1930's**
- 3.5 Summary**
- 3.6 Questions**
- 3.7 The Novel**
- 3.8 Summary**
- 3.9 Questions**
- 3.10 Drama**
  - 3.10.1 Irish Dramatic Movement**
- 3.11 Summary**
- 3.12 Questions**
- 3.13 Criticism**
- 3.14 Summary**
- 3.15 Questions**
- 3.16 Suggested Readings**

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### 3.0 Objective :

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In this section, the writer attempts to throw some light on the background of modern literature in all its areas—poetry, novel, drama and criticism, so that the students of this Open University can feel the pulse of the beginning and development of the twentieth century literature and take an interest in the writers and their works.

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### 3.1 Study Guide :

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This unit is divided into separate sections dealing with poetry, novel, drama and criticism. Each section is followed by a set of questions. You are advised to answer all questions. The list of suggested readings will give you a far detailed knowledge of the modern period. Read some, if not all, books suggested. This should enable you to answer questions on modern literature better.

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### 3.2 Modernism and literature in English

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“Modernism” (or ‘the modern movement’) [is] a comprehensive term, for an international tendency arising in the poetry, fiction, drama, music, painting, architecture and other arts of the West in the last years of the 19th century and subsequently affecting the character of most 20th century art.” **Fantana Dictionary of Modern Thought**, cited by Douglas Hewit in **English Fiction of the Early Modern Period**, Longman : 1988).

Modernism in literature is usually said to have been started in the early decade of the 20th century; Virginia Woolf, in her essay ‘Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown’ (1923), claimed that on or before 1910 human character changed. Her attempt to establish a relation between artistic novelty and social changes had revealed the socio-political implications of that date and the changes that were giving shape to the modern world, if not to human nature, anguish of the inter-war years in a language that is down to earth.

Some critics think that the year 1910 is the year which marked the beginning of a new movement in art. It was signalled by Roger Fry’s exhibition of Post-Impressionist art in London. Other important achievements in other spheres also took place during this decade. Max Planck set form the Quantum Theory in Physics fundamental to the growth of Nuclear Physics. This decade also saw the publication and popularisation of Freud’s Intrepretation of Dreams. With the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the

Victorian age was literally over and a new stirring of life and spirit developed freely in all spheres: New Realism in novel, New Drama, New enthusiasm in Social reform started everywhere. Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen's Plays made a huge impact in creating an anti-Romantic Cult spearheaded by Bernard Shaw, Karl Marx's multi-volume *Das Capital* was translated into English in the year 1887-1900 which led to the growth of socialist movement in England. Industrialisation continued throughout the 19th Century resulting in rapid urbanisation. The agricultural labourers uprooted from land began to migrate from their rural habitats to industrial towns constituting the new labouring class in the cities. In the new competitive world human beings began to be regimented. The loss of religious conviction and the loss of organic rural communities created a sense of crisis, an intense alienation set in the minds of all sections of the people. Discontent displaced the complacency of the Victorian age. This general change in human psychology had a definite impact on the literary climate of the early decade of the twentieth Century.

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### **3.3 Poetry in the Twentieth Century**

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In the first decade of the twentieth century, several trends and movements appeared in poetry which changed the course of English verse. In literature, two important movements - Imagism and symbolism created an intense awareness about language and the need for new approaches. Modern Poetry was shaped by the divergent qualities of these movements.

#### **3.3.1 Imagism**

This poetic movement was started by T. E. Hulme (1883-1917) and the American poet. Ezra Pound (1885-1972). It favoured the use of precise, concrete words and direct presentation of things as opposed to the imprecise, elaborate and outmoded language used in the romantic tradition by the Georgian poets. Economy of expression was their motto. The first anthology of Imagist poems called *Des Imagistes* appeared in 1914 and the last anthology edited by the American poet Amy Lowell (1874-1925) was published in Boston in 1917.

The imagists focussed on the need for revitalization of poetry through accuracy of presentation, creation of new forms and the use of free verse. These principles have characterized most of the twentieth century poetry. T. S. Eliot's hard precise images capturing the varied experience of the city-life illustrating the use of concentration, economy and visual effect in language, own a debt to the Imagist tradition.

### 3.3.2. Symbolism

Symbolism valued form over content, suggestion and indirectness rather than straight forwardness. This was influenced by the ideas and practice of the French poets, notably Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) and Stephane Mallarme (1842-1898). Symbolism had a profound influence on the twentieth century verse. The Symbolist poets believed that reality lay beneath the surface of things and could only be indirectly apprehended through symbols which are the key to artistic knowledge. **The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899)**, the influential book of Arthur Symons created an awareness of symbolism among the modern English Poets. T. S. Eliot expressed his indebtedness to this book and its influence is distinctly evident in the work of W. B. Yeats as well as in the novels of Conrad, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. In fact, the book was dedicated to W.B. Yeats, whom Symons called a Symbolist Poet.

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### 3.4. Poetry : Some major schools

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, there began some experiments in English poetry which looked for inspiration to French poetry. The figureheads of modern English poetry were W.B. Yeats and T S. Eliot while the poets of the First World War brought an awareness about the reality of war giving poetry a closer touch with a world of disruption.. Auden and others brought poetry to direct treatment of social issues.

#### 3.4.1. The Georgian Poetry

The word 'Georgian' was used as a banner to proclaim an escape from the Victorian age. Under the little *Georgian Poetry* Edward Marsh edited a series of volumes beginning-in 1912 to focus on the poems of those new poets who wrote about their personal concerns and feelings in a conversational language. *A.E. Houseman* (1859-1936) Edward Thomas (1878-1917), Robert Bridges (1887-1915) tried to bring about a fresh air in poetry making it closer to the actuality of life. But their poetry centring around love of nature, weak-erd amusement failed to meet the needs of the time which demanded a new poetic idism characterised by bareness and directness. The poetry of the First World War opened up new possibilities for a modem poetic idism that came with the advent of T.S. Eliot. However, a few eminent poets of this period showed great promise in a diluted Keatseon manner.

**Edward Thomas (1897-1917).** Edward Thomas was a soldier-poet who was killed on the Western Front in 1917; but he was not a war-poet in the sense Wilfred Owen and some of his contemporaries were. Unlike Owen, Edward Thomas joined the War as a mature man of thirtyseven. But he began to write poetry after the war started. He loved the countryside with an intense passion and wanted to capture in his poetry the rural life with all its tragedy and harshness. Nature provided him with a refuge from the oppresiveness of his wretched existence. He was deeply responsive to beauty and described nature with a visionary eye. His poems—such as ‘Tears’, ‘Rain’, ‘As the Team’s Head Bross’ show his feelings very often melancholy for the country sentiment, the values of the past and of humanity in general. He tried to break away from the Victorian poetic tradition by using conversational idioms and rhythms of everyday speech. Besides his sensitive observation of “some natural sorrow—loss or pain” have given him a respectable position among the poets of the Georgian tradition.

**Gerard Manly Hopkins (1844-1889)** was not a Georgian poet. He wrote during the later half of the Victorian period. But his poems were published in 1918 long after his death. He was a Jesuit priest and was unaffected by the Victorian tradition. He experimented in the use of new rhythm of syntactical syllabic variation. A known as “sprung rhythm” which had a considerable influence on T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas and Ted Hughes. His originality was acclaimed soon after the publication of his first edition of poems in 1918 twenty years after his death. His famous poems include “The Wreck of the Deutschland” “Pied Beauty”, ‘Felix Randal’, “The Wind-farm”, etc. His experimental use of language, his courageous departure from the conventional metrical norms, his emphasis on ‘inshape’ in visualizing experience of natural objects of landscape and his use of ‘sprung rhythm’<sup>1</sup> gave a new dimension to poetry. So he was valued as a modern poet. He brought a new energy of expression into English Poetry.

#### **3.4.2. W. B. Yeats (1865-1939)**

Yeats is considered to be an undisputed leader of the twentieth century English poetry through he was Anglo-Irish by birth. At the beginning of his career, he concentrated on Irish folk tales and legends to arouse national pride in Ireland. His earlier poetry was written in the late Romantic tradition of the Rhymers Club and the poetry of the 1890s’. His **Wanderings of Oisín** (1889) shows his love for the Irish countryside and its dream-like beauty. **The Wind Among the Reeds** (1899) is a collection of a new kind of love poems some of which show his longing and regret

over the unreciprocated love for Maud Gonne, the revolutionary Irish patriot who involved him in Irish politics. Lady Gregory, an aristocratic widow whose healing touch enabled him to overcome the rejection of Maud Gonne stimulated his interest in drama. He became the production Manager of the Abbey Theatre, the first Irish National Theatre established in Dublin in 1904. A remarkable achievement of Yeats was to involve Synge in this project.

Yeats had all along been interested in magic and the supernatural. As a member of the Rhymers' Club, he drew inspiration from the aesthetic philosophy of Walter Pater, but soon he overcame this impact and moved towards an active energetic school of thought. He was bored with his own mannerism and wanted to strengthen his poetry through adoption of colloquialism and connection with larger issues of life. He moved from lyrical lament to a poetry of powerful statement. From the group of poems published in *Responsibilities* (1914), Yeats has become the spokesman of his age and the General of the modern poets. Yeats' later poetry developed a powerful penetration into mysteries of life and art; he let his earlier descriptive and ornamental poetry in a poetry of nakedness and strength and statement. In some poems like *An Acre of Grass* he reflects on his old age and loss of vigour and creativity; but he is determined to renew his creation "Myself must I remake." 'Easter 1916' shows his disillusion about the Eastern rising. His later poems illustrate his effort of remaking his genius. Some of them are satiric in tone and elaborate his doctrine of the Mask and the anti-self. However, the poems in which he adopted the symbolist mode show an unusual richness and power that strengthened his position as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century.

### **3.4.3. Poetry of the First World War**

In the second decade of the twentieth century, English poetry was reshaped by a group of poets all of whom participated in the first World War-Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rozenbarg, Julian Grenfel, Wilfred Owen, Charles Sorley, Edmund Blunden and others. Historically, they belong to the same group of poets known as Georgians but their poetry takes off from the Georgian poetry which was basically escapist in nature, unconcerned with the problems of life. The poets of the first World War were committed to give the true picture of the War to those who stayed at home; they wanted to convey their experience of the cruelties of War-the merciless killing, purposeless heroism & false patriotism leading to hatred and enmity.

Robert Brooke (1887-1915), a dominant figure in Georgian poetry became very

popular for his patriotic Sonnets written at the outbreak of the War. The sequence of Sonnets—Peace, Safety, 'The Daed', 'The Soldier' convey a shallow patriotism blind to the suffering and horrors of war. Contrasted to the truthful anti-war messages given by Sassoon or Owen, Rupert Brook's poetry of glorification of War and soldiering soon appeared to be 'a living lie' put in an eloquent language and soon lost its popularity.

The poets known as the anti-war poets wanted to give their personal experience as evidence to bring home to the civilians the unimaginable horror and cruelty of the War from the point of view of a soldier not that of a War-Lord or a politician engaged in promoting war. Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) who inspired Owen to write about the war was repelled by its horror which he documented in poems like, 'Rear Guard', 'Suicide in the Trenches', 'They'. Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), an artist as well as a poet, gave the details of the sufferings & violence in trench—warfare in poems such as 'Dead Man's Dump', 'Break of Day in the Trenches'. He died in the war.

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), Unlike Sassoon, who wrote about the horrors of war, Owen's subject is 'the pity of war; the poetry is in the pity: Owen started writing poetry at a very early age and his first poems show Keatsian influence which appears to a certain extent in his later poems as well. While suffering from shell-shock in 1917, he met Sassoon in a hospital who was also undergoing treatment at the time. The older poet stimulated Owen to give an accurate picture of the War in his poetry. Owen believed that 'the true poets must be truthful'. His determination 'to warn' finds expression in 'Strange Meeting' where the dialogue between the two dead soldiers focusses on the wastage of life, the potentialities of the youths remaining unrealized and die irreparable loss of civilized values. Owen, like Shelly, believed in the prophetic task of a poet of warning the world; in the poem, 'Strange Meeting' the soldier-poet in spite of his newly gained insight and his determination to regenerate humanity could do nothing as he was granted a very short time of life.

This sense of futility, the utter wastage is the theme of his poem 'Futility'. His 'spring offensive', 'Anthem for Doomed youths', 'Insensibility' are very successful exposure of the evils of war but they are also impressive for their lyricism poetic power, and stylistic features.

Owen's technical originality is much greater than that of any of the poets of his time. His use of assonance for regular rhyme, known as para-rhyme or half-rhyme, is based on vowel sounds like escaped/scooped, grained/groined. His para rhyme creates an ominousness and sombreness necessary to capture the disintegration spirit

of war and shock since melodiousness of regular rhyme is inadequate for his poetry. His use of military phrases 'break ranks', 'traek from progress', ('strange meeting') or colloquialism feeling mushy', 'bloody lot', (The chances) bare statement in poems like 'Futuility' left an impact on the poetry of the thirties. The poetry of the First World War has its short-comings; sometimes it becomes propaganda rather than poetry. But its effort to document the harsh reality the movement, the violence and the action brought a new kind of poetry to the literary scene of England. It should be noted in this context that the realistic poetic idiom used by the war poets anticipated Eliot's use of imagism.

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) came to the literary scene of England with his small volume of poems—**Prufrock and other Observation**; (1917). The title poem 'Prufrock' is a dramatic monologue of a lonely middle-aged man of the same name. Passing through squalid streets of the city, Prufrock thinks of the women of high society he wants to be friend. There the "Women come and go/Talking of Michaelangelo". But he is too-cowardly to deny the people who have a different level of existence. He has explored a deeper level of truth but fails to deliver the message. The poem conveys his anguish and frustration of growing old without any fulfilment. This in a sense sums up the futility of life in the postwar Europe.

Eliot's wide-ranging scholarship in the European literary and philosophical background and in Indian tradition as well had given his poetry a cosmopolitan authority. His first volume of poems are 'observations' of urban society where angles of vision are tentative, evasive but graphic. The images drawn from the city life are those to which a metropolitan reader can respond easily. The colloquial language of these poems makes a distinctive break from the entire tradition of poetry. The influence of the French poetry particularly that of Laforgue and Baudelaire is prominent in these early poems. Baudelaire's imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis' is adapted by T. S. Eliot in 'Preludes'.

'**The Waste Land** - (1922) portrays different states of mind—memories, meditations, desires, consciousness and unconsciousness. Here Eliot has taken "the mythical method", allusive style and stream of consciousness technique used by James Joyce in Ulysses. The concise distinct images of loneliness and boredom used in his early poems 'a patient etherised upon the table' (Prufrock) or images of despair 'cunning passages' ('Gerontian') of of mechanization in modern urban life 'human engine waits like a taxi throbbing waiting (**The waste land**) focus on the need for revitalization of language in twentieth century poetry as well as in the artistic prose of the time. After his conversion into the Anglican Church in 1927, T.S. Eliot started

writing a different type of poetry. The poems of **Ash Wednesday** (1927-30) show a search for religious faith to overcome despair. *Marina* is a poem of spiritual rebirth, a new realisation.

#### 3.4.4. Poetry of the 1930s

During the 1930s, -there was a reaction against the so-called experimental modes of writing in poetry and novel. The Thirties were a decade of economic breakdown, political uncertainty and unemployment. Europe was drawn gradually to the verge of another war through the rule of Fascism in Italy & Germany. Both in poetry and in fiction, the inter-war years produced a literature committed to social issues. Naturally a voice of disapproval for the poetry of the school of Eliot and Pound detached from socio-political concerns could be heard in the poetry of W. H. Auden (1907-1973), Stephen Spender (1909-1977), Louis Macneice (1907-1963), C. Day Lewis (1904-1972) who met at Oxford as students. They began to write poetry on the topical issues—a poetry which would diagnose the disease of the time and prescribe its cure. The social and political concerns of their poetry, the journalistic urgency to focus on the current problems of social decay, were influenced mostly by Marxist thoughts. These writings might seem ephemeral from the stand point of eternal poetic themes but a break from the temper of the previous decade brought about a new revival, as they were less obscure and more concerned with subjects that interested all.

W. H. Auden was definitely the most gifted of this group. His first volume of poems published in 1930 conveyed a sense of impending disaster. His originality is evident in the striking phrases drawn from industrial life and clinical subjects, his imagery appealed to the new reader. **Look Stranger** (1936) and **Another Time** (1939) are two important collections of the thirties. The poems of these volumes illustrate his absorption of Owen as well as of Eliot, but they make a return to lyricism. His wide interest in modern psychology and a remarkable technical control of metre and form established a new direction. The most impressive of his poems is probably 'Spain' (1937) on the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) which is presented as a symbol of idealism for which talented youths of his time fought and died

Auden and the poets associated with him gave a new dimension to modern poetry. They made poetry a subject of enthusiasm and popular appeal which was lost in the twenties.

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### 3.5. Summary

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Modernism is an international phenomenon embracing all fields of twentieth century art which started at the end of the nineteenth century and reached its peak before and after the First World War. It marked a break with the tradition and affected all the branches of literature—poetry, novel, drama and criticism.

### 3.6. Questions

1. Give a brief account of the changes that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century—which led to new development in literature.
2. In what sense modern movement in literature is international in nature?
3. Give an account of the principles of Symbolism and Imagism.
4. What is new about the poetry of the First World War?
5. Write on one of the important war poets of this period.
6. Discuss the importance of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot with special reference to their works.

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### 3.7. The Novel

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The impact of modernism on the English novel was noticed quite early. It brought a radical change in both its form and content. The twentieth century English novelists, like the poets of their time, were greatly influenced by French models. The French Naturalism of the nineteenth century pioneered by Emile Zola stimulated the contemporary English novelists to write unsentimental narratives unlike the Victorian novels which were full of sentimentality and sensationalism. The Naturalist school of writers gave an exact reproduction of age and its people with all the objective details. Their characters included a wide range of people generally of the so-called lower class, the down-trodden. In England, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy pursued this documentary presentation of life to such an extent that both became Virginia Woolf's targets of attack in the former's essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1923). She criticizes them for taking a trivial approach to life and for accumulation of clumsy details. In fact, after 1910, the readers fed up with such documentation

were in search of something new. It is a strange irony, however, that the two stalwarts of the twentieth century novels—D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce also came under the influence of Naturalism: Joyce was greatly indebted to Gustave Flaubert, the french Naturist novelist.

The three novelists who were attacked by Virginia Woolt^H. G. Wells (1866-1946), Arnold Bennett (1867-1937) and John Galsworthy (1867-1933) showed a remarkable artistry in their novels. Wells primarily known for his scientific fantasies and social criticism wrote *Kipps* (1905) and **Tono Bungay** (1909). These novels were much admired by the readers. But his novels are traditioned in form past Anrold Bennelt was more concerned with documentation of facts than exploration of the intricacies of characters, **His The Old Wives Tales** (1908), inspite of its reproduction of reality remains state. John Galsworthy's chronicle novel **The Forsyte Saga** (1906-22) provide an ambitious study of a family and a society but fails to give alasting impression.

Our analysis of novelists regarded as modern should begin with the achievements of Henry James (1843-1916) who established himself as novel an influential critic of fiction. He helped in elevating the novel to an art form. A conscious artist, James focussed on the private self, on the single human consciousness in his novels. His **Portrait of a lady** (1881) gives the story of a beautiful American Girl in Europe through the consciousness of the central character Isabel. Similarly, **The Wings of the Dove** (1902), **The Ambassadors** (1903) and **The Golden Bowl** (1904) are three perfectly constructed works where all types of information are presented through the mind of one of the central characters. James was the first to introduce in fiction the concept of "point of view"—the shifting angles of vision unfolding a complex web of the mind. His works set the tone and style of the novels of the new century. His use of relativity of perspectives has a clear connection with the theory of relativity in physics 'Henry James' focus on his characters' consciousness has a definite bearing on James Joyce's stream of consciousness. Significantly, this phrase was used in psychology by his brother William James, the philosopher and psychologist.

The three novelists who caught the imagination of the readers at the turn of the century were Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence and E. M. Forster.

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)—A Pole by birth who spent a considerable part of his life as a sailor, experimented with narrative strategies which anticipated the techniques of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. In the preface to his short novel **The Niggard of the Narcissi** (1897) he emphasized that a novelist's art was in 'showing'—that is, in vividly presenting things;

In his first important work **Lord Jim** (1900) and in the shorter novel, **Heart of Darkness** (1898) this 'showing' method works through the voice of a narrator-framing the tale. The narrator functions as a Jamesian reflector through whose centre of consciousness the story is filtered. **Nostramo** (1904), regarded by many as Conrad's masterpiece, is a story of a third world country revolving round the silver stolen by the hero. The shifting of time and perspectives in the novel foreshadowed the stream of consciousness techniques.

D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) did not experiment with techniques and followed the forms of traditional novels. His early works show a clear influence of the Naturalist School. He is considered as a modern writer basically for the subject matter of his novels with a deep concern for sex so long a taboo in fiction.

His first novel **The White Peacock** was published in 1911; but what brought him to the limelight was his major novel **Sons and Lovers**. (1913). This autobiographical novel gives the story of Paul Morel a young man's attachment to his mother which stands in the way of his satisfactory relationship with two women—first with Miriam and then with Clara Lawrence's experience as a son of a miner is reflected in the working-class background of Paul. Paul's father a miner with his vitality and vigour is contrasted with his wife's cold intellectual and intimidating middle class norms. This is a psychological study—of human relationships. In fact in all his novels, Lawrence shows his concern for the healthy growth of relationship based on spontaneous or uninhibited experience of human passion.

**The Rainbow** (1915) became an object of attack for its open discussion of sex and marital problems. It is the story of three generations of the Brangwess family, the first sections of which throw a significant light on the agricultural depression and consequent rootlessness of the people at the turn of the century. Its strikingly modern theme is acclaimed by Ian Gregor in the final sentence of his book **The Great-Web: The Form Hardy's Major Fiction**' (London, February 1974) where **Jude** ends the **Rainbow** begins".

**Women in Love**, a sequel to **The Rainbow** was written in 1916 but it was published in 1920 and was less popular than **Sons and Lovers** or **The Rainbow** but for many a greater novel. His most shocking novel **Lady Chatterley's Lover** was published in 1929 but was proscribed by the customs for obscenity. An expurgated edition of the novel however, was published in 1932, two years after his death. It is the story of love between Lady Chatterley and her game-keeper Mellors whose vigorous passion is contrasted with the impotence of her husband Sir Clifford, a symbol of sterile aristocracy. Lawrence here asserts with boldness not only a theme of adultery but also

uses a language freed from social prudery. An unexpurgated edition of the book was published in 1963 when the bar on the book was removed.

E.M. Forster (1879-1970) is a witty writer of social comedy whose novels—**Where Angels Fear to Tread** (1905), **The Longest Journey** (1907), **A Room with a View** (1908), **Howard's End** (1910), and **A Passage to India** (1924). They deal with sociopolitical issues of his time which he tried to interpret in terms of personal relationship. A liberal humanist his novels were characteristic of the Edwardian age of his time. His critical appraisal of novel as an art form can be seen in **Aspects of the Novel** (1927), a critical work on novel and its art. His **Howards End** demonstrates a mode of narration from the shifting points of view of different characters, a mode much admired and followed by the later novelists.

James Joyce (1882-1921)—Joyce's first literary output **Dubliners**, a collection of short stories on the lives of people in Dublin came out in 1914. It was followed by **A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man** (1916) an autobiographical novel centring around a young artist. In this novel as in some of the stories of **Dubliners** Joyce had been developing the stream of consciousness technique used most successfully in his monumental work **Ulysses** (Published in Paris in 1922).

**In Dubliners Joyce** has given the sordid details of the lives of people in the crowded Dublin city with a scrupulous meaness'. The stories illustrate his indebtedness to Naturalism and Symbolism at the same time; one can trace mythical elements as well as a hint of his theory of Epiphany—'the supreme quality of beauty' perceived only by 'a spiritual eye'.

**A Portrait of the Artist**, drawn from Joyce's own life as an artist in the making, brings out the Hero's search for beauty, need for objectivity and impersonality in art. The contradictions and isolation of an artist were the ideas that moved Joyce in shaping of his art. The story centres round the growth of the hero from childhood to maturity. **Ulysses**, his masterpiece shows the simultaneous influence of Symbolism and Realism and a direct impact of the Psychoanalytic ideas much talked about in the early twentieth century. The structure of the novel is modelled on the Homeric epic **Odyssey** in the mode of a parody; the three characters Leopold Bloom, his wife Molly and Stephen Dedalus, a maturer version of Stephen of **A Portrait of the Artist** are the mock heroic counterparts of Ulysses, Penelope and Telemachus of Homer's epic. The stream of consciousness technique has given to the novel a cob-web like frame-work capturing the hidden irrational thoughts in a continuous flow not restricted by time. In fact, the idea of relativity, the flux of time, defiance of chronological order, juxta-position of scenes through the process of association draws one's attention

to kinship of the film and fiction and **Ulysses** is extremely cinematic in its effect. Joyce's last novel **Finnegans Wake** (1939) is difficult and in certain sections obscure as he pushed his technique too far here. The ambiguities of this work intimidate the reader. Nevertheless, it is a great work which explores the possibilities of language.

Joyce's novels convey the intensity of poetry. The stream of consciousness technique has thrown new light on human psychology, fragmentation of life and complexities embedded in it. With James Joyce, as with T. S. Eliot, the literature of the twentieth century went several steps further.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) belonged to the Bloomsbury (1906) group of writers and artists that included Roger Fry, Vanessa and Clive Bell, the economist, J. M. Keynes and Leonard Woolf whom she married in 1912. In her two notable essays 'Modern Fiction' and 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' she criticised three writers—H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett and their kind for their limited vision and old conventional themes. She believed that a novelist must capture a character's streams of consciousness as—the flux of experience. She herself was influenced by the post-impressionist School of painting and aimed at conveying the light and shade of experience in her fiction. Virginia Woolf, a rebel against the convention of Victorianism, wrote in a review of Dorothy Richardson's **The Tunnel** in 1919. "We want to be rid of realism (and need) to penetrate without its help into the regions beneath it" Her focus was on the centre of the characters' experience in order to achieve a deeper realism. She could depict the symbolic texture of a scene and present the metaphoric quality of a mood by which her novels attained an aura of symbolism.

Her early novels **The Voyage out** (1915), **Night and Day** (1919) and **Jacob's Room** (1922) are cast in the conventional mode with occasional flashes of her poetic insight. With **Mrs Dalloway** (1925), she breaks away from the traditional chronological narration and takes a plunge into the internal life of her central character—a rich middle-aged lady. The time-scheme of this novel is a day in the life of the wife of an M.P. preparing for a party in the evening. As she looks 'before and after' a variety of characters flock to her consciousness and the reader follows the current of her thoughts that transcends the barriers of time and place. The use of flash-back, flash forward, synchronizations of situations, juxtaposition of scenes defying the logically ordered plot of external narrations creates a brilliant cinematic effect in this novel.

To **The Lighthouse** (1927), usually considered to be her best work, centres around a trip to the lighthouse which becomes a highly symbolic trip in the last section of the novel, when Lily Briscoe enlivens the lighthouse through her painter's brush. The

two sections of the novel focus on two days separated by a ten years' gap. The journey to the lighthouse with the hopes and disappointments involved in it takes the reader on a journey into the inner lives of the characters. The novel, thus, defies the conventional notion of plot with causality and chronology so far used in traditional novels.

In the most experimental of her novels *The Waves* (1931), Virginia Woolf uses multiple narrators—three male and three female characters reflecting their consciousness, their memories and dreams interwoven by the symbolic use of the sea.

Virginia Woolf's writings on the theories of fiction have a tone of authority and an urge to transform the form and substance of fiction. Her novels bear the stamp of an innovator. But her concentration on the creation of characters and on the ordinary passions of men and women soon put her out of favour even with her contemporaries.

During the thirties, before the breakout of the Second World War, an acute awareness of socio-political situations on part of the left-wing intellectuals initiated a reaction against the stream of consciousness technique used by the experimental novelists. The inter-War years in England were haunted by unemployment, depression and industrial unrest and some novelists of the time felt an urge to depict the social and historical reality in an objective manner, with a more penetrating insight than that of their immediate predecessors. They were irritated at the lack of social and moral concern of the novelists preoccupied with the surface reality, the superficial aspects of life and technical innovations rather than with topical problems.

Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986) used his 'camera-eye' to give objective snapshots of Berlin during the years of Hitler's rise to power in **Goodbye to Berlin** (1933) and **Mr. Norris Changes Trains** (1935).

George Orwell (1903-50) documented the lives of the vagabonds, the menial workers and the miners in his two works of on the spot study, sponsored by the Left Book Club—**Down and Out of Paris and London** (1933) and **The Road to Wigan Pier** (1937). **His Coming up for Air** (1939) gives the experiences of a middle-aged Insurance agent who comes up for air on a day and realizes that the rural peace of the English country-side is over and another War is imminent

Graham Greene (1904-1991) was not a Left-Wing writer like Isherwood and Orwell but he was quite radical in his views on the social issues of the thirties—depression, war scare, gang-warfare and corruption of a money-nexus society. His **England Made Me** (1935), **A Gun for Sale** (1936), **Brighton Rock** (1939) outline the lives of the poor, the deprived, the outlaws without any moral concern.

Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) draws our attention to the reverse side of the coin.

Cast in a mode of fantasy and comedy his novels diagnose the symptoms of the disease that broke out in the form of War. His novel **Vile Bodies** (1930), **Black Mischief** (1932), **Scoop** (1938) bring out the lives of the fun-loving young men and women of newly-rich families, the social climbers completely indifferent to the reality of the time. The callousness, the folly and the absurdities of those Bright Young Things according to Waugh, dragged the country to the brink of another War.

The objective reportage and documentation of these novelists brought about an awareness of the topical issues and established the bond between film and fiction.

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### 3.8. Summary

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The new fiction that developed in the twentieth century had the structure of a cob-web rather than that of a ladder. It explored the minds of the characters in a complex manner in place of accumulating information about men and women and presenting them in a chronological mode. The concept of 'Point of view' gave a new focus on the narrative technique. While 'the stream of consciousness' novelists attempted to capture the continuous flux of thoughts in human mind. The novelists of the thirties **upheld objective realism** and turned their attention to the social reality of the time in a **reaction to the mannered** stream of consciousness technique.

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### 3.9. Questions

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1. Which novelists Virginia Woolf criticized and why?
2. What are the distinctive features of Virginia Woolf's novels?
3. Assess the achievement of James Joyce in the field of fiction with special reference to *Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*.
4. Write a note on any two novelists of the 1930s.

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### 3.10. Drama

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Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a need for change in drama in Europe. In 1887 Antoine **Theatre Libre** was established in Paris, the Independent Theatre of Berlin was set up in 1889, J. T. Grain's Independent Theatre Society was

founded in London in 1891, Moscow Art Theatre was built in 1897 and Irish Literary Theatre took shape in 1899. Modernism is an international movement and the modern movement in English drama is closely associated with the wide-ranging achievements of all the leading dramatists who were demanding a new spirit in drama. Among them were—Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), the Norwegian dramatist August Strindberg (1849-1912) his Swedish con-temporary, Anton Chekov (1860-1904) the Russian play-wright They were in search of new art forms to express new perceptions of truth discarding the false superficial treatment of life in the earlier conventional theatre.

Ibsen introduced new courageous themes in skilfully contrived plots on the self-realization of the characters. His **A Doll's House** (1879) **The White Duck** (1889) **The Ghosts** (1881) are not so-called problem-plays but they present the social problems of the times in an authentic manner. George Bernard Shaw of England was greatly indebted to the new dramatic movement and specially to Ibsen. Strindberg began his career with naturalist plays like **The Father** (1887) and **Miss Julie** (1888). His later plays **A Dream Play** (1902) and **Ghost Sonata** (1907) are apparently formless to correlate with the formless irrational planes of human consciousness and may remind one of the stream of consciousness technique.

Anton Chekhov's **The Three Sisters** (1901), & **The Cherry Orchard** (1904) are new plays liberated from the conventional dead forms. They bring about a kind of poetic realism rather than social realism.

Among the English dramatists of this period John Casworthy's (1867-1933) plays of ideas. **The Silver Box** (1906), **Strife** (1909) and **Justice** (1910) showed the playwright's compassion for the poor and the exploited in a mode of documentary realism. But these 'problem plays' failed to give any solution and soon lost their appeal 2.4. The most remarkable exponent of the new drama in England was George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). He wrote plays as vehicles of ideas which he explained in the long prefaces to these plays. He was against all kinds of fictitious images presented in the conventional well-made plays, but he made Use of the popular theatrical devices to sustain the interest of the audience in his comedy of social ideas. To make his plays interesting to the readers who would not see them on the stage, he introduced elaborate stage directions giving the details of the characters and the setting. Traditional comedies end with a happy note of reunion or marriage while tragedies end with death or separation. In Shaw's plays, there is a reversal of expectation at the end and he chose the terms 'pleasant and unpleasant' in place of 'comedy' and 'tragedy'. He was stimulated by the new European theatre of Ibsen but as a Socialist he wanted to make his audience aware of the social absurdities; hence

he avoided the pervasive gloom and extreme seriousness of Ibsen's plays which failed to make an appeal to the average audience.

In his drama, Shaw wanted to blend instruction with entertainment through traditional stage, tricks, humour, farce and music or even melodrama. His dramatic craftsmanship, use of suspense and surprise, enabled him to involve his spectators even in his unpleasant plays on the so-called repulsive subjects like tainted income of a slum land-lord in **Widower's Houses** (1892) or prostitution in **Mrs. Warren's Profession**.

In his **plays pleasant**, Shaw invited his audience to laugh at the false assumptions of the characters and the conventional illusions of the society. In **Arms and the Man** (1894) his target is cheap romanticism centring love and war. **Candida** performed in the same year is a perfect blending of amusement and seriousness where a strong-willed married woman ultimately chooses her husband in place of a poet, with whom she has been in love.

**Man and Superman** (1903) is both romantic and anti-romantic where the hero Jack Tanner, the spokesman of the dramatist and the philosopher of the concept of life force, is captivated by Anne.

**Saint Joan** (1924) a historical play is often considered to be his greatest achievement. He did not always maintain historical accuracy but the character of Saint Joan with her conviction and failure makes it a powerful dramatic work.

Shaw entered the theatre with wit and humour. He brought in the plays reason and intellect in jollity of illusion and emotion.

### 3.10.1 Irish Dramatic Movement

Stimulated by the spirit of Irish nationalism against the English rule, Irish Dramatic Movement of the 1890's marked a rebellion against the English social problem plays. Its chief architects were W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. Both of them wrote plays and founded the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899 which was to become Irish National Theatre in 1902 and the Abbey Theatre company in 1904. However, the most important person in this new theatre movement was John Millington Synge (1871-1900) who created a kind of drama distinctly Irish in character. Yeats met Synge in Paris advised him to come back to his own country and write plays—the spirit and language of which would reflect the life and idiom of the contemporary Irish people. Following his advice, Synge visited the West of Ireland to study the speech of the common people and fashioned his own poetic style out of it.

Synge's first play **The shadow of the Glen** (1903) is a one-act play centring around a cruel husband his wife and her young lover and a tramp, whose lives are intimately related with the desolate countly side they live in. The play shows the dramatist's compassion for the characters in the living language of these rustics.

His next production **Riders to the Sea** (1904) achieves a rare tragic dignity in its simplicity of action and purity of the language. The characters—all governed by the sea have the timeless quality of figures in ancient myths.

Synge's greatest play **The play boy of the Western World** (1907) is the story of a peasant boy Christy who is treated as a hero under the false assumption that he has killed his father, a terror figure. But the boy loses all the glamour of a hero as soon as his 'murdered' father reappears. This almost improbable story becomes convincing by the dramatists handling of the common people's urge for having a meaning in their lives through hero-worship.

Sean O' Casey (1880-1964)'s plays written after the First World War show the change that had come in the Irish scene after the 1920). Whereas Synge's plays are on the lives of the Irish peasants, O' Casey's plays **The shadow of a German** (1923), **Juno and the Paycock** (1924) and **The Plough and the Stars** (1927) on the misery of the Irish are set in the Dublin slums where the playwright was bom. Each of these plays is inspired by a pity for the suffering and the afflicted. The characters—particularly the women among them show a rare courage and spirit of self-sacrifice even in the midst of their poverty and misery.

After the First World War the new dramatic movement gave way to a different type of plays. Noel coward (1899—1973) achieved success as a mainstream playwright who became popular with his first staged play **The Vortex** (1924)

T. S. Eliot reintroduced verse drama in his **Murder in the Cathalsas** (1935) and **The family Reunion** (1939). He used the conventions of the West-End theatre to make them popular. But the absence of human sympathy vitality and warmth have made them uninteresting inspite of the care and mastery of their creator.

At the end of the thirties, W. H. Auden in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood wrote three experimental verse-plays—**The Dog Beneath the Skin** (1935), **The Ascent of F6** (1936) and **On the Frontier** (1930) which were produced by the Group Theatre a private society. Inspite of a number of short-comings they could create an awareness about another war at the door of England.

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### 3.11. Summary

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The new movement in theatre was international in its aim and scope and it started in different countries almost around the same time. In England, the drama of Bernard Shaw was used as a vehicle for ideas while the Irish dramatic movement revived the Irish culture and sentiments through the language of the common people. Later in the thirties X S. Eliot intended to arouse an interest in verse drama while Auden and Isherwood tried to capture the tension of the pre-second world war days.

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### 3.12. Questions

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1. Do you think that the new theatre movement can be called an international movement? Give reasons.
2. What were the main objectives of the Irish dramatic movement? Discuss the achievement of the most important playwright of this movement.
3. Write on Bernard Shaw's contribution to drama
4. Name some verse plays of this period.

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### 3.13. Criticism

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The new critical outlook in England made its mark only after the First World War. By that time, however, English criticism of the twentieth century absorbed the major influences of continental European thought. During the last years of the nineteenth century aestheticism of Walter Pater was a dominant influence in criticism but it was challenged by Bernard Shaw's art for propaganda Symbolism and Realism two important influences in all the fields of literature formed a part of critical writings as well 3.2. At the turn of the century a major critical work **The Symbolist Movement in Literatrue** (1899) by Arthur Symons introduced the English readers to the French Symbolist poets and gave shape to the symbolist Aesthetic Movement in England.

W. B. Yeats, himself a creative member of the Symbolist Movement explained the symbolist ideas in his two volumes of essays—**Ideas of Good and Evil** (1896-1903) and **The Catting of an Agate** (1903-15) In a later work **Plays and controversies** (1923) he outlined his views of drama.

Henry James analysed the technical questions of fiction in his essays contained in the **House of Fiction** (published in 1957 edited by Leon Edel) and in **The Art of the Novel** (1934)

Formal academic study of English literature was stimulated during this time by George Saintsbury's works as the literary history—**Short History of English literature** (dating from 1898) **History of criticism and literary Taste in Europe** (1900—1914), **History of Prosody** (1900-1910)

Sir Walter Raleigh's **Studies of Million** (1900), **Wordsworth** (1903). **Shakespeare** (1907) and **Sir Johnson** (1910) opened up critical writings about these major English writers.

Certain significant works of this time on English drama and Shakespeare plays are E. K. Chambers (1866-1954)'s **The Medieval Stage** (1903) **The Elizabethan Stage** (1923) and later **Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems** (1930) A. C. Bradley's (1851-1935) **Shakespeare Tragedy** (1904) provided a philosophical and psychological analysis of the characters and action of Shakespeare's plays. His profound observations on poetry are contained in **Oxford Lectures on Poetry** (1909)

Under the editorship of T.S. Eliot **The Criterion** published critical writings of Pound, Hulme and of the editor himself, which brought into focus the impact of commercialisation on criticism leading to a cultural degradation.

During the 1920s the technique of detailed critical analysis was developed by I-A. Richards' **Principles of Criticism** (1914) & **Practical Criticism** (1929). **A Survey of Modernist Poetry** (1927) by Robert Graves and Laura Riding inspired William Empsons **Seven Types of Ambiguity** (1930), a study on the plurality of meanings in poetry.

T. S. Eliot's essays on the function of poetry and criticism, culture and tradition published as **The Sacred Wood** (1920) stimulated a new critical outlook anticipating the later critical movement called New criticism.

Virginia Woolf's essays on the need for new method in fiction in **The Common Reader** came out in two series 1925 and 1932.

F. R. Leavis works (1895-1978), editor and co-founder of **Scrutiny** (1932-1953) a critical quarterly review shaped the new approach to criticism by his publications **Fiction and the Reading Public** (1930), **New Bearings on English Poetry** (1932) **Tradition and Development in English Poetry** (1936) as well as some later works.

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### 3.14. Summary

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The new critical outlook that developed in the twentieth century created an analytical awareness in the study of almost all the branches of literature and shaped the technique of criticism.

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### 3.15. Questions

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1. What were the major influences behind the new critical outlook?
2. Name an important critical work that stimulated interest in symbolism in English literature.
3. Mention certain critical writings on Shakespeare.
4. What role did The Criterion play in the field of criticism?
5. Name two important critics whose works shaped the new approach to criticism.

### Suggested Reading

1. *A Prologue to English Literature*, W.W. Ropson London : Batsford 1986
2. *Pelican Guide to English Literature* (Vol 7) Ed. by Boris Ford London: Penguin Books reprint 1970
3. *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period* : Douglas Hewit London, Longman : 1988
4. *Bloomsbury Guides to English Literature* From 1900 to the Present Day ed. by Linda P. Williams London : Bloomsbury 1992
5. *The British Novel Since the Thirties : An Introduction* : Randall Stevenson London: B.T.Batsfield 1986.

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## **Unit - 4 English literature from 1945 to the present**

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### **Structure**

#### **4.1 Features**

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##### **4.4.4 William Golding (1911-1993)**

##### **4.4.5 Lawrence Durrell (1912-1993)**

##### **4.4.6 Angus Wilson (1913-1992)**

##### **4.4.7 Doris Lessing (b. 1919)**

##### **4.4.8 Nadine Gordimer (b, 1923)**

##### **4.4.9 Chinua Achebe (b. 1930)**

##### **4.4.10 V. S. Naipaul (b. 1932)**

##### **4.4.11 J. M. Coetzee (b. 1940)**

##### **4.4.12 Kazuo Ishiguro (b. 1954)**

#### **4.5 Short Questions**

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## 4.1 Features

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At the end of the Second World War (1939-1945) the allied forces which included USA, UK, France and USSR emerged victorious. The axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) were defeated. The war helped to break up the British empire while USA emerged as the major economic and cultural force in the world. Also the USSR, hitherto underrated, was recognised as one of the major powers.

Without the empire, England had to think carefully about its place in the world. In 1947, India won its independence. The partition of the subcontinent saw the emergence of a new state, Pakistan. Subsequently, all British colonies in Africa, Asia and the West Indies became free. These newly independent countries claimed equal and honourable places in the British commonwealth along with UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The United Kingdom faced this political reorientation of postwar years along with the task of economic reconstruction after major damages suffered during the war in which many areas of London and other cities were severely bombed and partially destroyed. The twin task of reconstruction and recognition of the loss of empire proved to be a bitter experience for those with conservative on traditional ways of thinking. For others, the young and the radical, it was an opportunity to expose and criticise those who ran the empire. Both the bitterness and the radical criticism are present in the literature of Britain after 1945.

Due to various economic reasons, there was a large-scale influx from the former colonies into Britain during the 25 years following the war. There were jobs for many of them not only in the industrial sector but also among professionals, specially doctors and teachers. Unlike, before many of them stayed on and became citizens of UK. There were also immigrants from other countries in Europe and Asia. So, by the 1970's, there was a whole new generation of non-white British born in Britain. This naturally gave UK a multicultural look. In literature, we now find many writers from among immigrant communities. Nadine Gordimer, V. S. Naipaul, Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje and Salman Rushdie, to name only a few, are respectively of South African, Trinidadian, Japanese, Srilankan and Indian origins.

The women writers have left their firm imprint on English literature of this period. There were important women writers in previous ages too; Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and others. But the difference between them and women writers after 1945 is created by a new self-awareness generated by feminism and other

women's movements which focused on marginalisation of women throughout history and the demands for women's rights.

Irish writers since Yeats and Joyce have also emerged as important practitioners writing in English, especially in English verse. So also have writers from Scotland and Wales which, though parts of UK, have often been ignored in English literary history.

To sum up, the main features of the history of English literature between 1945 and 2003 are :

- (a) the impact of the second world war on both conservative and progressive minds;
- (b) criticism of traditional and imperialist views;
- (c) an increased awareness of the international community and the hitherto ignored sections of the society;
- (d) variety provided by the multicultural origins of the writers now writing in English;
- (e) the feminist consciousness in literature;
- (f) the awareness of Irish, Scottish and Welsh cultures.

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## 4.2 Poetry

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T. S. Eliot did not write any major poem after 1945, but Auden and Spender, already active before the war, continued to write influentially after it. Auden's long poem **The Age of Anxiety** (1948) became a name for the period.

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), the Welsh poet, published three volumes of verse before the war but his was the most authentic poetic voice after the war **In Deaths and Entrances** (1946) and **In Country Sleep** (1953) he established a rich and colourful language. His images were complex. His view of nature was bright. He struck a compromise between romanticism and surrealism. In poems like 'A Refusal to Mourn the Death by Fire of a child in London' and 'Do not go gentle into that good night' he presents the fear of death but goes beyond it. He also created an impression by powerful readings of his verse, some of which is still preserved in recordings. He wrote a play called **Under Milk Wood** (1954). **Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog** (1940) and **Adventures in the Skin Trade** (1955) are works of fiction.

#### 4.2.1 The Movement

Some poets of the 1950's and 1960's are clubbed together by critics as The Movement. But most of these poets did not consider themselves as part of a single group and they differ a good deal, one from another, in respect of opinions and formal characteristics. The only points held in common were perhaps their avoidance of large concerns and issues, and the rejection of obscure language as practised by Eliot, Auden and their contemporaries. D. J. Enright (b. 1920), Philip Larkin (1922-1984), Donald Davie (b. 1922-95), Elizabeth Jennings (b. 1926) and Thorn Gunn (b. 1929) are considered part of The Movement Larkin was the most important among them. His poems seem very simple. But they are carefully written and contain many ironic and witty observations. Against the eclectic, allusive idiom of T. S. Eliot and others moderns, Larkin chose the alternative tradition of Thomas Hardy and Edward Thomas. He is deliberately conventional in his technique, using traditional forms like the Spenserian stanza on the rhymed quartet effectively. "The Whitsun Weddings" and 'Mr. Bleaney' are examples of such effects. He had mastery over unrhymed verse too, as evidenced by 'Going'. **The Less Deceived** (1955), **The Whitsun Weddings** (1964) and **High Windows** (1974) are Larkin's major books of verse. He also wrote two novels, **Jill** and **Girl in Winter**.

Elizabeth Jennings, in **A Way of Looking** (1955), showed a new way of writing. In her poetry, clear description is matched by ironic comments. Jennings often writes about personal pain. Her other books of verse include **The Mind has Mountains** (1966), **Relationships** (1972), **Consequently I Rejoice** (1977) and **Celebrations and Elegies** (1982).

Thorn Gunn, in his **Fighting Terms** (1954) wrote about new and emerging features of British society in the 1950s. **The Sense of Movement** (1957). **My Sad Captains** (1961) and subsequent books display greater range and skill. Afterwards, Gunn lived in America and his poetry tried to come to terms with the nihilism of American life. **Boss Cupid** (2000) is a collection of poems about survival and achievement, mixed with sadness and memory. It is inspired by Cupid, the Greek god of love.

#### 4.2.2 Ted Hughes (1930-1998)

Hughes is a contemporary of The Movement poets but is completely outside it. With his mysterious animal poems, with his interest in dreams and occult symbolism,

he is closer to D. H. Lawrence than to the directness of The Movement. **The Hawk in the Rain (1957)** and **Lupercal (1960)** contain poems which are only apparently simple and direct. He makes us aware of the gap between the ordinary life of the fox or the hawk and the experience of imagining them. Hughes and his wife Sylvia Plath, the American poet, devised exercises in meditation, based on their reading of magical literature, in 1959. Occult symbolism and primitivism, therefore, become prominent in his later books like **Crow (1972)** and **Gaudete (1977)**. **Birthday Letters (1998)** looked back at the relationship between him and Sylvia who had died in 1963. Ted Hughes became poet laureate after John Betjeman.

#### 4.2.3 Adrian Mitchell (b. 1932) and Tony Harrison (b. 1937) : Protest Poetry

Mitchell is perhaps the best-known 'protest poet' in England. He ruthlessly satirizes all conservative and conventional opinions in his poems collected in **Heart on the Left : Poems 1953-1984 (1997)**. Parody and biting humours are two of the weapons which he there's are good thing about a cow-pat: if you leave it in the sun it dries and there's one good thing about capitalism— it dies.

Tony Harrison's protest is voiced in an unconventional language dealing with subjects often ignored by conventional as well-known poetry. He belongs to Yorkshire and often uses the local dialect or even the slang of common speech, thus generating controversy. *V. (1985)* caused such a controversy when this long poem was televised. Apart from many poems on the distance between the working class and the educated middle-class, he has written republican poems opposed to the continuation of royalty in Britain and also antiwar poems. His other books are **The Loiners (1970)**, **Poems (1975)**, **Continuous (1981)**, **A Cold Coming (1991)**, **The Gaze of the Gorgon (1992)** and **Laureate's Block (2000)**.

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### 4.3. Drama

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There is a continuity between prewar drama and postwar drama, chiefly because of the presence of three great masters : Shaw, Eliot and Fry.

Unbelievably, G. B. Shaw (1856-1950), who had started writing plays even before T. S. Eliot was born, was still alive after the Second World War, still popular, still partially productive. T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) was continuing his important pre-war work in verse drama. Among his plays. **The Cocktail Party (1949)**, **The Confidential**

**Clerk** (1954) and **The Elder Statesman** (1959) came after the war. His experiment with plays in verse proved valuable for later writers. The verse in these plays has a close-to-speech rhythm. In Eliot's own words, **The Cocktail Party** is intended as 'a design of human actions and words, such as to present at once the two aspects of dramatic and musical order.'

Christopher Fry (b. 1907) was the other main poetic dramatist. Though without the impressive overall pattern of Eliot's plays, Fry is notable for smart dialogue and bright imagery. His major plays are **The Lady's Not for Burning** (1949), a medieval romance, **Venus Observed** (1950), **A Sleep for Prisoners** (1951) and **The Dark is Light Enough** (1954) which was directed by Peter Brook who has been one of the best directors in the British theatre in the last fifty years. Fry's verse-idiom was powerful enough to captivate an audience especially when the dialogue was brought alive by such famous actors and actresses as Edith Evans, Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Richard Burton, Claire Bloom and Pamela Brown. Olivier also directed **Venus Observed**.

#### 4.3.1. The Royal Court Theatre

In 1955, a small group of people joined together to open a theatre in London. They wanted to encourage new English playwrights and also introduce contemporary 'classics' from other countries. They were called The English Stage company and played at the Royal Court Theatre at Sloane Square, London. The company's first artistic director was George Devine. His experience as actor and teacher in experimental drama extended from Oxford University Dramatic Society to French companies. Since then, Royal Court (or 'the Court') has played an important role in British cultural milieu. In their very first season in 1956 they introduced John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. Later on they introduced Wesker, Arden and Bond. All four wrote pathbreaking plays. Those of them who were interested in political drama (the last three of those named above) gradually moved away from the court which was intensely theatre-based. Still, the Court has lived dangerously near the centre of middle-class revolt against traditional values. Before discussing their plays, we have to notice a parallel development taking place at the same time.

#### 4.3.2. Samuel Beckett (1906-89)

1955 also saw the staging, at Arts Theatre, of Beckett's **Waiting for Godot** soon after its success in Paris. The play, written in French, was translated into English by

the author himself. It was directed by Peter Hall. The play introduced several new things : (a) continental existentialism (a philosophy which specially affected many European writers outside Britain); (b) the non-realist mode of presentation (for example, the play **Godot** does not tell a story and the characters act and speak in an uncertain setting); (c) non-illusionism (Beckett does not create an illusion of reality on the stage; the fictional remains fictional). This is a reaction against the realistic prose drama of the pre-war era. The same action and dialogues are often repeated in order to present poverty, isolation, boredom and narrowness. The characters often take shelter in fantasy. But there is also self-mockery. Fantasy is given no indulgence. Beckett renewed the language of drama through a fresh approach not only to dialogue but also to stage-space, action (or its absence) and lighting. In these areas and in dramatic structure, the later plays of T.S. Eliot were weak. **Waiting for Godot** succeeded precisely in those areas.

Samuel Beckett was born in Dublin, Ireland. He spent his later life in France. He wrote novels, plays and poems in both English and French. (His novels have been discussed in 4.4 below). He was associated with James Joyce (1882-1941) in his early days. Beckett's use of fantasy is indebted to the Joycean mode of fiction. He was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1969. Among his other plays are **All that Fall** (1957), **Endgame** (1958), **Krapp's Last Tape** (1958), **Happy Days** (1961), **That Time** (1976) and **Company** (1980). The central problem in Beckett's plays is the problem of language : what the language on the stage can achieve and also what it cannot do. There are moments of crisis in which language is useless: this is what he probably wants to state in the later plays where dialogue becomes scarce.

#### 4.3.3. Brendan Behan (1922-64)

John Osborne (1929-94), Harold Pinter (b. 1930), John Arden (b. 1930), Peter Barnes (b. 1931) and Arnold Wesker (b. 1932)

Behan, like Beckett, was an Irishman. In **The Quare Fellow** (1956) and **The Hostage** (1958) he brought Joycean fantasy to the service of black comedy. The first play concerns a man about to be hanged. The second is about an English soldier kept as hostage by the Irish Republican Army. Out of these stark situations, Behan is able to extract both rich comedy and criticism of social conventions. Especially in **The Quare Fellow**, Behan was handling very difficult material. The events take place in a prison; all the characters are male. The principal character (the prisoner who is to

be hanged) is never seen. It is a situation of unrelieved gloom. From these unpromising materials, Behan has made a play that is funny and humane. It is a profound affirmation of the life that everything in prison is trying to destroy. It is convincing as an argument against capital punishment but, even if we forget that grim subject, it is enjoyable because of its witty dialogues and the mixture of the lyric and the irony in its songs. The following song, surprisingly, is sung by the hangman:

“She was lovely and fair like the rose of the summer, Though ’twas not her beauty alone that won me, Oh, no, it was the truth in her eyes ever shining, That made me love Mary the Rose of Tralee.

John Osborne’s **Look Back in Anger**, first staged on 8 May, 1956, marks a watershed in dramatic history. Plays would no longer be concerned with middle-class heroes nor set in country-houses. The play gave voice to the discontent of the young Jimmy Porter who was aware that he could find no place in the society around him. He became the bitter spokesman of a disillusioned generation. The success of the play found a response in other disaffected groups in society. **Look Back in Anger** was linked by critics and reviewers to the works of a few socially-conscious novelists. The label ‘Angry Young Men’ was applied to them. The later plays include **The Entertainer** (1957), in which Olivier played the main role, **Luther** (1961), **Inadmissible Evidence** (1965), **A Patriot for Me** (1966) and **West of Suez** (1971). All the central characters, like Porter, are driven by a furious energy directed towards a void. Bill Maitland, the solicitor in **Inadmissible Evidence**, cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality, and is the prisoner of his own dream. The dream is a vision of his own helplessness.

Harold Pinter has affinities with the French plays of Eugene Ionesco and the Theatre of the Absurd (the most influential dramatic movement in postwar Europe). In Pinter’s **The Birthday Party** (1958) and **The Caretaker** (1960), dialogues are switched into absurdist ritual. There are repetitions, undertones of violence, and inconsistencies in what the characters say. Non-communication between characters becomes more important than communication. There are frequent transitions from dialogues to semi-soliloquy. **A Night Out** (1961) displays interweaving of fantasy, decorousness and brutality. Pinter’s language has many of the qualities of poetry. A specific term often represents a range of meanings. He is able to deploy his powers as a poet to new effect in later works like **Landscape** (1969) and **Night** (1969). Though written in the non-realistic mode, the plays turn into deeper representations of reality. Absurdism is modulated.

John Arden’s **Sergeant Musgrave’s Dance** (1959) is a searching criticism of

Victorian society and colonialism. His other plays include **Live Like Pigs** (1961), **The Workhouse Donkey** (1964), and **Armstrong's Last Goodnight** (1965).

Peter Barnes's **The Ruling Class** (1969) exposes the machinations of big capitalists and creates enjoyable drama out of boardroom politics (i.e. members of the board of directors of a company clashing with each other). **Leonardo's Last Supper** (1970) and **The Bewitched** (1974) are some of his other plays.

Arnold Wesker is famous for his trilogy (a group of three plays, **Chicken Soup with Barley**, **Roots** and **I'm Talking About Jerusalem**) written in 1959-60. Wesker's plays started the vogue of plays written in genuine working-class speech on middle-class speech. The nuances of the dialogues spoken by his characters made the political content of the plays more convincing. **Chips with Everything** (1962), **The Journalists** (1975) and **The Wedding Feast** (1977) are some of Wesker's other plays. Wesker has also written short stories.

#### 4.3.4. Edward Bond (b. 1934), Caryl Churchill (b. 1936), Howard Brenton (b. 1942) and David Edgar (b. 1948).

With these dramatists, the political drama in England takes a more radical turn and makes effective use of lessons learnt from the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), a Marxist. Bond's first three plays, **The Pope's Wedding** (1962), **Saved** (1965), and **Early Morning** (1968), were directed by William Gaskill at the Court. The violent episodes in **Saved** caused a hot dispute. Sir Laurence Olivier commented "Saved is not for children but it is for grown-ups, and the grown-ups of this country should have the courage to look at it." Bond himself, called the killing of a child in the play 'negligible' compared to the bombing of German towns. The social comment in this and other plays by Bond is obvious. The experience of oppression in society, Bond admits, is depressing. But he refuses to give up optimism. His other plays include **Leas** (1971), **The Sea** (1973) and **Bingo** (1973). **Two Postmodern Plays** (1990) is a book containing **Jackets** and **In the Company of Men**. The latter is a vivid attack on capitalism where the conflict between a rich tycoon, Oldfield, and his son turns violent. Commenting on the two plays. Bond asserts that theatre "has to be both iconoclastic and iconographic because that is the function imposed on it by the mind's need to humanize itself." Bond has also written poems. **Poems 1978-1985** was published in 1987.

Caryl Churchill is a major woman dramatist. In **Owners** (1972), which marked a turning point in her career, the two principal characters do not follow conventional

male and female behaviour. Instead, they express what they believe. Therefore, Marion, a woman, is the active characters while Alec, the man, is passive. In **IVaphs** (1977) there is no flashback or fantasy, but the characters seem to be living out all their possibilities at the same time. The time, the place, the characters' motives cannot all be reconciled. **Cloud Nine** (1979) explores the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression. This play brought Caryl Churchill recognition as a major dramatist. **Top Girls** (1982), **Serious Money** (1987) and **The Striker** (1994) are among her later plays.

Among the other political dramatists of the 1970's and subsequent decades the most significant are Howard Brenton, David Hare, David Edgar, Trevor Griffiths and Stephen Poliakoff. Brenton intended **Weapons of Happiness** (1976) to be a "petrol bomb through the proscenium arch" which would blow up bourgeois self-satisfaction. David Edgar's **Destiny**, published the same year, is an analysis of British society in the seventies : especially the forces of neo-fascism and its various opponents. Hitler's fascism comes in for serious treatment in **Albert Speer** (2000).

Outside political drama, there were several types of plays following the tradition of naturalist drama. In **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead**, Tom Stoppard places two unimportant and unheroic figures at the centre of tragic action. He invents in the stylized modern idiom used by Ros and Guil a parallel to Gogo and Didi in Beckett's **Waiting for Godot** and also a contrast to the excerpts from Shakespeare's **Hamlet His Night and Day** (1978) and **The Real Thing** (1982) are more naturalistic plays.

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#### 4.4. The Novel

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Compared to poetry and drama, the novel has been the most practice literary form in English since 1945. Especially, authors writing in English outside Britain have been more concerned with fiction. Thus there are many prominent practitioners of the English novel or short story in the USA, the West Indies, in African and Asian countries, in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. All of them cannot be discussed in a short space. Even the most prominent ones can be mentioned but briefly. In the brief history below, only some authors from outside Britain who later went to stay there have been mentioned (e.g. Lessing, Gordimer, Naipaul, Coetzee and Ishiguro). The only exception is R. K. Narayan who was the most prominent Indian writer of English fiction for the last seven decades of the twentieth century.

It will be noted that the main trend in the fiction of this period does not follow the 'interior monologue' technique perfected by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, though Samuel Beckett and Laurence Durrell use it and other learn important lessons from it. But we mainly find variations of realism in other novelists, often mixed with the use of symbols.

#### 4.4.1. Graham Greene (1904-1991)

Greene was a major novelist even before the war with novels like **England Made Me** (1935) and **A Gun for Sale** (1936). But the struggles of human conscience, often in the context of critical situations abroad, become absorbing subjects in his postwar novels : **The Heart of the Matter-** (1948), **The Third Man** (1950), **The End of the Affair** (1951). The political context, with a definite anti-imperialist commitment, becomes more focused in later novels. In this respect, **The Comedians** (1966) marks a departure from earlier catholic themes. **The Human Factor** (1978) and **Monsignor Quixote** (1982) are more politically committed.

#### 4.4.2. Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)

Beckett's plays have been discussed above (4.32). His novels, though not always interior monologues, follows a character's consciousness constantly and elaborately. In **Murphy** (1938), **Watt** (1953), **Molloy** (1955), **Malone Dies** (1956) and **The Unnameable** (1958), there are continuous shadow-boxings with the self. Despite the atmosphere of loneliness and futility, the tone is always comic and the language exact.

#### 4.4.3. R. K. Narayan (1906-2001)

Narayan's 'complete objectivity' and 'complete freedom from comment' were characteristics noted by Graham Greene who promoted the Indian author's early works **Swami and His Friends** (1935) and **The Bachelor of Arts** (1937). These qualities also dominate **The English Teacher** (1945), **The Guide** (1958), **The Vendor of Sweets** (1967) and other novels as well as the short stories in **Malgudi Days** (1943) and other collections. This objectivity and concise description make the imagined town of Malgudi, the setting for most of his tales, come alive. At the same time he is rooted in his **culture**, civilisation and values. Though never explicitly stated, these values are evident in his treatment of characters.

#### 4.4.4. William Golding (1911-1993)

In **Lord of the Flies** (1954), Golding shows a group of boys on a desert island. They lose contact with civilisation and return to a savage state. Golding often treats such unusual themes. He explored the basis of human behaviour in his stories. He goes back to prehistory in **The Inheritors** (1955) to do this. In **Pinches Martin** (1956) a drowning sailor's struggle for survival recreates hell. Golding received the Nobel Prize for literature.

#### 4.4.5. Lawrence Durrell (1912-1993)

Durrell is famous for his **Alexandria Quartet** which contains four novels.: **Justine** (1956), **Balthazar** (1958), **Mountolive** (1958) and **Clea** (1960). These are experimental novels having affinities with both Joyce and Proust. The same situation as person is shown through the differing view points of different characters. The four novels therefore hold partial pictures which take a complete shape only when the reader knows all four. With this gradual building-up of characters and motives, there are also objective descriptions of desert life and city life in Egypt where the novels are set.

#### 4.4.6. Angus Wilson (1913-1992)

Wilson is in some ways the most traditional among novelists of his generation. He follows Dickens and Thackeray rather than any modernist trend. **Hemlock and After** (1952), **Anglo-Saxon Attitudes** (1956), **The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot** (1958) and **No Laughing Matter** (1967) are his most well-known works. His way of looking at society is unusual. Unlike other writers, Wilson looks mainly at middle-aged characters. He also gives prominence to social minorities. He is particularly good in treating homosexual characters.

#### 4.4.7. Doris Lessing (b. 1919)

Doris Lessing is a South African novelist but she settled in England in 1949. She made her mark with her first novel. **The Grass is Singing** (1950). It is the story of a town girl married to a white farmer in Africa. Her behaviour towards her black servants reflects her own inner uncertainties which lead to fatal consequences. The two major themes in her novels are (a) relations between black and white in Africa and (b) the problem of being a woman in a man's world. The second theme gains more prominence than the first in **The Golden Notebook** (1962). She has also written a series of novels with the common title. **Children of Violence**.

#### 4.4.8. Nadine Gordimer (b. 1923)

Gordimer is also a South African who settled in England later. In **A World of Strangers** (1958) she treats an Englishman's first experience of South Africa. In **The Late Bourgeois World** (1966), a white activist, sympathetic to the African struggle for independence, is disillusioned and commits suicide, but his wife, the narrator, lends vitality to the novel by her self-possession and her ability to respond to Africans. Gordimer's other important novels are **A Guest of Honour** (1972) and **July's People** (1981). She received the Nobel Prize for literature.

#### 4.4.9. Chinua Achebe (b. 1930)

Achebe was born in Nigeria. **Things Fall Apart** (1958), his first novel, sold over two million copies. It was translated into 30 languages. It was followed by **No Longer At Ease** (1960) **Arrow of God** (1964) and **A Man of the People** (1966), a novel dealing with post-independence Nigeria. Achebe has also written short stories and poetry.

#### 4.4.10 V. S. Naipaul (b. 1932)

Naipaul was born in Trinidad and now lives in England. **The Mystic Masseur** (1957), **The Suffrage of Elvira** (1958), **A House for Mr. Biswas** (1961), **In a Free State** (1971) and **Guerillas** (1975) are some of his novels. The world of his novels is a world of private and political tensions. It is a world which is intensely individual, yet inescapably public. He has also won the Nobel Prize for literature.

#### 4.4.11. J. M. Coetzee (b. 1940)

Coetzee also is of South African origin. **In Coming of the Barbarians, Life and Times of Michael K** and **Disgrace**, he has exposed both the historical roots and the present of imperialism and Fascism.

#### 4.4.12. Kazuo Ishiguro (b. 1954)

Ishiguro is of Japanese origin and he uses some of his novels to bring this background into the English novel for its enrichment. His novels are **A Pale View of Hills** (1982), **Artist of the Floating World** (1986), **The Remains of the Day** (1989), **The Unconsoled** (1995) and **When We were Orphans** (2000). The last one uses the form of the detective fiction to explore questions of identity.

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#### 4.5. Short Questions [End of 4.1]

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1. What were the immediate problems in Post-War Britain ?
2. How would you explain the emergence of the multicultural approach of English literature in the decades following 1945 ?
3. In what ways did the post war women writers strike a different path from their predecessors ?

[End of 4.2]

1. Name two major Pre-war poets who continued to write important poetry after the war.
2. Who was the major poet of “The Movement”? What is remarkable about his poetry ?
3. Who is the author of **Boss Cupid** ? What is its theme ?
4. Point out some of the features of the poetry of Ted Hughes.
5. Which poet of the 1970s uses a lot of dialect and slang in his verse ? Name some of his works.

[End of 4.3]

1. Name some of the verse plays of the post-war decade. What kind of verse did the playwright’s use ?
2. What role did the Royal Court Theatre play in rejuvenating the English Stage ?
3. What made **Waiting for Godot** a pathbreaking achievement ?
4. How does Brendan Behan succeed in making his black comedies enjoyable ?
5. In what way was the first staging of **Look Back in Anger** significant ?
6. Apart from Beckett’s which other major British playwright’s plays belong to the Theatre of the Absurd ?
7. Why did Edward Bond’s *Saved* create a controversy ?
8. Name two major writers of political drama and mention some of their themes.

[End of 4.4]

1. Who were main post war practitioners of the interior monologue technique ?
2. Can you identify the central theme of Graham Greene’s major novels ?

3. What are the special features of R. K. Narayan's narrative technique ?
4. Briefly comment on the work of Lawrence Durrell.
5. Name two major non-British women writers and comment on their themes.

**Essay type Questions :**

1. Analyse the situation of post-war Britain and show how it resulted in the emergence of radicalism and multiculturalism in literature with a few illustrations.
2. With reference to at least two major women novelists show how the feminist movement mediated the choice of themes for the women writers.
3. Discuss 'The Movement' in Post-war poetry, with reference to at least two poets who are considered by critics to belong to it.
4. Discuss the post-war experiments in poetic drama.
5. What were Beckett's innovations ? Which later British playwrights seems to be most influenced by Beckett ? Answer with suitable examples.
6. John Osborne's **Look Back in Anger** was first staged at the Royal Court Theatre in May 1956. Discuss the significance of this event, focussing on the role played by both **Anger** and the Royal Court theatre in Postwar Drama.
7. Discuss the achievements of two non-British practitioners of the English novel, and show how their work expanded the scope of the English novel.
8. Show how in the post-war novel there are simultaneously experimentation with theme and narrative technique and continuation of the older novelistic tradition.

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## UNIT-1 W.B. Yeats : “Easter 1916” and “An Acre of Grass”

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### W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

William Butler Yeats was born on 13 June, 1865 at ‘Georgeville’, Sandymour Avenue, Dublin. His father, John Butler Yeats, was a lawyer by training and an artist by profession. He was a sceptic who believed in the supremacy of personality and intellect. He exalted art and poetry, claiming that “a work of art is the social act of a solitary man.” The poet’s mother, Susan Pollexfen, on the other hand, was a quiet, self-effacing person, who shared a deep bond with the world of nature and peasant life which she had found at Sligo in her childhood. The family frequently shifted residence owing to financial constraints and Yeats’ childhood was spent largely in London, Dublin and Howth, with frequent visits to Sligo, his mother’s home. Yeats studied at Godolphin School, Hammersmith, England and then went on to High School at Dublin. After completing school, Yeats joined the Metropolitan School of Art at Dublin where he became acquainted with George Russell (AE), who spurred his interest in mystical studies, much to the dismay of his rationalist father. In 1885, Yeats became a founder member of the Dublin Hermetic Society. He evolved a religion of his own – “I” had made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.”

In 1885, Yeats met John O’ Leary, a Fenian leader of native Catholic stock who, for Yeats, embodied the spirit of “indomitable Irishry.” While the family were settled at Bedford Park, Yeats met Maud Gonne, said to be one of the most beautiful women of her time in Ireland, and fell in love with her. She was fiercely devoted to the cause of Irish liberation and inspired by her, Yeats wrote his play **The Countess Cathleen**. Meanwhile, Yeats’s esoteric and literary interests continued unabated and he became a member of Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society. Later he became initiated into the ‘Order of the Golden Dawn’. In 1891, Yeats became a member of The Rhymers’ Club and met Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and others. Earlier, Yeats had made the acquaintance of William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, and Oscar Wilde, leading literary figures of the late nineteenth-century. In 1893, Yeats brought out an edition of **The Works of William Blake** in collaboration with Edwin Ellis. He shared rooms with Arthur Symonds in ‘Woburn Building’, who introduced him to

the works of French symbolist poets. Yeats's love for Maud Gonne, his involvement in Irish politics and his interest in occult studies occupied him simultaneously, 'Yeats established the Irish Literary Society in England and the National Literary Society in Dublin with John O'Leary as President. Yeats's meeting with Lady Gregory in 1896 is of particular importance in his literary career. His visits to her home at Coole Park offered him the opportunity to delve deep into the folk-culture of Ireland and form ideas about establishing an Irish Theatre. His meeting with John Middleton Synge proved to be extremely propitious for both. Yeats urged Synge to visit Aran Islands to learn about Irish peasant life. In 1902, Yeats became President of Irish National Dramatic Society, and the famous Abbey Theatre at Dublin was established in 1904. Maud Gonne, who consistently refused Yeats's repeated proposals of marriage, married Major John MacBride in 1903. After the Easter Rising in 1916 Maud Gonne's husband was executed and Yeats once again renewed his proposal of marriage which she again refused. With her permission, he offered marriage to her adopted daughter Isolt Gonne, who also refused. In 1917, Yeats got married to George Hyde Lees and set up house at Ballylee Tower. His wife's power of automatic writing spurred him on to compose **A Vision** which contains his 'system' of arranging history in terms of 'gyres' (conceived as inter-penetrating double cones), where, after every two thousand years, subjective and objective phases alternate. It places human personality according to the twenty-eight phases of the moon, representing different stages of subjectivity and objectivity.

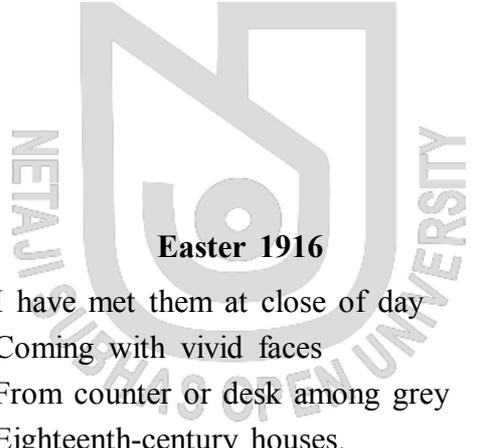
In 1922 Yeats became a member of the Irish Senate which he attended faithfully. In 1923, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. He continued writing extensively up to his death in 1939. He went on a number of lecture tours to America and regularly delivered radio talks for the B.B.C. His interest in philosophy led him to a study of the "Upanishads" which he translated into English in collaboration with Purohit Swami. He had earlier met Rabindranath Tagore and wrote an introduction to the English **Gitanjali** and it was around that time that he also met and made friends with the young Ezra Pound.

Yeats has left a record of his life, describing it in "What comes oftenest into my memory", which he wrote in parts over several years and which is collectively called **Autobiographies**. Yeats's letters are also important documents of his literary career and highlight his concern with the politics, literature and philosophy of his time. He is the most representative Anglo-Irish poet, who is also the link between Romantic and Modern Poetry. **The Celtic Twilight**, projecting the cause of Irish Cultural Revival is a product of his early years while **A Vision** is that of his late years. The distinctive

quality of Yeats's achievement lies in his assimilation of diverse attitudes, ideas and poetic modes which mark the transition between nineteenth and early twentieth-century poetry. He would claim to be the "last Romantic" and yet be as modern as Ezra Pound exhorted him to be. All his life he sought for that "unity of being" whereby he could resolve the dichotomies of private and public experience, emotion and intellect, youth and age, the material and the spiritual worlds, through symbols, masks and images. And when he felt he could, perhaps, no longer call forth his images and symbols, he would turn to "where all the ladders start, / In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."

Yeats died on 28 January, 1939 leaving behind a vast collection of poetry, prose and drama. He had written his own epitaph in September, 1938 in the poem "Under Ben Bulbin";

Cast a cold eye  
On life, on death.  
Horseman, pass by!



### Easter 1916

I have met them at close of day  
Coming with vivid faces  
From counter or desk among grey  
Eighteenth-century houses.  
I have passed with a nod of the head  
Or polite meaningless words,  
Or have lingered awhile and said  
Polite meaningless words,  
And thought before I had done  
Of a mocking tale or a gibe  
To please a companion  
Around the fire at the club,  
Being certain that they and I  
But lived where motley is worn:  
All changed .changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent  
In ignorant good-will,  
Her nights in argument  
Until her voice grew shrill.  
What voice more sweet than hers,  
When, young and beautiful,  
She rode to harriers ?  
This man had kept a school  
And rode our winged horse;  
This other his helper and friend  
Was coming into his force;  
He might have won fame in the end,  
So sensitive his nature seemed,  
So daring and sweet his thought.  
This other man I had dreamed  
A drunken, vainglorious lout.  
He had done most bitter wrong  
To some who are near my heart,  
Yet I number him in the song;  
He, too, has resigned his part  
In the casual comedy;  
He, too has been changed in his turn,  
Transformed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream.  
The horse that comes from the road,  
The rider, the birds that range  
From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
Minute by minute they change;  
A shadow of cloud on the stream  
Changes minute by minute;  
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,

And a horse plashes within it;  
The long-legged moor-hens dive,  
And hens to moor-cocks call;  
Minute by minute they live:  
The stone's in the midst of all.  
Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice ?  
That is Heaven's part, our part  
To murmur name upon name,  
As a mother names her child  
When sleep at last has come  
On limbs that had run wild.  
What is it but nightfall?  
No, no, not night but death;  
Was it needless death after all?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said.  
We know their dream; enough  
We know they dreamed and are dead;  
And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they died?  
I write it out in a verse —  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

September 25, 1916.

“Easter 1916” was composed in September 1916, when the poet was staying in France with Maud Gonne. It was first circulated privately and was later printed in the **New Statesman** in 1920. Finally, it was published in the volume of poems entitled **Michael Robartes and the Dancer**. The poem has a clearly political background and represents an important phase in Yeats's poetic consciousness. It was written in

response to the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. The rebellion was organised by the Irish Republican Brotherhood in protest against the failure of the English Government in solving the problem of Home Rule in Ireland. In April, 1912, a moderate Home Rule Bill had been introduced which was opposed by a section of Irish Protestants aided by the Conservatives. Before a solution could be reached, the outbreak of World War I put an end to the proceedings. The I.R.B. did not have any faith in English promises and on Easter Monday, 1916, they stormed the centre of Dublin and occupied all the important offices, including the G.P.O. The siege had been planned in complete secrecy and took everyone by surprise.

The coup continued till the 29th of April. However, lack of sufficient arms led to military failure. Between 3rd and 12th May, fifteen of the leaders were executed after court-martial. Among those executed were Pearse, MacDonagh, Plunkett, John MacBride and James Connolly. And, as Yeats termed it, “a terrible beauty” was born out of this sacrifice.

In his poem, “September 1913”, Yeats had bemoaned that  
Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone  
Its with O’Leary in the grave

But, now in 1916, Yeats feels that “tragic dignity<sup>1</sup>” has returned to Ireland”. This is a recurrent theme in the poems which follow “Easter, 1916”- namely, “Sixteen Dead Men”, “The Rose Tree” and “On a Political Prisoner”. The poet was filled with a sense of tragedy and in a letter to Lady Gregory dated 11 May, 1916, he wrote:

The Dublin tragedy has been a great sorrow and anxiety. Cosgrave, who I saw a few months ago in connection with the Municipal Gallery project and found our best supporter has got many years’ imprisonment and to-day I see that an old friend Henry Dixon - unless there are two of the name - who began with me the whole work of the literary movement has been shot in a barrack yard without any trial of any kind. I have little doubt there have been many miscarriages of justice.

Later, in the same letter, he continues :

I am trying to write a poem on the men executed — ‘terrible beauty has been born again.’ If the English Conservative Party had made a declaration that they did not intend to rescind the Home Rule Bill there would have been no Rebellion. I had no idea that any public event would so deeply move me—and I am very despondent about the future.

Yeats was filled with a sense of waste and wondered if he “could have done anything to turn those young men in some other direction.” He wondered if it was “needless death after all”. At the same time, he was overwhelmed by the transformation in Irish Politics that was wrought by the ‘blood - sacrifice’ of these brave men.

**Stanza 1** : Yeats outlines his relationship with the men executed after the Rising. They were “vivid faces” for him. Before the Rising, they were ordinary people, with whom he exchanged “polite, meaningless words”. Sometimes he even derived fun by relating “a mocking tale” or making “a gibe” at them at the club, “being certain” that they and he lived in the same value - less, empty world where “motley is worn”. But the Easter Rising brought about a transformation — “All changed, changed utterly.” And the most striking discovery about the Rising for the poet was that “a terrible beauty is born”. It is “terrible” because the rebels knew that death was sure if they failed. The “beauty” lay in the snirt of sacrifice, in the spirit of patriotism . It is a “terrible beauty” because the beauty of their sacrifice is mingled with their knowledge of imminent death.’

L. 1: “them”— the revolutionaries

L. 4: “eighteenth-century houses”—typical Dublin houses built of granite.

L.12: “club”—an Art Club in Dublin of which Yeats was a member.

L.14: “Motley”—a fool’s or clown’s dress.

**Stanza 2** - Yeats gives a brief but penetrating sketch of some of the revolutionaries whom he knew personally. First, he mentions Constance Gore -Booth who was married to Count Casimir Markiewicz. Yeats knew both the sisters Constance and Eva Gore-Booth whom he had visited at their ancestral home in Lissadell in 1894. Yeats recalls Constance’s fine qualities when “young and beautiful” — she was one of the best horse -women in Ireland. But, then as she became involved in Politics, “her voice grew shrill” as she spent “her nights in argument.” After the Rising, she was sentenced to death, which was later commuted and she was finally released. Yeats is filled with a sense of waste in the sacrifice of noble natures for fanatic idealism. He is pained by the ignorance of those who sacrificed their lives (“in ignorant good-will”). In another poem about Constance, “On a Political Prisoner” he refers to her as “Blind and leader of the blind”.

Yeats next mentions Pearse — “this man had kept a school. Pearse was the founder

of St. Enda's school for Boys at Rathfarnham. He was the Commandant general and President of the Provisional Government in Easter Week, during the Rising. He was said to have stated that "blood must be shed in every generation". After Pearse, Yeats mentions Thomas MacDonagh as "this other, his helper and friend". MacDonagh was a Professor of Literature at the University College, Dublin. He was also a poet and dramatist and "might have won fame in the end".

"This other man" whom Yeats had "dreamed" of as 'a drunken, vainglorious louf refers to John MacBride, Maud Gonne's husband. Yeats had a poor opinion of him and felt that "he had done most bitter wrong" to someone who was "near" the poet's heart, referring to Maud Gonne. MacBride had allegedly ill-treated her and they were separated. Yet, after the Rising, MacBride becomes a heroic figure and Yeats "numbers" him "in the song". He, too, has moved beyond the "Casual comedy" of mundane, everyday life and "has been changed in his turn, Transformed utterly".

L . 17: 'That woman'— Constance Gore-Booth (1868-1927)

L . 23: "harriers"—hounds used in hunting.

L . 24: "This man"—Patrick Pearse (1879-1916)

L . 26: "This other"—Thomas MacDonagh (1878 - 1916).

L . 31: 'This otherman"—Major John MacBride (1865 -1916).

L . 33: "Most bitter wrong"—break-up of MacBride's marriage to Maud Gonne

L . 34: "Some who are near my heart" —Maud Gonne and her children

**Stanza 3.** Yeats uses the symbol of a stone to signify those who dedicate their lives to a single purpose ignoring all other dimensions in life. Their "hearts with one purpose alone" seem "enchanted" or turned to "a stone" by some magic spell which obstructs the natural flow of life ("to trouble the living stream"). The horse that comes from the road", the riders, the birds—all change "Minute by Minute". So, do "the long- legged moor-hens" and "moor-cocks" also, and move with the flux of life. But, those people who cut themselves off from the multi-fariousness of existence and devote themselves to a single cause become as fixed and as hard as "Stone". The poet uses natural details to suggest the vitality and flux of life from which fanatics are cut off.

L . 1: 'Hearts' — hearts of fanatic revolutionaries.

L . 3: 'enchanted to a 'stone' —turned into a stone, becoming hard-hearted and resistant to love and life.

**Stanza 4 :** Here Yeats wonders whether the sacrifice was necessary, after all. He is trying to seek justification for the Easter Rising and analyse his own response to it. Yeats begins with a reference to Maud Gonne whose "too long a sacrifice" had made "a stone of the heart. Her long service to the revolutionary cause had made her indifferent to the other aspects of life. Yeats, wonders if that is enough for fulfilment. But "that is Heaven's part, that is beyond human count. The ordinary man's part is to recall the names of those who have sacrificed their lives for such causes—"to murmur name upon name, as a mother names her child" The tender image of a mother and child indicates Yeats's personal feeling of sorrow for those who died after the Rising—"when sleep at last has come on limbs that had run wild." For the revolutionaries, it is not "night fall" but death, synonymous with "sleep". And Yeats asks if it was "needless death, after all" because England might yet have kept "faith regarding its promise of Home -Rule in Ireland. But the revolutionaries did not think so and were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Ireland and "we know their dream; enough /To know they dreamed and are dead." There is yet some doubt in Yeats's mind about the justification of the Rising and he wonders if an "excess of love", had not blurred their reason, "bewildered them till they died". But the sacrifice has been made and Yeats ends his poem with a reiteration of his admiration for those men who sacrificed their lives for their nation - MacDonagh, MacBride, Connolly and Pearse. They will be remembered whenever and wherever "green is worn", referring to the revolutionary songs of the time, green being the colour of shamrocks, the national emblem of Ireland .And, out of the sacrifice of so many valued lives, "a terrible beauty is born".

L . 1 : "too long a sacrifice": Maud Gonne's long service to Irish Revolutionary Causes.

L .12 : England may keep faith'—England's promise of Home Rule for Ireland.

L .16 : "excess of love"—blind, irrational devotion to Revolutionary ideals.

L .20 : Connolly : James Connolly (1870 -1916)-trade union leader and Commandant in the Post-office during the Rising. He was the author of **Labour in Irish History**.

### **An Acre of Grass.**

Picture and book remain,  
An acre of green grass  
For air and exercise,  
Now strength of body goes;  
Midnight, an old house  
Where nothing stirs but a mouse.

My temptation is quiet.  
Here at life's end  
Neither loose imagination,  
Nor the mill of the mind  
Consuming its rag and bone,  
Can make the truth known.

Grant me an old man's frenzy,  
Myself must I remake  
Till I am Timon and Lear  
Or that William Blake  
Who beat upon the wall  
Till Truth obeyed his call;

A mind Michael Angelo knew  
That can pierce the clouds,  
Or inspired by frenzy  
Shake the dead in their shrouds;  
Forgotten else by manking,  
An old mans eagle mind.

'An Acre of Grass' was written in November, 1936, when Yeats was seventy-one. It was published in **The Atlantic Monthly** and in **The London Mercury** in April, 1938. It is included in the collection, **Last Poems**. "An Acre of Grass" deals with the theme of old age, a recurrent motif in a number of poems written during his last years. "Are you Content", "The Apparitions", "Why should not old men be Mad", "A prayer for Old Age", and "The Circus Animals' Desertion" are some poems

written on the theme of age and decrepitude. In these poems, Yeats attempts to revert to the basic, elemental passions of life, shorn of all embellishment. The poet had worked through his mature years to achieve this degree of simplicity when he could reach down to “where all the ladders start, / In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart”. In “An Acre of Grass”, Yeats prays for “an old man’s frenzy” to spur him on in the search for truth. The poet had anticipated this situation in an essay written in 1917:

A poet when he is growing old, will ask himself if he cannot keep his mask and his vision without new bitterness, new disappointment. Could he if he would, knowing how frail his vigour from his youth up, copy Landor who lived loving and hating, ridiculous and unconquered, into extreme old age, all lost but the favour of his Muses.

**Stanza 1:** Yeats begins the poem with a list of the few possessions he still has—“picture”, “book” and “an acre of green grass for air and exercise”. He is old and his “strength of body goes”. He is in his “old house,” the house at Rathfarnham which he had taken on lease for thirteen years. A sense of immediacy, of reality is evoked by the poet’s mention of the time—“midnight”, when the whole house is quiet, “where nothing stirs but a mouse”. It could also be a hint of old-age sleeplessness.

L.5 : ‘an old house’ — “Riversdale”, Rathfarnham, Dublin, leased for thirteen years.

**Stanza 2 :** Yeats is reflecting on this restful life of picture, book and ‘an acre of green grass. “My temptation is quiet”, but has he been able to turn this idea into poetry? No.”At life’s end,” that is, in old age, “neither loose imagination /Nor the mill of the mind” after “consuming its rag and bone” “can make the truth known.” Yeats feels that the bits of imagination are not enough. And surely the mind that has denied the body will not do.

L.1 ‘temptation’ — yearning for active life and for old times spent at Coole Park, as he wrote in a letter to Mrs. Olivia Shakespear, dated 25 July, 1932-”At first I was unhappy, for everything made me remember the great rooms and the great trees of Coole, my home for nearly forty years, but now that the pictures are up I feel more content.”

L . 2: “at life’s end”—in old age.

L . 2: “rag and bone”—flesh.

**Stanza 3 :** Yeats realizes that only frenzy can fetch him from this uncreative quiet. And it is only the old that can gear up that frenzy. He invokes two famous frenzied

figures from Shakespeare, Timon and Lear, the former noted for his rage and the later for his madness, and both utterly wronged. Yeats next calls forth the name of William Blake, an early Romantic poet - philosopher, whose original theories about the Universe and profound poetry fascinated him throughout. Blake was a visionary who worked out his own concept of religion till he arrived at truth—Till Truth obeyed his call”.

L .1 : “An old man’s frenzy”—possibly drawn from Nietzsche’s quotation of Plato—‘All the greatest benefits of Greece have sprung from madness.’”

L.3 : Timon and Lear”-characters in Shakespeare’s plays, *Timon of Athens and King Lear*.

L .4 : William Blake : 1757-1827, Poet and engraver.

**Stanza 4** : Yeats is craving for “a mind Micheal Angelo knew”, that is, for the creative energy associated with the painter -poet. That can pierce the clouds” is a reference to Micheal Angelo’s ‘Creation’ Series painted on the Sistine ceiling. And “shake the dead in their shrouds” is a reference to his ‘Last Judgement’ painted on the altar wall of the same Chapel in the Vatican. Piercing the clouds and shaking the dead in their shrouds are, therefore, also symbolic of the range of creativity that frenzy alone can produce, an old man’s frenzy. It is that he now needs, “an old man’s eagle mind”, else he will be forgotten.

L .1. : Michael Angelo : Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), Italian painter sculptor and poet.

L .6 : “an old man’s eagle mind - perhaps refers to Nietzsche’s. ‘The Dawn of Day’, where he speaks of the genius in men, whose minds, like winged beings” separate themselves from their character and temperament and “rise far above them”.

When Yeats wrote “Easter 1916”, he had already shed his “coat” of “old mythologies” which he had used in his early poetry. Even after he had evolved a more mature style, he would use symbol and metaphor while writing on public issues, as in “No Second Troy” or The Second Coming”. But in “Easter 1916”, he uses a direct, colloquial style which is at the same time full of passionate intensity”. He uses the “stone” symbol to express his misgivings about fanatical devotion to a

single cause which leads to so much blood-shed. And he can also question directly in everyday speech, “was it needless death after all?” Yet, he retains that elevated tone appropriate for the occasion where all are “transformed utterly” and “a terrible beauty is born.”

In “An Acre of Grass”, Yeats has moved further towards a style which is even more direct and hard-hitting and at the same time, intensely passionate. It is a characteristic poem of his last years where metaphor, image, symbol and direct speech combine powerfully. His style is terse and rich in allusion. His inclusion of literary associations (“Timon and Lear”, Blake, Michael Angelo) gives his metaphors and images a specific context and identity. His language is divested of Romantic glamour even, while expressing a craving for “frenzy” or inspiration, as he prays for “an old man’s eagle mind”. In both these poems. Yeats aimed at suiting style to theme.

#### **Select Readings :**

1. W.B. Yeats, **Collected Poems**,  
-Rupa & Co., 1993
2. W.B. Yeats, **Autobiographies**.  
-Papermac, 1980
3. Richard Eilmann, **Yeats :The Man and the Mask**  
-Falver and Faber, 1961.
4. Denis Donoghue , **Yeats**  
-Fontana/Collins, 1971.
5. Louis Macniece , **The Poetry of W.B. Yeats**  
- O.U.P, London, 1945.

#### **Questions:**

##### **1. Long answers.**

- a) Analyse Yeats’s response to the Easter Rising of 1916, as revealed in the poem, “Easter, 1916”.
- b) Write a critical appreciation of the poem, “An Acre of Grass”.

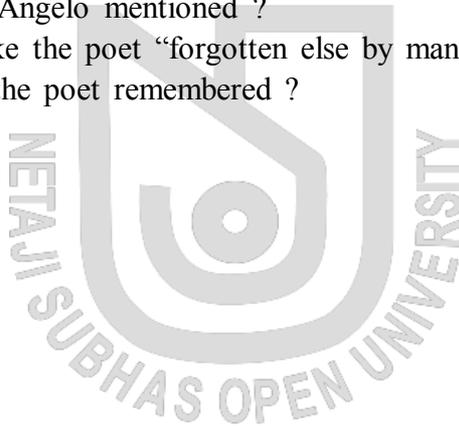
##### **2. Short answers.**

- a) What was the poet’s attitude towards the Revolutionaries before the Rising?
- b) Why does Yeats question whether “it was needless death after air”?
- c) What does the “Stone” signify in the poem “Easter 1916”?

- d) What picture does the poet paint of his present condition in the poem, “An Acre of Grass” ?
- e) Why does the poet pray for “An old man’s frenzy” ?

**3. Objective -type.**

- a) Who is referred to as the “woman” who “rode to harriers” when “young and beautiful” ?
- b) Who “kept a school” and who was his “helper” ?
- c) What was the “most bitter wrong” that “this other man” had committed ?
- d) Who is meant by “England may keep faith”?
- f) Who are Timon’ and ‘Lear’ ?
- g) Why is Michael Angelo mentioned ?
- h) What should make the poet “forgotten else by manking”?
- i) What can make the poet remembered ?



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## Unit 2 T.S. Eliot : Preludes and Marina

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### Structure

#### 1.0 Objectives

#### 1.1 Study Guide

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##### 1.2.1 The Early Days

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##### 1.3.0 Comprehension Exercises on Preludes

##### 1.3.1 Comprehension Exercises on Marina

### T.S. ELOIT : PRELUDES AND MARINA

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#### 1.0 Objectives :

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This unit attempts to introduce you to T.S. Eliot, one of the major poet-critics of what is known as the Early Modern period (1870-1930), in the history of English literature. It places Eloit in the **milieu** of the early 20th century to show how the dynamic changes occurring at multiple levels of experience, in both America and Europe, influenced the shaping of his poetic genius, and how this in turn shaped the aesthetic ethos called “Modern”. The two poems selected in your course, namely **Preludes** and **Marina**, have been critically analysed to reflect the evolution of Eloit, the poet, from an irrepressible radical young man with a declared mission, to one of

the most sensitive perceivers, who can easily rank with the greatest figures in English literature.

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## 1.1. Study Guide

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In this unit you will often find such expressions as image, imagist, objective correlative, imaginative, symbolic and mysticism. It is important to understand them precisely as most of these terms signify literary concepts and techniques which powerfully characterise the great poems written by the greatest poets of the early modern period (1910-1944), Yeats, Eliot and Pound. The other features of their experimental poetry are indirection, suggestion and allusion. The medium of expression is, of course, expressive use of language but language used in evocative ways which, when first employed, appeared strikingly different from those of the Victorian and Romantic poets. New ways of sharp, severe and compressed poetic utterance were devised partly because late nineteenth century modes of expression had grown increasingly trite, less precise, more clumsily ornate and partly because these poets felt that western urban civilisation of the early twentieth century with all its bewildering complexities, dislocations and self-destructive violence (as witnessed chiefly in the 1914-18 War) clearly outgrew old form of poetry and demanded both new vision and new technique. The poetic person still needed to take a stand or play a role (as the speaker does in **Prelude**), still needed, as Yeats explained presenting the poet's case, 'like Milton, Shakespeare, Shelley, vast sentiments, generalizations supported by tradition'. In the greatest poems of the period (Yeats's **Among School Children**, **The Second Coming**, **Easter 1916**, Eliot's **Generation**, **Marina** and Pound's **Hugh Selwyn Mauberly**) the poets achieve, like the old masters, vitality, range and variety as they handle the symbolist imagist techniques and develop a variety of poetic person with a complete mastery in carefully crafted masterpieces.

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## 1.2 Thomas Stearns Eliot

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### 1.2.1 The early days

Eliot was born in 1865, in St. Louis, Missouri (U.S.A.) in a conservative household of entrepreneurs, devoted to the tenets of Christianity called **Unitarianism**. The family was dominated by the patriarchal figure of his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot. His father, Henry Ware Eliot and mother, Charlotte Champs Eliot were guided

by the spirit of the senior Mr. Eliot, but were not as severe in their dedication to the Unitarian faith. Eliot's grandfather and the other pioneers of the European settlers in America preferred a creed in which there was no conflict between man's material and spiritual pursuits and in fact, the Unitarians often justified pure material intentions as aspects of duty and responsibility to the community. While the uneasy alliance between the craving for material gain and the desire for spiritual welfare was suited to the early days of the opening up of the New World, as time progressed, the ethos tended to generate an attitude of **decadence**, which disturbed the young Eliot. He was not a stranger to the subtleties of human sensibilities because Charlotte Eliot was something of a poet herself and under her influence her young son knew there was more to life than justifying pure materialism as communal duty. In his days as a student in the Milton Academy and later as a young undergraduate at the Department of Philosophy in Harvard, he came across contemporary society in the affluent as well as impoverished sections of contemporary Boston and noted that everywhere men and women simply went through the motions of life without any vital emotional and spiritual responses to the act of living.

The times in which Eliot was growing up saw the world being increasingly guided by the physical sciences instead of the biological sciences, and inert matter was assuming great importance. Age old institutions like the Church and traditional value systems based on belief were being seriously challenged by emphatic importance on the phenomenal. If unprecedented advances in science and technology weakened the position of supremacy of the human mind over matter, the World War I drove the proverbial final nail in the coffin of man's dwindling self-esteem.

In Harvard at this time there was the inevitable backlash at the spiritual vulnerability and Eliot's teachers like Prof. **Irving Babbitt** and Prof. **George Santayana** initiated the young man's intellectual development to aggravate an already disturbed emotional state. Eliot's study of Philosophy took off from this early guidance. The chief concern of the Harvard Philosophers was the defence of religious and spiritual values against the challenge of Darwinism and the reconciliation of these with the new scientific materialism of the times. Among the philosophers whom Eliot studied, **F.H. Bradley's** approach seemed to offer the ideal middle path. Bradley identified the plane of immediate experience as the source of all **noumenal** responses, and therefore created a system where the dignity of the subject were preserved without denying the status of the objective world. Though Bradley conceived of an 'Absolute' where all contradictions would be resolved, yet his philosophy emphasized the tension between the subject and the object rather than the hypothetical 'Absolute'.

### 1.2.2 The European Influence.

Another important experience, which formed Eliot's intellectual reaction against the contemporary dehumanization, was the young man's growing interest in French Literature. As a student of philosophy Eliot was interested in Henri Bergson's concept of Time but it was Baudelaire's poetry, with its ability to convey disturbed emotional states in terms of urban imagery and tone that took him further into French literature. The next milestone in the moulding of Eliot was his reading of Arthur Symons' translation of **The Symbolist Movement in Literature**, in the library of the Harvard Union and this book acquainted him with the creative efforts of Stephane Mallarme and Jules Laforgue. The aspiring poet noted that the poetry of these 19th century French Symbolists showed an economy of expression and an uncompromising effort to make transparent the texture. But expression needed the right amount of dilution to improve upon its communicability. And here Eliot's role model was the Italian poet of the Middle Ages, **Dante Aligheri**. The influence of Dante of course went far deeper than serving to improve the poetic idiom. The infusion of belief into a medium that Dante so effortlessly achieved argued a sincerity of belief, which left an indelible impression on one who encountered a generation plagued by splintered consciousness.

### 1.2.3 The reaction against Georgian Poetry; Eliot, T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound.

The early poetry of T.S. Eliot was at one level severe criticism of late Victorian and Georgian Poetry. In this poetry, intent upon creating idyllic worlds of **pastoral** beauty or sentiments rather than sharp, **empirical** feelings Eliot saw an artistic parallel of the spiritual apathy, the shying away from real experience and true feelings that pervaded contemporary civilizations. Inevitably Eliot would see in the Georgian mindset a legacy of the absolute concept of selfhood of generations of **humanistic** thinking, and hence this school of poetry became a convenient target for releasing the new understandings of the living experience. Eliot in America was treading the same path in his crusade against the Georgians as T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound were doing in Britain.

Eliot's contention that poetry could refrain from indulging in sentimental rendition so that it could entail an "escape" from personality is fundamentally in agreement with T.E. Hulme's argument that human progression is governed by "discontinuity" as opposed to the humanistic belief in continuity, which rules out any attempt at self-analysis and self-criticism. The suggestive, unfocused content of Georgian poetry

certainly called for a change even on purely aesthetic grounds. But the need became an intense demand for a spiritual revolution as well because the creative impulse coincided with the urge of the 20th century to probe the causes of its emotional disturbance.

On the purely creative level the way to arrive at the core of truly felt emotion was to evolve effectively sharp imagery. Eliot developed a system of imagery he later termed "objective correlative". He defined it in his essay on "Hamlet" as: "The only ways of expressing emotion in the form of art by finding an 'objective correlative', in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for a particular emotion, such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." In this connection one also recalls Pound's rediscovery of the image and the vital role which, according to him, imagery plays in the development of poem:

'An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.... "It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art'.

This Eliotian prescription is similar to the efforts of the **Imagist** school of poetry, which dominated English and American poetry in the early part of the 20th century. Its main exponent Ezra Pound developed an aesthetic creed upon the philosophy of T.E. Hulme. Hulme felt that the only way of presenting the perception of the splintered consciousness or "discontinuity" was to fashion images with precision as if they were chiselled out of alabaster. Eliot's Lafourgian imagery taken from all walks of life, economic and sensual in character, drew admiration from Ezra Pound across the Atlantic and he announced that the young American had "modernized" himself on his own.

T.S. Eliot was a poet who lived his life in his poetry. Each one of his major poems, beginning from "The Love Song" of J. Alfred Prufrock" and ending with the "Four Quartets" marks a definite stage in the developing curve of experience, where the borderline between the personal and the poetic is maintained with enough control to reveal the human element and keep out the prejudice of sentiment. "Preludes" and "Marina" are remarkable early examples of this continuous development.

## 1.2.4 Preludes

### Preludes

#### I

The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o' clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
10 On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

#### II

The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust-trampied street  
With all its muddy feet that press  
To early coffee-stands.  
With the other masquerades  
20 That time resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.

#### III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,  
You lay upon your back, and waited;  
You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
The thousand sordid images  
Of which your soul was constituted;  
They flickered against the ceiling.  
30. And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters

And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

#### IV

40. His soul stretched tight across the skies  
That fade behind a city block,  
Or trampled by insistent feet  
At four and five and six o'clock;  
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,  
And evening newspapers, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.  
I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling;
50. The notion of some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.  
Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;  
The worlds revolve like ancient women  
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

### 1.2.5 Preludes - Critical Analysis

In the "Preludes" Eliot draws the readers into the core of a diseased modern life peopled by deformed sensibilities. It is possible for readers to discern a similarity of content with **Matthew Arnolds's** "The Scholar Gypsy" and "Dover Beach". But where the earlier poet presented the agonies of spiritual apathy as a nostalgic commentary, interspersed with philosophical speculation, Eliot's determination to "escape" from personality, and achieve a "concentration" or **distilled** expression of experience rules out the possibility of the reader enjoying poetry as an act of leisure.

Preludes is a cluster of four poems, probably acquiring their common epithet from a group of piano pieces composed by the Polish composer Frederic Chopin (1810-49).

They were written separately so that “Preludes” I and II were penned in Harvard in October 1910, and directly relate to Eliot’s nocturnal forays in the Boston slums. The third “Prelude” is the record of the poet’s exploration of those areas of Paris, which lie just beyond the respectable perimeters of the city. The fourth and the last “Prelude” was written either in 1911 after the third, or possibly in the following year in Harvard. The term “Prelude” signifies inflation into the mainstream, and Eliot’s four “Preludes” represent the introductory stages of a spiritual and imaginative **odyssey** that was to span for the next five decades.

One of the basic features of modern poetry, such as was being written by Yeats, Eliot, Auden and other poets of the 1920’s and 1930’s is that they cannot be paraphrased as a continuous narrative, if one says that the four poems of the “Preludes” describe a winter evening scene in a city, a typical urban morning scene, a prostitute’s chamber and the frustration of a city dweller, respectively, the reader will remain completely ignorant about the real significance of the poem. The precise imagery, like “burnt out ends of smoky days” or “smell of steak in passageways” does not tell a story, nor does it speculate from a peculiar, individualistic point of view. Instead it takes the reader into the felt emotion of staleness attending urban life in cities at the turn of the century. When Eliot talks of “burnt out ends....”, “all the hands.../ raising dingy shades...”, or “trampled by insistent feet...” he manages to fuse a number of acute observations into a single powerful feeling. We get the impression of mechanical actions performed with boredom but without any attempt at exploring the sense of mental fatigue. The similarity with the expression of the Imagist school of poetry is evident in the staccato quality of the pictures and Eliot’s reminiscence of Baudelaire’s “Crepuscule du Soir” and “Crepuscule du Matin” are also obvious in the vignettes of the first two ‘Preludes’.

Through these images the reader is made aware of the spiritual inertia in squalid, urban scenes. Further, the repetitive actions are undertaken by dismembered limbs, and they convey the impression that human beings are no longer capable of original feeling and thought; they are no longer individuals but simply automations that are extensions of the materialism all around them. In the second “Prelude” Eliot selects the word “masquerade”, probably digging it out from the recesses of his scholarship on Elizabethan drama, and uses its implications to add on to the impression of spiritual impoverishment, already in place. In the elaborate Elizabethan pantomimes called “masquerades” the participants wore grotesque masks and this form of entertainment always emphasized the elements of “exaggeration” and “caricature”. Eliot sees the daily activity of earning a livelihood and generally surviving in the

modern times as pantomimic gestures- that is, they are acts of pretence like the exaggerated actions of the Elizabethan masques, being made mindlessly, without consciousness.

The third Prelude offers a contrast to the picture of unimaginative, mindless existence. The imagery of this section most likely owes to Eliot's passion or the novel, written by Charles Louis Phillippe called **Bubu de Montparnasse** on which he found the same unflinching emotional honesty that graced the works of the 19th century Symbolist poets. Here the protagonist, is as in Phillippe's novel, a depraved street walker. She is engaged in the age old profession that exploits the perennial human weakness for the flesh and it is in her chamber that contemporary materialistic pompousness is most compromised because it is most clearly exposed for what it really is, namely sordid avarice. The act of prostitution is apparently much more vulgar and gross than the drudgery of the unconscious masses, but Eliot as the perceiver observes in the prostitute's sound perspective that includes an open acknowledgement of the depravity of both her customers and herself, a sharpened sensibility totally absent in the more respectable segments of society.

But the impression of liberation of sensibility is short - lived. In Prelude IV the reader returns once more to a sensation of being denied vitality as he experiences imagery that talks of the "soul stretched tight across the skies". The reference to the "ancient women" is interesting. A group of women, old and wise, are encountered in Greek tragedies of dramatists like **Sophocles**. They comment upon the experiences and attitudes of the protagonists, explaining to the audience the reasons for their suffering. That is to say, in Greek drama these women, collectively called the Chorus, represent the sensibility at its most alert and sharpest. Yet in Eliot's poem the women are seen performing the menial task of scavenging upon the streets of Boston. The image, deflatory in character, is an embodiment of the poet's realization that human sensibility is dangerously departed from responsiveness. There is a sense of threatened self-esteem that makes up the content of much of 20th century literature, and is termed by critics as the "crisis of identity".

The four poems called the "Preludes" see the disturbed consciousness traumatized by its spiritual deficiency and cynically realizing that for all its "civilized" accomplishments it is a poor human being than those, who are kept outside the mainstream of society. Such a mood of agony and frustration provides the stimulus for the quest for redemption to begin and this prepares the ground for the arrival of "Marina".

### 1.2.6 Marina (Text)

#### Marina

Quit'is hic locus, quae  
regio, quae mundi pfaga?

What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands  
What water lapping the bow  
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through  
the fog  
What images return  
O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning  
Death  
Those who glitter with the glory of the humming bird,  
meaningm  
Death

10. Those who sit in the sty of contentment meaning  
Death  
Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning  
Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by wind,  
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog  
By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer  
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger\_\_  
Given or lent? more distant that stars and nearer than the eye

- 20      Whispers and small laughter between leaves and  
          hurrying feet.  
          Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.  
 I made this, I have forgotten  
 And remember.  
 The rigging weak and the canvas rotten  
 Between one June and another September.  
 Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own  
 The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.  
 This form, this face, this life  
 30 Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me  
 Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,  
 The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.  
  
 What seas what shores what granite islands towards  
 my timbers  
 And woodthrush calling through the fog  
 My daughter.

### 1.2.7 Critical Analysis

T.S. Eliot's consummate imaginative achievement called "Marina" marks one of the more rare occasions because it provides a direct reference to his personal view of mysticism by actually stating the time of his conversion to Anglo - Catholicism. In 1927 Eliot, who was often assailed by cynicism in the early phase (when, for example, the "Preludes" was composed), was baptized into Christianity at Finstock Church in Oxfordshire, and received his confirmation in that summer. "Marina" published in September 1930, contains these lines:-

"I made this, I have forgotten  
 And remember  
 The rigging weak and the canvas rotten  
 Between one June and another September".

Despite the obvious relation between the poem's composition and Eliot's conversion it is not a religious poem in the strictest sense of the term. Rather the dawning of a deeper realization arising from the need to believe instead of living a life like 'Hollow Men'.

A convert undergoes a duality of involvement. He must simultaneously discard delusion and embrace the strange experience of true perception. "Marina" attempts to arrest the fragile, ineffable moment of transition from one experience to the other

and record a final release. Its title refers to Shakespeare's "Pericles", the story of the Greek king who miraculously rediscovers a daughter, lost in the sea in her infancy; at the same time the title quotes 'Hercules' words of terrible remorse taken from Seneca's **Hercules Furens**, uttered after he wakes up from a charmed sleep and realizes that he has killed his children under the curse of a spell. The references evoke emotions of ecstasy and agony arising from the core of special bonding between the father and the child. The metaphorical nature of the title is clear when we realize that spiritual struggle entailing loss and recovery or discovery of loss is as integral an element to man's existence as the child's relation to a father. When the spirit fights for vision and yet is not always enlightened enough to resist delusion, the emotional experience is richly ambivalent. Its ways between the ecstasy of Pericles and the agony of Hercules as each becomes aware of the discovery and loss, respectively of something so indispensable to their lives.

The poem appropriately opens with a series of interrogations, as the struggling, questing soul is likened to a floundering boat, trying to reach a half-seen destination. The questionings express the anguish of a spiritual struggle. In the second stanza the reader is drawn into the heart of delusion, and it is worthwhile to notice Eliot's manipulation of semantics as the word death is invested with an extraordinary signification "Death" is not physical annihilation but it is spiritual degeneration, and Eliot achieves this signification by piling up imagery of gross sensuality and Biblical references and withdrawing all punctuation so that the stanza rolls on presenting a series of images or objective correlatives which precisely evoke sensual responses till the predicate comes in the form of "Are become unsubstantial.. "The animal imagery of the wolf or dog may have come from Eliot's fondness for Jacobean drama, especially Webster's **The Duchess of Malfi** and **The White Devil**, where the scavenging wolf is often the symbol of gruesome death. The emblems can also be identified with the seven Deadly Sins of traditional Christianity like anger, envy, ambition, pride, sloth, greed and lust. The cumulative effect of the symbolic imagery is to bring an awareness of what Coleridge regarded as "the-death-in-life" syndrome in "**The Ancient Marine**". Indeed the conventional life-attributes like anger and lust are referred to as negative experiences. By associating the so-called life-attributes with annihilation Eliot succeeds in making clear the nature of a new doubt. The self, undergoing spiritual cleansing, is expectant but vulnerable, as if after death he is about to encounter an unfamiliar existence.

With the understanding of insignificant existence firmly in place, the reader's mind is able to respond to the redemptive emotion evoked by the liberating, refreshing

images of a song-filled, salt-laden air of the opening lines. The soul, like the boat is ravaged, the one by spiritual struggle, the other by harsh weather. Eliot adds objective correlatives taken from Christian prayer such as “grace”, redemptive symbols like “stars”, and literary images of religious deliverance like the phrase from Alice Meynell’s poem ‘They’, reading “Given or lent”. These beautifully suggest the state of imminent redemption. As the call of redemption intensifies and becomes irresistible, the felt experience permits the highly involved metaphor of the boat to recede and a direct acknowledgement of faith, advancing the position of the protagonist as cynic, (cf. “Preludes”), to that of a believer, take its place. The reference is to the following lines:

This form, this face, this life  
Living to live in a world of time beyond me, let me  
Resign my life, my speech for that unspoken...”

This is followed by the image of the Christian supplicant and the expression of rich mystic feelings becomes complete.

The poem ends with a near repetition of the first stanza. But there are significant changes on the level of language which you will immediately notice. If you keep in mind the metaphor of the boat, you will observe that the granite shore is now no longer at a distance but it is relentlessly coming closer. This signifies a readiness of the soul to surrender its flawed existence, even if it implies an entry into a strange spiritual condition, more demanding than the one left behind. The change in the nature of the fog is also noteworthy. From “wood song fog” we now have the woodthrush “calling” and there is no more fog. That is to suggest that the perceiver has increasingly achieved clarity of vision or belief, as he prepares to surrender his old life. The mention of “daugher” without the encumbrance of words suggesting the vulnerability of the early stages of the spiritual odyssey, denotes that like Pericles finally convinced of Marina’s miraculous recovery, the protagonist has also regained his lost faith in the act of living.

### **1.2.8 Conclusion**

T.S. Eliot had left the shores of his native America for brief European exposure just before the 1914-18 War. He never went back permanently as an early marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood, and pre-occupations of livelihood and aesthetic ambitions kept him busy. He had his financial crises and personal problems but became a more

settled man of letters after he became the director of the famous publishing firm, Faber & Faber. He went on to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948, and the Order of Merit in the same year. There followed other academic honours, a second, happy marriage and a long and fruitful life. By the time he breathed his last in 1965, Eliot had become an international literary icon.

### 1.2.9 Glossary

Milieu—background.

Irresponsible—that cannot be repressed, determined.

Unitarianism—A Christian sect that grew out of Calvinist Puritanism, but rebelled against the more dogmatic parent philosophy in believing in the rational man as opposed to the dogmas of Original Sin and predestination. Eliot was unhappy with their tendency to combine theological liberalization with social conservatism, and believed they were hardened rationalist time-servers.

Decadence—from “decay”, state of decline.

Irving Babbitt—Eliot took his course on Literary Criticism in France, in Harvard in 1909-10.

George Santayana—Eliot attended his course on the history of Modern Philosophy in 1907-08, at Harvard.

Aggravate—intensify.

Darwinism—from “Darwin”. Charles Robert Darwin (1809 -1882), famous Naturalist, who systematically explored the theory of Natural Selection, as applied to plants and animals in **The Origin of Species** (1859). A theory such as this would assume sinister proportion in an age enslaved by the stranglehold of rationality, as was the case at the turn of the century.

F.H. Bradley—Exponent of philosophical thought called Neo - Idealism, (1846-1924). Eliot wrote his Ph.D dissertation on this philosophy , which was published as **Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley** Eliot retained a life-long admiration for Bradley’s prose, which admitted contradictory points of view to arrive at a new richer signification.

Noumenal—that which identifies , from the intuitive mind.

Dante Aligheri—13th century Florentine poet, the writer of **La Vita Nuova** (*The New Life*) and **Divina Comedia** (*The Divine Comedy*). T.S. Eliot admired Dante’s artistic self-control, which resulted in precise rendition of complex spiritual struggles.

Pastor- of shepherds, of rural life. The Latin poet Virgil is credited for setting up

the tradition of pastoral poetry, which, generally speaking, evokes sentimental images of rural peace and simplicity from an urban point of view.

Empirical-based and acting on observation, not on theory.

Humanistic-from "Humanism" 16th century meaning of Humanist-one who taught humanities as grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. In the 19th century "humanism" was formed. The term referred to the general values, educational ideas which were common to many humanists and later writers of the same tradition. Renaissance humanism assumed the dignity and central position of man in the Universe.

Imagist-from "Imagism". It was a poetic movement, which flourished in England and America from 1912-17. Based on the philosophy of T.E. Hulme, it was spread by writers like Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, D.H. Lawrence, William Carlos Williams, John Gould Fletcher and Richard Aldington.

Matthew Arnold-Late Victorian poet (1822 - 1888), famous also as an educationist and a lecturer. He recognised the threat to man's spiritual identity consequent of the upsurge of dry rationality and materialism, and therefore preempts the concern for reviving spiritual integrity of the Early Modern poets. But he was more a man of thought than experience and wrote speculative poems which did not quite capture the disturbance of the times.

### **Persona**

Persona in recent criticism, reflects the tendency to think of narrative and lyric works of literature as a mode of speech. To conceive a work as an utterance is to assume that there is a speaker who expresses attitudes both towards the characters and materials within the work and towards the audience to whom the work is addressed. In recent criticism, then, the word is often applied to the first person speaker whose voice we hear in a lyric poem. The term can be applied for example, to the voice presenting the experience in *Marina* (and even *Preludes*, particularly in the last section). Sometimes it is possible to attribute the voice we hear to the poet in his own person (Yeats in *Among School Children*, Eliot in *Marina*).

### **Image/Imagery**

This term is one of the most common in criticism and sometimes it varies in meaning. Its applications range all the way from the 'mental pictures' often experienced by the reader of a poem to the totality of the components which make up a poem.

Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, through literal descriptions allusion or figures of speech (similes, metaphors). In recent criticism, imagery signifies figurative language, particularly components of metaphors and similes.

### **1.3.0 Comprehension Exercises (Preludes)**

1. Imagery is carefully employed in this poem to achieve precise effects. Can you pick out words and phrases which suggest (a) squalor, (b) dinginess, (c) monotony.(d) stagnation ?

2. What do you think is the theme of the poem ?

3. In a good poem the title often initiates you into the text. What do you think the title of this poem signifies?

4. Explain the lines:

The worlds revolve like ancient women Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

### **1.3.1 Comprehension Exercises (Marina)**

1. In this poem, too, the title performs important functions and assumes the symbolic dimensions of a persona. Read the commentary carefully and then discuss the significance of the title. (Also look up 'Persona' in the Glossary.)

2. This great poem illustrates Eliot's consummate use of what he called the 'objective correlative'. Can you spot examples of 'Objective Correlative' here?

3. Iterative imagery plays an important part here. What do you think the phrase, 'meaning' death' signifies ?

4. What is the effect of bird images in Marina ?

5. Write a critical analysis of the poem.

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## **Unit-3 W.H. Auden: “On This Island”, L. Macneice: “Snow”, Philip Larkin: “Church Going”, S. Heaney: “Digging”**

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### **22.3.1 Objectives :**

In this unit we are going to study four twentieth - century lyrics. A lyric is usually regarded as an expression of a private mood, feeling or state of mind. The word “lyric” etymologically from the Greek musical instrument “Lyra” (lyre or harp) and signifies something meant to be sung to the lyre. Since music is associated with emotion, inevitably lyric poetry is emotional poetry. It is also subjective. One of the following poems. “Snow” by MacNeice, fits this description very well. Although it began with private emotion, it soon extended to include all themes that move the poet. For instance, Wordsworth’s sonnet “The World Is Too Much With Us” is a meditation on the problem of increasing urbanization. This extension is more evident in modern poetry. It is subjective. In the other three poems of this unit you will notice that the poets, unlike, say, the Elizabethan Lyric poets, have combined private feelings with the momentous public themes and events of the twentieth century like anxieties about World Wars, (‘On this Island’) decline of organised religion, (‘Church Going’) colonial oppression, terrorist violence, and clashes on narrow sectarian, communal, religious grounds. (‘Exposure’) You should also note in all the four poems, experiments in poetic forms and craftsmanship, the use of free verse, the rhythm of living colloquial speech even in traditional stanza forms, the expressive sensuous sound symbolism in language (alliteration, consonant clusters, pun, rhyme,), subtle shifts and variations in tone, and evocative but complex imagery. These will help you to identify a number of the most important traits that characterize twentieth century lyric poetry.

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### **1.1 Text :**

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#### **On This Island by W.H. Auden**

Look, stranger, on this island now  
The leaping light for your delight discovers,  
Stand stable here

And silent be,  
That through the channels of the ear  
May wander like river  
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause  
When the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges  
Oppose the pluck  
And knock of the tide,  
And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf,  
And the gull lodges  
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships  
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands,  
And the full-view  
Indeed may enter  
And move in memory as now these clouds do,  
That pass the harbour mirror  
And all the summer through the water saunter.

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## 1.2 Introduction to the Poet :

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W.H. Auden was born in 1907 at York in England, was educated at Oxford, where he came under the influence of the ideas of Freud and Marx, left for the USA in 1939 and became a US citizen in 1946. In 1958 he bought a farmhouse in Austria and spent a few months there each year. He died there in 1973. His poetry since the forties became increasingly Christian in tone.

During the 1930's Auden, along with Stephen Spender, C.Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice, was determined to engage with the contemporary economic and political landscape. A topicality and social concern, a political stand, usually leftwing, were more central to their work than to the work of poets coming before or after them. A

blending of the individual perception and social awareness, of the private and the public, is a distinctive feature of the thirties poets. A careful reading of Auden's "On this island" clearly bears this out.

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### 1.3 Central Idea :

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The poet looks at a scene which is the meeting place of land and sea and suggest that though looking beautiful it is actually full of foreboding. It is apparently a poem of nature but, in fact, of man. The convergence of land and sea suggests harmony, but it is only illusory and really full of the threat of imminent disharmony.

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### 1.4 A Critical Analysis of the Poem :

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The physical setting of the poem is a cliff, a meeting - place of land and sea. (A frontier or boarder territory, the (line between the known and the feared, the past and the future, is a recurrent image of Auden) The time is early morning. The speaker exhorts a stranger to look at England from the cliffs of Dover. The "leaping light" uncovers the island for the stranger. If he stands here quietly, he can listen to the moving sound of the sea., The waves break the chalk wall of the cliffs. The tall ridges resist the tide. The shingle is swept away by the withdrawing waves. A gull lodges "a moment" - but not makes a home - on the "sheer side" that is perhaps dive soon to fail. Far off the ships sail on with some urgent voluntary purposes. But all these previously unperceived, beautiful sounds and sights may pass away soon and be mere objects of memory of a joyful past.

The poem was written in 1935 and published as the title poem of **Look Stranger!** (1936).. But Auden preferred the title of the American edition, **On this Island** (1937).

The first sixteen lines of the poem build up a picture in which potentially discordant elements are apparently reconciled. Here silence and sound, land and water, humanity and nature become interdependent. The sound of the sea suggests some vast violent force, but "the ear" can humanize it. It gets converted into the gentle murmur of a river as it passes 'through the channels of the ear". (In Auden's poetry rivers are linked to valleys, good society, lit houses, friendship and hospitality, says John Lucas). The gull is also in harmony with the cliff, however short-lived it may be. The man-made and the natural are blended in the image of the ships as floating seeds. The last

line also merges summer and autumn (suggested by the “floating seeds”).

However, there are also hints that this harmonious picture is to be enjoyed only for the time being. The disharmony is first indicated in stanza 2 through such words as “oppose” “scrambles” “pluck” and “knock”. The last stanza is now regarded as prophetic. The poet says that the ‘full view’ - formed after taking all things in consideration - may have to exist in memory only. For the poet cannot ignore the great economic depression and the ominous international situation during the 1930s. The decade began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, killed his rival colleagues and withdrew from the League of Nations; Japan also did so and attacked China proper. The Spanish Civil War began in 1936. This series of international calamities culminated in Hitler’s attack of Poland and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Auden was not unaware of the deep current of tension below the apparently peaceful surface- which he perceived to be purely temporary. This is suggested by the repetition of the adverb “now” twice (lines 1 and 19). Moreover, the “urgent voluntary errands” has a suggestion of threat, for “urgent and “voluntary” seem to be contradictory and the line implies that soon the ships will be used to perform compulsory, coercive errands; they may be life - giving like seeds now, but soon will be more like bullets. Besides, an awareness of the international situation will make one regard the clouds as an image of the dark ominous future war and unrest.

Thus the mood of the poem, like that of most of Auden’s early poetry, takes its origin in public history inseparable from a personal state of mind.

You may read Matthew Arnold’s well-known poem “Dover Beach” and compare and contrast it with “On this Island.” Arnold’s poem also suggests a harsh note of violent clash and confusion within an apparently calm, fair, sweet, tranquil picture of sea and land. However, Arnold is saddened by the present, and Auden is full of foreboding of the future.

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## 2.1 Word - Notes

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Line 1 : “Look Stranger”: who is this “Stranger”?

Is Auden addressing a foreigner ? Perhaps not. For a foreigner may not care much for the inward - looking, musing beauty of the vision. Auden may address another Englishman or the reader to look on and perceive the land and the sea in a new light. But more probably, “the address is a self address”, the stranger being Auden himself. He may not have previously looked at contemporary Britain in the way that he

“Now” does. Besides, he often feels himself alienated from England, particularly from its natural beauty as displayed in an autumnal seascape, as he is often preoccupied with the industrial landscapes of a city like Birmingham where he grew up, with its tramlines and slagheaps and pieces of machinery. ^

Line 2 : The “leaping light”—the sunlight on the dancing waves suggests the image of the spotlights of a theatre, and “discovering”, the rising of the curtain, almost as much as it suggests dawn.

Line 8-13 : “ledges”: ridges of rock;

“shingle” : small rounded pebbles lying on sea -shore ;

“Scrambles” : moves hastily over rough ground

The language of these lines, according to John Lucas, is that of war, suggesting military defeat (“iatis”), heroic resistance (“oppose”), and defection (“scrambles”). Allan Rodway, on the contrary, perceives the sense of a match, a game rather than a battle, and emphasizes the harmony of the picture. The students should also note the sound - effects of “pluck”, “knock” and “suck-ing” and the use of insistent alliteration in lines 2,3,7,12,14,15,19, and 21.

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### **3.1 Comprehension Exercises :**

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#### **A. Essay - type Questions :**

- 1) How does Auden make something like a nature poem informed with historical concerns in “On this Island” ?
- 2) Make an analysis of the imagery in “On this Island”.

#### **B. Short -answer type Question :**

- a) Whom does Auden address as “Stranger” ?
- b) Describe the physical setting of the poem.
- c) Bring out the significance of the repetition of the word “now” in lines 1 and 19
- d) What does the stranger see “at the small field’s ending”?
- e) What will happen if the stranger stands “stable” and become “silent”?

**C. Objective - type Questions :**

- i) What is a “chalk wall” ?
  - ii) Give the meaning of “errands”.
  - iii) What does the poet say about the “tall ledges” ?
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**3.5 Text :**

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**Snow**

by Louis MacNeice

The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was  
Spawning snow and pink roses against it  
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:  
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we think  
Incorrigibly plural I peel and portion  
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel  
The drunkenness of things being various

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world  
Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes  
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's hands  
There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses.

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**4.1 Further Reading :**

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### **Snow**

by Louis MacNeice

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## **5.1 Introduction to the poet:**

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Louis MacNeice (1907-1963) was born in Belfast in Northern Ireland and educated at Oxford. He has always been linked with Auden, Day - Lewis and Spender under the “Macspanday” umbrella (the contemptuous collective name given to them by Roy Campbell). But he does not deserve the narrow identity of a leftwing social poet of the thirties . He reveals a joyous awareness of the beauty and diversity of things. His poem “Snow” presents an act of spontaneous and mystified enjoyment.

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## **5.2 Central Idea :**

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The poem presents the poet’s shocked awareness of the contiguity and coexistence of diverse, bizarre, freakish and even incompatible things in our world. But the poet’s perception is that our world is not the less rich, gay and intensely enjoyable for this disparate multifariousness of things. He tends to accept this plurality with gladness.

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## **5.3 A Critical Analysis of the Poem :**

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The poet sat in a room of a big mansion. A bouquet of pink roses stood before a great bay window in this room. Suddenly he became aware of a change in the atmosphere of the room, then he realized what was happening. He noticed that it had begun to snow heavily.

And the static roses and the whirling snow were strikingly juxtaposed on the glass of the window. He saw the roses standing without motion ‘against’— in contrast to— the background of the swiftly falling snow. He felt that the window “was spawning” snow and roses. The verb “spawn” belongs to biology. It carries the suggestions of breeding without control, a very large number, physical energy and incessant motion.

The use of the past progressive tense implies the continuousness of the snowfall. The metaphor, as applied to an inorganic process, embodies the speaker's sense of the strangeness of the scene. The speaker's intellectual interpretation of the rose - snow juxtaposition is presented with two abstract but precise words: "collateral" and "incompatible". The roses and the snow have "a side in common since they share the common boundary-plane of the glass window. The roses and the snow "cannot really exist together in the same conditions," since what enables one to exist would destroy the other. Yet they were together. This striking experience led the poet to make a general comment: "World is sadder than *We* fancy it". The omission of definite article before "world" suggests that we must experience it as a state of condition, not as a unified thing (the world) separated from us.

In the second stanza, the poet supplements his general comment. He now dwells on the surprising diversity of "World" - the contradictions of its endless plurality. One of his trivial everyday actions, the eating of a fruit, occurs to him as a further illustration of these aspects of experience. The fruit, the tangerine, has an apparently simple shape. But within it lie numerous sections containing the "pips". Thus the fruit is like a microcosm. It has a plurality in unity and thus it represents the totality of things making up the world. The peeling and portioning and eating the tangerine and spitting the pips make the poet feel "the drunkenness of things being various". The poet uses an onomatopoeic device: as we pronounce the letter *Hp* in "peel", "portion", "split" and "pips", our lips move as if to expel a small object, and thus initiate the action described.

The train of thought is completed in the last stanza. The speaker feels that the sound of the fire in the fireplace is paradoxically like the bubbling of water. He thinks that "world" is "more spiteful and gay than one supposes". Here "spiteful" does not suggest malice but rather a kind of prankishness. The unexpectedness of "world" makes the poet feel to be like a victim of a cosmic practical joke. He perceives the gaiety and playfulness of the world "On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's hand". "On the tongue" recalls the eating of the tangerine, "in the palms of one's hands", holding and peeling of it, "on the eyes", the roses and the snow, and "on the ears", the bubbling sound of fire. The omission of punctuation helps us to read the line rapidly. "World" in the poem suggests the world of sensory and pleasurable experience; it includes both the extraordinary moment of beauty and everyday things and actions. The last line goes back to the rose - snow incident for a final statement. The poet suggests that the relationships among objects of our experience (as exemplified by the roses and snow) are less simple, more mysterious than we think.

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## 5.4 Word - notes

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- L1 bay window : window projecting out from the wall, with glass panes.
- L.2 spawning : producing eggs or offsprings in large numbers. particularly by fish or frog. Implication of uncontrolled growth.
- L.3 collateral : incapable of existing together in the same position.
- L.3 incompatible : incapable of existing together in the same position.
- L.7 tangerine : a mandarin orange; the name implies that it is native to Tangier, seaport in Morocco, and it is also “incompatible” with the climate in which the speaker finds it.
- L. 6 peel (verb) : strip the skin from orange etc.
- L.6 portion (verb) : divide things into parts.
- L.7 pips: seeds in fruits like orange, grapes etc.

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## 5.5 Comprehension Exercises :

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### A. Essay- type Question :

- 1) How does MacNeice express his sense of beauty, joy and mystery of “World” being “incorrigibly plural” ?
- 2) Make a critical analysis of MacNeice’s poem “Snow”.

### B. Short -answer type Questions :

1. why was the room “suddenly rich” ?
2. Explain what the poet feels when he eats a tangerine.
3. Do you find any paradox in lline 9 ? What does the paradox suggest?
4. What does the poet wish to convey in the last lline of the poem ?

### C. Objective - type Questions :

1. What kind of climate is indicated in the poem?
2. In what kind of building can one find a “great bay window” ?
3. Why are the roses and snow “ incompatible” ?
4. Give the meaning of the phrase “things being various”.
5. What is meant by “spiteful” in the poem ?

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## 5.6 Bibliography

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**Church Going**  
by Philip Larkin

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### 6.1 Text :

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**Church Going**  
by Philip Larkin

Once I am sure there's nothing going on  
I step inside, letting the door thud shut.  
Another church: matting, seats, and stone,  
And little books; sprawllings of flowers, cut  
For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff  
Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;  
And a tense, musty, unignorable silence,  
Brewed God knows how long. Hatless, I take off  
My cycle-clips in awkward reverence,

Move forward, run my hand around the font.  
From where I stand, the roof looks almost new -  
Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don't.  
Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few  
Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce

'Here endeth' much more loudly than I'd meant.  
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door  
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,  
Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

Yet stop I did: in fact often do.  
And always end much at a loss like this,  
Wondering what to do for; wondering, too,  
When churches fall completely out of use  
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep  
A few cathedrals chronically on snow,  
Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases,  
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.  
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?

Or, after dark, will dubious women come  
To *make* their children touch a particular stone;  
Pick simples for a caner; or on some  
Advised night see walking a dead one?  
Power of some sort or other will go on  
In games, in riddles, seemingly at random;  
But superstition, like belief, must die,  
And what remains When disbelief has gone?  
Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky,

A shape less recognisable each week,  
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who  
Will be the last, the very last, to seek  
This place for what it was; one of the crew  
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?

Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,  
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff  
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrth?  
Or will he be my representative,

Bored, uniformed, knowing the ghostly silt  
Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground  
Through suburb scrub because it held unpilt  
So long and equably what since is found  
Only in separation—marriage, and birth,  
And death, and thoughts of these—for which was built  
This special shell? For, though I've no idea  
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth,  
It pleases me to stand in silence here;

A serious house on serious earth it is,  
In whose blent air all our complusions meet,  
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.  
And that much never can be obsolete,  
Since someone will forever be surprising  
A hunger in himself to be more serious,  
And gravitating with it to this ground,  
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,  
If only that so many dead lie round.

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## 6.2 Introduction to the Poet :

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The Movement poetry of the 1950s was marked by a reaction to the intellectualism and social consciousness of the previous three decades. Philip Larkin (1922-1985) is often regarded as one of the Movement poets who prefer traditional stanzaic and prosodic forms, native common sense and an empirical approach, dislike the use of

myths in the exploration of contemporary history, and allusiveness—what Larkin mockingly calls “a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets.” However, Larkin himself denies that his poetry has anything to do with the group image of the Movement and suggests that it is merely a media hype. “Church Going”, a central poem in Larkin’s work, for instance, does not fit in the theoretical mould of the movement for it has a grand theme, treated, in the last analysis, in a serious enough manner.

Larkin published only four major volumes of poetry with major time gaps in between : **The North Ship** (1945), **The Less Deceived** (1955), **The Whitsun Weddings** (1964) and **High Windows** (1974). Yet he is regarded as one of the most important poets of the second half of the twentieth century. Donald Davie thought in 1973 that “there has been the widest possible agreement over most of this period, that Philip Larkin is for good or ill the effective unofficial poet laureate of post - 1945 England”.

“Church Going” was written in 1954 when Larkin was in Northern Ireland. It was published in **The Less Deceived**. The title is ambiguous. It **may** mean “going into churches”, indicating a particular visit, or “the church is going”, that is, religion is dying; or, going to church, as people used to go and they will, despite the neglect now. Faith is inherently in us, and cannot die.

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### **6.3 : The Central Idea :**

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The poem is a meditation on the role of the church in a predominately secular age. The poet assumes that in the second half of the twentieth century Christianity is dying. However, life will be the poorer for it. For the church has so long held the most important issues of life like birth, marriage and death in close and serious association. But now these are found only in separation, the unity has been wrecked. And yet, the poet feels that even if the church falls into a ruin, the place will attract people, for people have a hunger for “seriousness” which they think the church can satisfy, although on a conscious level they may feel embarrassed for doing so.

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### **6.4 An Analysis of the Poem :**

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#### **Stanza -1 :**

Out for a bicycle ride, the poet stops at a church on a weekday and goes in to have a look. He makes a brief survey of its contents, deliberately trying to be irreverent;

matting, seats, stone, little books, withered flowers from the Sunday service, some brass and staff and a small organ. He pretends to be detached, skeptical, colloquial, even a little mocking. Yet he cannot but feel an “awkward reverence”. He takes off his hat and cycle - clips, perhaps as a mark of respect to the place. He does not fully understand his emotions and feels slightly uncomfortable.

**Stanza -II :**

Then he moves forward to the font, looks at the roof, wonders whether it is cleared or restored. He goes up to the lectern and reads a few lines from the Bible, parodying the manner of the vicar or lay reader (lines! 5-16). His words echo in the empty church. The words (that is, his voice) do not snigger. Only the echo mocks the meaninglessness of his action. There is no relevance of these in today’s context. Then he comes back to the entrance, signs the visitor’s book and donates “an Irish six pence”. He thinks that the place is not important enough to make a stop.

**Stanza -III :**

However, the fact is that he stopped there, went in and indeed, he often does so. He wonders why at all he stops to visit church and also speculates what will happen to such places “when churches fall completely out of use”. Will some churches be kept as museums, and their contents like “parchment, plate and pyx” be kept in locked cases for exhibition? Will the rest perhaps be allowed to deteriorate? Will deserted churches be regarded as “unlucky places”?

**Stanza -IV :**

He gusses churches then may be the breeding - grounds of superstitions. Some “dubious women” (of suspected, questionable character or doubting, hestating) will come here to “make their children touch a particular stone” or pick medicinal herbs as a cure for cancer. Advised to visit the church on a particular night like the Hallowe’en, the superstitious persons will see a ghost walking: there. The belief in the existence of a supernatural power will be perhaps service in a disguised way in games, riddles and other ways. But when superstitions. like religions farth, also desappear, nothing but “grass, weedy pavement, brambles, sky” will remain.

**Stanza -V :**

Continuing his reflection, the poet says that after the disappearance of superstition, people will not be able to recognize either the place or its purpose. He guesses that the last person who will visit and recognise the church as church will be perhaps antiquarian “ruin- bibber, randy for antique” or some “Christmas - addict”celebration. These type of people will be interested in the incidental, superficial objects to be collected as merely curious things, they will completely miss the true significance of the church. Or such a visitor may be like him.

**Stanza -VI :**

In this stanza he elaborates on the last lline of the previous stanza and describes himself and others who, like him may come . He is “Bored, uniformed, knowing the ghostly silt /Disperesed” and yet incapable of resisting the attraction of the significance of the place. He thinks that because of the function of the church, marriage, birth and death in the past (in an Age of Belief) attained a unity and transcendental significance in human life. But with the decline of religious faith, these events are seen in isolation and without any sacred meaning.

For instance.marriage now no longer holds any scantity procreation. Now birth of a child is not always accepted as a blessing, may be something unwanted, preferably to be prevented or controlled. Shorn of religious meaning, death may now be only an object of fear and disquiet, as passiing into a void, into nothingness. The church, on the contrary, had conferred a divine purpose and unity to all these events.

However, the poet is still unsure of the validity of his thoughts. He calls himself, “bored” that is, not enthusiastic about such positive ideas; “uniformed, that is, not knowing enough about churches and their significance. He is pleased to stand here in silence, though he has no clear “idea/what this accoutred frowsty barn is worth”. His rational mind deliberately uses these irreverented words - ‘frowsty barn’.

**Stanza - VII :**

This stanza has been called a “peroration”, a formal conclusion. It contains no more doubtful question or uncertainties or deliberate understatement and down playing of his true emotions, but declarations in serious tone and dignified language. Here he attempts to offer an explanation for his initial “awkward reverence”. He declares that the church is a “serious house on serious earth”. Although man many cease to practise the rituals of an organised religion, there will forever be “A hunger in

himself to be more serious". So lack of seriousness about many of our compulsions like marriage, birth and death—"compulsions" because these are biologically inescapable—will leave in man a spiritual and psychological dissatisfaction. But in a place of worship these compulsions are "blent", fused to form a harmonious whole, are presented as "destinies". The word "destinies" connotes that men must accept these events with humility and positive meaning. The poet emphatically states: "And that much can never be obsolete"

And therefore men will for ever be "gravitating" to churches. "Gravitating in this context is sufficiently weighty, serious and apt expression, for the verb "gravitate" means "be strongly attracted to some centre of influence "(OED,3). Once man considered the church a "ground ... proper to grow wise in" by seeing, at any rate, "so many dead lying around" in the adjacent graveyard; it was what may" be called a "memento mori". a reminder of death. Even in the present godless age, or perhaps because of the prevalence of the forces of death as were displayed in the World Wars, the "hunger to be more serious" has not become dated; rather it has increased. That is why even in a secular, welfare state, men like the poet visit places of worship in search of a positive meaning and wisdom.

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## 6.7 Word notes

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### Stanza - II.

font : a receptacle, usually of stone, for the holy water used in baptism.

lectern : reading-desk or singing-desk in church.

hectoring: blustering, imitating a grand, serious, heroic style.

snigger: utter half -suppressed mocking laughter. Not he, himself, only the echoes.

Irish sixpence : the poem was written after an actual visit to a church in Northern Ireland.

### Stanza - III :

Chronically : through the ages.

pyx: the vessel in which the consecrated bread of the Eucharist is kept.

### Stanza - IV :

Simples : medicinal plants.

**Stanza - V :**

roodlofts : a gallery at the top of a rood-screen, the ornamental partition separating choir from nave or body of church.

ruin - bibbers rone who is very interested in the study of ruins; ‘bibber’ actually means one who drinks much and often. Antiquarian

randy : having a rude, aggressive manner; coarse - spoken, lustful.

Christmas - addict: perhaps formed on the analogy of drug - addict and implies being excessively romantic or sentimental about Christsmas and things associated with it.

**Stanza VI :**

ghostly silt : ‘silt’ is fine sediment; it is used here to describe a deposit of belief in a supernatural religion.

scrub : undergrowth or thicket; brushwood; ground covered with it.

accoutred : dressed; equipped with all the paraphernalia of a church,

frowsty : stuffy; with musty warmth. Deliberately irrerential word being con

tradicted by the fact that keeps coming back,

barn : large outhouse

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**6.8 Comprehension Exercises :**

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**A. Essay-type Questions :**

- 1) “Church Going” is an important statement of the mid-twentieth century consciousness. Discuss.
- 2) “Church Going” reveals an agnostic’s attitude to religion and its symbols. Do you agree with such an assessment of the poem ? Justify your Answer.

**B. Short-answer type questions :**

- a. How does the poet describe the contents of the Church ?
- b. When “superstition” will die what kind of visitors will come to the church?
- c. What does the poet refer to by “all our compulsions”?
- d. “And gravitating with it to this ground “-what does ‘it’ signify here?
- e. Is the title “Church Going” ambiguous ?

### C. Objective-type Questions:

- a. Why have the “sprawlings of flowers” become “brownish now”?
- b. What is a “lecturn”?
- c. Why does the poet say “The echoes snigger briefly” instead of “The sniggers echo briefly”?
- d. Why will “dubious women/pick simples”?
- e. What does the poet suggest by describing the church as “This special shell” in the line 52 ?

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#### Exposure

by Seamus Heaney

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### 7.1 Text :

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#### Exposure

by Seamus Heaney

It is December in Wicklow:

Alders dripping, birches

Inheriting the last light,

The ash tree cold to look at.

A comet that was lost

Should be visible at sunset,

Those million tons of flight

Like a glimmer of haws and rose-hips,  
And I sometimes see a falling star.  
If I could come on meteorite!  
Instead I walk through damp leaves,  
Husks, the spent flukes of autumn,

Imagining a hero  
On some muddy compound,  
His gift like a slingstone  
Whirled for the desperate.

How did I end up like this ?  
I often think of my friends'  
Beautiful prismatic counselling  
And the anvil brains of some who hate me

As I sit weighing and weighing  
My responsible *tristia*  
For what? For the ear? For the people?  
For what is said behind-backs?

Rain comes down through the alders,  
Its low conducive voices  
Mutter about let-downs and erosions  
And yet each drop recalls

The diamond absolutes.  
I am neither interneer nor ionformer;  
An inner emigre, grown long-haired  
And thoughtful; a wood-kerne

Escaped from the massacre,  
Taking protective colouring  
From bole and bark, feeling  
Every wind that blows;

Who, blowing up these sparks  
For their meagre heat, have missed  
The once-in-a-lifetime portent,  
The comet's pulsing rose.

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## 7.2 Introduction to the poet :

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You have already read a poem by Seamus Heaney called "Digging". The present poem "Exposure" belongs to his much-discussed book **North** (1975). In this poem Heaney explores some facts and circumstances of his own life to articulate his thoughts on the relation between poetry and politics.

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## 7.3 Historical and Political Background :

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In order to understand the poem better, we should be familiar with some important facts of Irish history as well as of Heaney's own life.

England was a close trading partner of Ireland in medieval age. The English court of William the Conqueror, who became king of England in 1066, often discussed the idea of invading Ireland. Then in 1169 Dermot, a provincial ruler of Ireland, in his rivalry with other provincial rulers, appealed for help to the English king Henry II. This event became an invasion. Some Norman earls and barons conquered parts of Ireland. Finally in 1171, Henry II declared himself the king of Ireland.

However, the Irish people had fought for independence from the oppressive English rule for seven centuries. In 1922 the English rulers partitioned Ireland into two parts along religious lines: Irish Free State (Later changed to the Republic of Ireland) with a Catholic majority, and Northern Ireland (often called Ulster, which is its ancient name) with a Protestant majority and still a part of the United Kingdom. The majority population of Ulster considered itself British because of its religious affinity with Protestant England. But the Catholics were one-third of the population of Northern

Ireland and they were discriminated against in education, employment, housing and other administrative areas. There have been prolonged protest against this. The situation became dangerous in the late sixties. In 1968 the Civil Rights movement organised marches in protest against chiefly vote-rigging and discriminations in housing allotments in Derry City, about forty miles from where Heaney was born. The Ulster government tried to suppress the protests by police baton charges, internment without trial, torture and imprisonment. Rioting between the Catholics and Protestant loyalists and Royal Ulster Constabulary followed. The British army entered the City in 1969. In January 1970 the Provincial Irish Republican Army was officially formed by Catholic extremists in Dublin. Since then terrorist violence by both the Catholics and the Protestants has increased. The trouble has not yet ended.

Heaney was born in a Catholic family on County Derry in Northern Ireland. He had to suffer all the insecurity, suspicion and humiliation for being a member of the religious minority. In a poem entitled “The Ministry of Fear” he describes how he used to be stopped on his way, questioned, searched and abused by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and his armed and uniformed Protestant neighbours acting as B- Special Police Force, in an interview speaking of his experience of being a Catholic in Northern Ireland he says : “It’s almost a racist term, a label for a set of cultural suppositions”. Heaney was himself involved in the Civil Rights movement and wrote often on the political and cultural scene in Northern Ireland in various journals like the **New Statesman** and the **Listener**. But in 1972 Heaney left Northern Ireland as a consequence of threats from loyalist paramilitary and settled in a secluded cottage in Glanmore in County Wicklow in the Republic of Ireland. His move South received a great deal of media attention. It created in his mind self-doubts about whether he has shirked his responsibility towards his people and whether as a poet he has failed to respond to the situation. Then he wrote this fine poem “Exposure”.

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#### **7.4 Central Idea :**

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It is a poem of deep self-searching. The poet has reached a cross-roads of sorts in his life. Looking back at his life as a poet, he examines the significance of what he has achieved and what he might have achieved, what role his poetry should play in confronting the historical agony and the tragedy of his people and his country. In short, it is a meditation on the relationship of poetry and public life as well as his own motivations.

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## 7.5 A Critical Analysis of the Poem :

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The physical setting of his meditation, with symbolic overtones, is presented with the help of a few telling images. It is winter. Light is fading rapidly just before sunset. Alder, birch and ash trees are cold, being exposed to the cold weather. The winter picture suggests a depressed state of mind. He imagines he walks “through damp leaves. Husks, the spent flukes of autumn”. It is more of a symbolic or psychological than a physical journey. There may be a pun in ‘leaves’ in that they may refer to the pages of his books of poems. Does he regard his poems as ‘husks’, ‘spent flukes’?

He hopes that when night comes, a comet will be visible. The “million tons of light” of a comet remind the poet of glimmering flowers and fruits (like... a glimmer of haws and rose - hips”). The comet image fuses fear and beauty and calls up to memory Yeats’s phrase “terrible beauty” in his poem “Easter 1916”, and so suggests a bloody sacrifice, a revolutionary event. The poet also sometimes sees “a falling star” and exclaims “If I could come on meteorite!” These images suggest his desire to be even in a lesser degree revolutionary activist.

For in stanza IV, he speaks of “a hero/On some muddy compound”. This hero, in the Irish context and for Heaney, may refer to a Catholic political activist, an internee now confined in the “muddy compound” of an internment camp. He whirls his “slingstone” (a primitive weapon) on behalf of a “desperate” people who, perhaps, are the oppressed Ulster Catholics: they are described as “the desperate” because they, have little room for hope, are reckless and can stake all on a small chance.

Instead of being such a hero, he has chosen to “end up like this”, that is to migrate to the safety and seclusion of a Wicklow cottage. Apparently he has taken himself away from his native place, from the centre of all political activity (civil rights marches, police firing and baton charges, bombing campaigns, internment without trial, imprisonment, road - blocks, cordon and search operations, interrogations, executions). He asks himself: “How did I end up like this?”. He thinks both of his “friends counselling” and the hatred of his enemies. (Ian Paisley’s paper **The Protestant Telegraph** called Heaney “the well-known papist propagandist” and his emigration was termed as a return to “his spiritual home in the popish republic”. Indeed their brains are like” anvils” on which one can be hammered ruthlessly!)

Questions crowd in his mind. He thinks of his “responsible tristia”. The word “tristia” in Latin means “sorrows”, and is very evocative. The Roman poet Ovid (BC 43-18 Or 17 AD) felt his life shattered when he was banished by the emperor Augustus and forced to take up his residence at Tomis, a Roman outpost on the Black

Sea. Despaired of his chances of return to his native Rome, Ovid wrote his lyrics called **Tristia**. Moreover, Neil Corcoran points out, **Tristia** is the title of one of the books of Osip Mandelstam, a Russian poet, who was forced to live in one of Stalin's camp when he wrote an anti-Stalin poem. Heaney might find some affinity with both Ovid and Mandelstam. Heaney further asks himself whether he should write his poems for attention, praise, pleasure or for the people's cause or as a rebuttal to what he is accused of: "For what ? For the ear ? For the people ? For what is said behind-backs ?"

He listens to the rains and is reminded of disappointments and gradual loss of faith and confidence ("let - downs and erosions"). Simultaneously, however, each drop of rain also recalls "The diamond absolutes". The hard, bright, diamond-like "absolutes" suggests his poetic beliefs and principles that are independent of and unaffected by accidental political circumstances.

The process of self - examination facilitates the discovery of his artistic identity; he is neither a political activist nor a spy or traitor to his people("neither internee nor informer") but an "inner emigre". He has left Northern Ireland to settle in the Republic, but for him both the parts constitute one country, divided merely on superficial political and religious lines. He may be legally described as an "emigre", but he wishes to modify this description by calling himself an "inner emigre". The term may also suggest another kind of emigration; he has retreated from the external world of political activism to enter into his inner world, introspecting on his true identity as a poet. He is an "inner emigre" also "in his internal psychological status as an emigrant from certainty and self-assurance to a transitional zone of anxiety and insecurity", as Corcoran says.

But it appears that Heaney has transcended this "transitional zone" as he identifies himself with a "wood-kerne"- one of those late medieval lightly - armed Irish rebels who escaped into the forest as a tactical retreat, to avoid "massacre" and prepare for future battle. Heaney in the same way has come to sort of natural retreat, the Wicklow cottage among alders, birches and ash trees, permeated by wind and rain. Taking sustenance from nature, he is recovering his battered and doubt - ridden creative powers, exploring both his personal and the Irish situation from every perspective :

Escaped from the massacre,  
Taking protective colouring  
From bole and bark, feeling  
Every wind that blows.

But this process of looking within does not produce any smugness. In the last stanza “these sparks” with “meagre heat” that he is “blowing up” might be his speculations and controversial moves. With humility he acknowledges that he has missed “The comet’s pulsating rose”. The comet as a “portent” presages something about to happen, especially of a momentous nature; he apprehends that he has missed a revelation, a possible revolution.

However, the poem on the whole does not have a despairing note. His speculations are after all “sparks”. Besides, in lines 31-32 he speaks of himself as ‘grown long-haired/ and thoughtful, “Interestingly, the word “comet” derives from Greek “Kometes” meaning “long-haired”. It certainly suggests that Heaney intends to be regarded as a long-haired fiery substance like the comet, but “thoughtful”. The implication is that the poet cannot shirk his political responsibility, but must remain faithful to his own art. Indeed Robert Lowell was justified in describing Heaney’s **North**, to which “Exposure” belongs, as “a new kind of political poetry by the best Irish poet since W.B. Yeats”.

Neil Corcoran says that the title suggests different meanings like the greater openness to natural environment, confessional self-revelation, and the media publicity which Heaney’s emigration occasioned. But it is also something more: it is an illumination of the role of poetry vis-a-vis politics.

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## 7.6 Word - notes :

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L.8. haws : hawthorns; hawthorn berries; hedges;

L.8. rose-hips ; the fruits of the rose,

L.10. meteorite : a fallen meteor

L.12. flukes : puffs of wind; chance breeze; barbed heads of arrows  
lance.harpoon etc

L.15. slingstone : a stone or pebble cast by a sling; a sling is a simple weapon, consisting of a loop of leather, for throwing stones

L.16. whirled : moved in a circle or curved, esp. rapidly or with force.

L.19 prismatic : many coloured, full of contradictory colours.

L.27. let-downs: disappointments; drawbacks; disadvantages; lowering; in status, intensity or strength.

L.27. erosions : the process action of destroying imperceptibly, little by little the state of being eroded;

L.29. absolutes: that which exists or is able to be thought of without relation to other things; an absolute principle or truth free from doubt or uncertainty.

L.30 interneer: a person who is interned or confined as a prisoner, obliged to reside within prescribed limits of a country etc without permission to leave them.

L.30 informer: person who gives information or intelligence ; a person who informs against another for reward; spy.

L.31. emigre : any emigrant, especially, a political exile. Originally a French emigrant from the revolution ; emigrant means a person who leaves one's own country to settle in another.

L.32. wood-kerne : light - armed Irish foot - soldier ; a rustic, a peasant.

L.35. bole : the stem or trunk of a tree.

L.35. bark : the layer of tissue over the stem of a tree.

L.39. portent : that which predicts something about to happen, especially of a momentous nature; a supernatural sign or revelation, prodigy; a marvel.

L.38. meagre : poor, scanty, inadequate, unsatisfying; lacking fulness and richness.

L.40. Comet : a celestial object that orbits the sun in a highly elliptical path and, when in the vicinity of the sun, usually has a bright hazy head and a long more diffuse tail; (figeratively, a portent, a herald).

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## 7.7 Comprehension Exercises :

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### A. Essay-type questions :-

- I) "Exposure" is a creation of anguished self-examination. Discuss.
- II) Consider Heaney's "Exposure" as a political poem.
- III) In "Exposure" Heaney explores the relationship of poet and his civic responsibilities. Discuss.

### B. Short-answer type questions:

- I) Describe the physical setting of the poem.
- II) Who is the "hero" (Line13) imagined by Heaney in "Exposure" ?
- III) What does the rain "mutter" to the poet ?
- IV) Why does Heaney calls himself an "inner emigre" ?

V) What does the poet say about a “wood - kerne”?

**C. Objective-type Questions:**

i) Why is the “ash tree cold to look at” ?

II) What are “haws and rose-hips” ?

III) Explain the meaning of “internee”.

IV) What is suggested by the phrase “anvil brains “ ?

V) Why is a comet described as a “portent” ?

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**Unit 4 Sylvia Plath : “Daddy” and “Lady Lazarus”**

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**Daddy**

by- Sylvia Plath

You do not do, you do not do  
Any more, black shoe  
In which I have lived like a foot  
For thirty years, poor and white,  
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.  
You died before I had time—  
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,  
Ghastly statue with one gray toe  
Big as a Frisco seal.

And a head in the freakish Atlantic  
Where it pours bean green over blue  
In the waters off the beautiful Nauset.  
I used to pray to recover you.  
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town  
Scraped flat by the roller  
Of wars, wars, wars.  
But the name of the town is common.  
My Polack friend.

Says there are a dozen or two.  
So I never could tell where you

Put your foot, your root,  
I never could talk to you.  
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.  
Ich ich, ich, ich,  
I could hardly speak.  
I thought every German was you.  
And the language obscene.

Chuffing me off like a Jew  
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.  
I began to talk like a Jew.  
I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna  
Are not very pure or true.  
With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck  
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack  
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been sacred of you,  
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.  
And your neat mustache  
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.  
Panzer-man, panzer.man, OYou—

Not God but a swastika  
So black no sky could squeak through.  
Every woman adores a Fascist,

The boot in the face, the brute  
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,  
In the picture I have of you,  
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot  
But no less a devil for that, no not  
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.  
I was ten when they buried you.  
At twenty I tried to die  
And get back, back, back to you.  
I thought even the bones would do.  
But they pulled me out of the sack,  
And they stuck me together with glue.  
And then I knew what to do.  
I made a model of you,  
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of rack and the screw.  
And I said I do, I do.  
So daddy, I'm finally through.  
The black telephone's off at the root,  
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two—  
The vampire who said he was you  
And drank my blood for a year,

Seven years, if you want to know.  
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart  
And the villagers never liked you.  
They are dancing and stamping on you.  
They always knew it was you.  
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

**Lazy Lazarus**

by— Sylvia Plath

I have done it again,  
One year in every ten  
I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin  
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,  
My right foot

A paperweight,  
My featureless, fine  
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin  
O my enemy.  
Do I terrify ?—  
The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth ?  
The sour breath  
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh  
The grave cave ate will be  
At home on me.

And I a smiling woman.  
I am only thirty.  
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.  
What a trash  
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.  
The Peanut-crunching crowd  
Shoves in to see.

Them unwrap me hand in foot—  
The big strip tease,  
Gentleman, ladies

These are my hands  
My knees.  
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.  
The first time it happened I was ten.  
It was an accident.

The second time I meant  
To last it out and not come back at all.  
I rocked shut

As a seashell.  
They had to call and call  
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls,

Dying  
Is an art, like everything else.  
I do it exceptionally well.  
I do it so it feels like hell.  
I do it so it feels real.  
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.  
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.  
It's the theatrical.

Comeback in broad day  
To the same place, the same face, the same brute  
Amused shout:

'A miracle'!  
That knocks me out.  
There is a charge

For the eyeing my scars, there is a charge  
For the hearing of my heart——  
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very on charge  
For a word or a touch  
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair on my clothes.  
So, so Herr Doktor.  
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,  
I am you valuable,  
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.  
I turn and burn.  
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash——  
You poke and stir.  
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——  
A cake of soap,  
A wedding ring,  
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.

Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air.

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## 1.1.

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Although the relevance of a writer's biography to a proper study and appreciation of his/her work has been occasionally questioned, in the case of Sylvia Plath the life

and the work seen to be inseparable. Indeed, one can go further and suggest that even her death by suicide casts a shadow on much of her poetry, for Plath is one of the most death-haunted poets you will ever read. Ariel, the volume of poems to which both 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus'<sup>1</sup> belong, has been aptly called 'the dialectic of death'. The poems collected in this volume, including the two you are going to read, were written in the last year or so of Plath's brief life. At the same time, however, we must remember that the fact her suicide, which created a sensation in literary circle, must not be allowed to cloud our reading of her poetry.

Here we will have time to record only a few facts of Plath's life. She was born in 1932 and both her parents, Otto and Aurclia Plath, were teachers. Her family naturally encouraged learning and from a very early age Sylvia read avidly. Her reading in fact was a preparation of her art; it also enabled her to become in later life a teacher of literature. Her father, Otto Plath, had come to America from Germany and this German background partly, explains Plath's presentation of the father-figure in 'Daddy' as a Nazi dictator. Though her father died in 1940 of complications arising from diabetes, when Sylvia was barely eight, he continued to arouse in his daughter mixed feelings, a sort of ambivalent attitude, as we see in her poetry. In most of her early poetry, the father is an idealised figure. We learn from the letters of Sylvia's mother that Otto Plath, fearing that his illness was communicable, kept himself aloof from his children. Sylvia herself said later in life that he was an autocrat whom she 'adored and despised', that she often wished that he were dead, and that when he actually died, she suffered from feelings of guilt, imagining that she had killed him. So far as her mother is concerned, she had brought up her daughter well and Sylvia thought that she must not dislike her mother, so that when she felt impatient or irritated with the mother, Sylvia again experienced feelings of guilt. But the role played by her mother in her poetry is nowhere near as complex as that of her father. A few other facts of Plath's life must be briefly mentioned, for they have a bearing on her poetry. In 1953 she suffered a nervous breakdown, received electroconvulsive shock treatments and attempted suicide. As a result she had to undergo therapy and rehabilitation at Mclean Hospitals, Massachusetts. In 1955 she went to England to attend Newnham College, Cambridge, on a Fullbright scholarship. In 1956 she met Ted Hughes, who was to become one of the leading English poets of the twentieth century, and married him secretly. Though they had two children, marital difficulties plagued them and Hughes left her in 1962 to live with another woman. In 1963 Plath's only novel, **The Bell Jar**, was published under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas; in the same year she made, in the worlds of the American poet M.

L. Rosenthal, 'her final' and finally successful, suicide attempt'.

Thus Plath had a troubled childhood, lost her father at an early age and was mentally disturbed for much of her life. Her marriage turned out to be unhappy, she had suicidal tendencies and finally committed suicide. But it must also be remembered that her poetry is valuable not simply as a personal document but also for its literary qualities.

### 1.1.2

Sylvia Plath is usually described as a 'confessional' poet. The confessional poem brought private humiliations, sufferings and psychological problem into the poems usually developed in the first person and intended without question to point to the author. In fact, it is because of the 'confessional' nature of her poetry, especially her late poems like 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus', that we seek a close relation between her life and her work. The term 'confessional poetry' is applied to a group of twentieth century American poets who chose the self as their subject. The first and greatest poet of this kind was Robert Lowell who declared, 'I can only tell my own story', and believed that his story needed to be told. There is abundant evidence that Plath was profoundly influenced by Lowell's collection of poems, **Life Studies**. She herself said that she was very 'excited' by the 'new breakthrough' that came with **Life Studies**. She also indicated very clearly the reason for her excitement: 'This intense breakthrough into very serious, very personal emotional experience, which I feel has been partly taboo'. Other American poets who have been called 'confessional' and who similarly dealt with 'Peculiar and private taboo subjects' (Plath's phrase) are John Berryman and Anne Sexton. The origins of many of Plath's poems lie in personal experience: a birthday present, a bout of fever, confinement to a hospital bed. Above all, poems like 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus' are explicitly concerned among other things, with death, the end which she consciously sought. Some confessional poets discovered peace and what has been called a 'therapeutic release' in the very act of composing poetry-for instance, Lowell. But for some others, especially Plath, writing was only a means of aggravating their private wounds, of pushing them towards the verge of death.

The American poet, M.L. Rosenthal, applied the term 'confessional' to Plath's poetry in a more restricted and specialised sense. For him, a genuinely confessional poem achieves 'a fusion of the private and the culturally symbolic'. Thus the private psychological vulnerability which is often at the centre of Plath's poetry is also a

cultural symbol, an 'embodiment of civilization'. From such a point of view, Plath's suicide is seen as a typically contemporary gesture. A poem like 'Lady Lazarus' is confessional not only because it presents the speaker as a skilled suicide artist but also because the crowd which has gathered around the artist to enjoy her performance represents the voyeurism, sadism and purely concealed fascism which characterize a significant aspect of twentieth century civilization. Plath also often associates her own suffering and longing for self-annihilation with the mindless barbarity and brutality perpetrated by the Nazis and by the American ruling forces in Hiroshima during the Second World War.

Thus Plath is a 'confessional' poet in her insistent exploration of her private self and its psychic wounds, subjects which were earlier considered 'taboo', and also in her attempts to place her own anguish and suffering in a larger cultural context, to transmute it into an embodiment of the more general suffering and victimisation which characterize an aspect of modern civilization.

### 1.1.3

Sylvia Plath's poetry is sometimes interpreted in 'feminist' terms. 'Feminism' as a literary movement was a natural offshoot of women's political movements for equal rights with men, and the political side of it should never be observed. Beginning in Europe and America in the late 1960s as a conscious endeavour to project powerfully the woman's point of view in a masculine-dominated culture in which the woman is often seen as 'the second sex', feminism has now assumed many and different forms, so that it seems natural now to speak of 'Feminisms,' which is the title of an anthology of feminist criticism, first published in 1991 and edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl. As the editors explain, they have used the plural form to acknowledge the diversity of motivation, method and experience of feminist writers and critics. Since it will be neither possible nor necessary to describe here all its different forms, only a few of its characteristics may be broadly indicated, in the hope that such a brief summary will be enough for our present purpose. Feminists and feminist critics are of course indebted to pre-twentieth century writers as well as writers of the early twentieth century, for example, Virginia Woolf who says in **A Room of One's Own** (1929) that 'if one is a woman, one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off consciousness,... when from being the natural inheritor of the civilization, she becomes on the contrary outside of it, alien and critical'. Literary tradition too has overlooked the works of many women writers, and some feminist

critics seek to rediscover and reinterpret these works. Others have sought to interpret the works of male writers from a woman's point of view, often finding in these works attitudes that have undermined women's position in life and society. Some feminist criticism, especially French, stresses the role of literary language as an expression of specifically feminine experiences and attitudes, since the patriarchal linguistic structure not only excludes but also represses the feminine. There are other, more radical, forms of feminism too.

For us the crucial question, however, is: can Plath be called a feminist poet? In her poetry she often presents herself as a victim and expresses in poems like 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus' a hatred of and an anger against men. In both poems, men are also presented as oppressors. In both poems, men are also presented as man's prey, harassed by his impossible demands, persecuted almost to the point of death. In a striking poem, **The Applicant**, a woman who is being offered as a wife, is dehumanized and referred to as 'it'. In **Lady Lazarus**, the speaker's enemies are all men and the victim asserts that her revenge will be terrible: she will eat men like air'. In **Daddy** the torturer of the woman-victim is again a male figure—father as well as husband. Such poems undoubtedly reflect 'a splitting off of consciousness' often experienced by a woman when 'she becomes alien and critical. But Plath seldom suggests that men as a class torture women or that women as a class should stand up against men. In other words, Plath is not interested in the politics of man-woman relationship nor is she concerned with ideological issues. Her moving portraits of a woman tortured by tyrannical male authority in 'Daddy' and 'Lady Lazarus' could easily have come from a consciously feminist poet. But Plath is not concerned with the feminist cause as such, nor can her ambivalent relationship with her father be explained in exclusively feminist terms. At best it can be said that her poems sometimes deal with issues that were to become critical for the feminist movement later. Womanliness was a central issue in her poetry without being a consciously adopted feminist agenda.

It has also been said that another woman poet of her time, Adrienne Rich, the power of whose poetry Plath recognised, was more conscious of the need for women to create their own 'common language'. Her poetry shows a conscious attempt on her part to develop a recognizably female language. Moreover, Plath also sometimes directed her rage against women, expressing her intense dislike of female celibacy, childlessness and ageing in poems like 'Barren Women', 'Widow', 'Lesbos', 'Childless Women', 'Medusa' and the 'The Other'. It has also been pointed out that some of her early poems, such as 'All the Dead Deers' express an ambivalent attitude to female

identity. On the other hand, Plath's uninhibited description for bodily processes like ageing and becoming battered by illness not only matches her equally frank representation of mental illness, but has been seen sometimes as a characteristic of twentieth century women's poetry, which has generally been more open than men's poetry about the body and its functions. Some feminist criticism has associated the celebration of physicality with the act of writing; they argue that women's language is more fluid and less confined than that of men.. Though this kind of specially female language was not used by Plath, what some other feminist critics say about female language may throw a good deal of light on Plath's poetry. These feminist critics point out that women's poetry even in earlier ages has often identified feminine sensibility with suffering. Subject to physical vulnerability, these women often seek to reject the self. Plath's poetry may be said to belong to this tradition, as 'Lady Lazarus' shows.

To conclude, therefore, it is difficult to offer a clear-cut answer to the question whether Plath was a feminist poet. All we can say is that though Plath was not a full fledged feminist poet always championing the cause of women as a class in a masculine-dominated culture, in important respects her poetry expresses facets of female sensibility and focuses sometimes on experiences which are specifically and exclusively feminine.

Questions (short answers expected):

1. Mention two facts of Sylvia Plath's life which are relevant to the study of her poetry.
2. What was Plath's attitude to her father ?
3. How did Plath die ?

Questions (Longer answers expected):

1. What is 'confessional' poetry ? In what sense is Plath a confessional poet ? Name two other confessional poets.
2. What is feminism ? Can Plath be called a feminist poet ? What is your own' attitude to the feminist cause?
3. Is Plath always sympathetic to women ? Which aspects of a woman's life or personality does she dislike ?
4. Was Plath successful in describing a special language for women in her poetry?

Mention a contemporary of hers who was aware of the need for a different language for women. In what respect does Plath's own poetic language strike you as specifically feminine ?

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#### 1.4 About the poem 'Daddy'

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Though Plath was careful to draw a distinction between herself and the speaker of this poem, and though recent criticism rightly insists on an inevitable gap between the 'I' as the speaker and the 'I' who is the grammatical subject in the speech, some of Plath's own feelings and experience undoubtedly serves as the raw material of this poem. There was, first of all, her own ambivalent relationship with her father, as we have seen. Then there was Plath's tendency to represent facts of that relationship in her poetry, sometimes with sorrow, as in the early poem, 'The Colossus' and sometimes with anger, as in 'Daddy'. There was Plath's deeply felt need to recreate that relationship in her adult relationships, for instance, with her husband. Finally, there were her attempts at suicide. All these facts undoubtedly lie behind the poem, reminding us of M.L Rosenthal's comment that confessional poetry continues the 'Romantic and modern tendency to place the literal self more and more at the centre of the poem'. But we must also remember Plath's conscious attempts to distance herself from the speaker in her poetry. She described 'Daddy' as 'a poem spoken by a girl with an Electra complex'. (In classical Greek mythology Electra is the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. After the murder of Agamemnon by his wife, Electra incites her brother to kill Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. In Freudian psychoanalysis the term 'Electra complex' refers to the hidden love of the daughter for her father and her consequent hatred of her mother.) Plath also said that the speaker's case 'is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish'. Plath's fictionalisation of her own experience is seen in the fact that though her own father came from Germany, he was definitely not a Nazi. Moreover, there is no evidence that her father mistreated Plath; and the daughter was 'a bit of a Jew' not in a literal sense, but in a culturally symbolic one. In short, Plath has enlarged and transcended personal feelings and circumstances in the poem.

The nursery-rhyme element, often seen in Plath's poetry is strongly present in this poem; it is appropriate too in the sense that the speaker roots her complex feelings for her father in her childhood, uses the fairy-tale image of the old woman living in a shoe to suggest her unnaturally constricted existence and ends with the fantasy of killing the vampire-like Daddy by driving a stake through his heart. Some would call

this fantasy a sign of infantile aggression. Then there are insistently repeated rhymes, for example, rhymes ending in the sound 'u', which persist through the whole poem. There are other kinds of repetition too : 'You donot do, you donot do', "An engine, an engine". Such repetitions give the poem an incantatory effect. The very word 'Daddy' is a child's loving form of address.

#### **1.4.1 Analysis of the poem**

At the very beginning the speaker employs a tone of command to the person who has dominated her life with his cruel, dictatorial ego, forcing her to live for thirty years a cruelly confined life, compared to the life of The old woman who lived in a shoe'(about whom there is an actual nursery rhyme). The paired adjectives 'poor and white' have a double function, referring to the condition of the foot when it is taken out of a shoe after a long time and also associating the speaker with the poorer classes among white people. So oppressive was the male tyrant's rule that the speaker did not even dare to breathe easily or express feelings of arrogance or anger. (Plath's father died when she was below ten and therefore the reference to 'thirty years' can only mean, for those who seek biographical accuracy, that the figures of the father and the husband are merged in Plath's consciousness). Ultimately the tortured, repressed victim had to kill the oppressive father. It would be wrong to interpret this statement as a suggestion of patricide: what the speaker wants to suggest is that she had to reject the idealised, god-like image of the father she had constructed as a child. But there is a note of ambivalence too in the description of the child's image of the father as a heary, ghastly statue. The following five lines (10-15) are tender and lyrical, visualising the state of the father as huge (the one gray toe is as big as a seal of San Francisco), with the head extending over the Atlantic ocean. (The reference to one gray toe' may again remind the biographically minded of the poet's actual father, Otto Plath, one of whose legs had to be amputated because of diabetes). But the image of the patriarchal statue associated with God by the child, gives way to a terrible Nazi figure. Even if the memory of Otto Plath inspired the earlier lines, the father figure is now being associated with a symbolic figure of wider and darker associations. From the tender touch of 'I used to pray to recover you' followed by the German words 'Ach, du, meaning, 'oh, you', the speaker moves to a vision of whole towns devastated by the war started by Nazi Germany (The Second World War). The German words make the transition appear natural and Polish towns are mentioned because Poland was one of the first countries to feel the destructive fury of the Nazi

forces. The friend who speaks of many towns devastated by the war is deliberately describe as 'Polack', usually a disparaging term, to heighten the arrogance and superior attitude of the Nazis. The identification of the father with a Nazi tyrant begins and the father figure now takes on an allegorical shape, terrorising the speaker to such an extent that she could not speak to him. The image of the tongue sticking in the jaw as the speaker makes an effort to speak immediately calls forth the image of 'a barb wire snare' suggestive of war, captivity and repression. The relapse into German ('Ich' means 'I') reinforces the sense of terror as the speaker continues her identification of the father with 'every German'. Even his language, commanding and authoritarian, appeared obscene, propelling the speaker, who is now explicitly identified with a Jew. This identification has the effect of enlarging the personal tragedy of the speaker into a much greater and more widely experienced tragedy experienced in the massacre of the Jews by Nazi Germany during the Second World War. It is also possible to glimpse in the speaker's identification with a Jew an attempt to equate the suffering of women with the persecution of Jews. Thus the personal history of the speaker, and possibly of the poet too, is linked to a historical experience of much greater significance. (Dachau, Auschuritz and Belsen were sites of concentration camps during World War II; thousands of Jews were tortured and massacred in these camps).

The speaker elaborates upon her fictional Jewish identity : just as the snows of the Tyrol, an alpine region in Austria, and the beer of Vienna, are not very true or pure, she too, what with her gypsy ancestress and gypsy characteristics, may well have something of the Jew in her; (Taroc or tarot, from Italian, **tarocco**, is a pack of cards used for fortune-telling and naturally follows 'gypsy ancestress' by association since gypsies practise fortune-telling). By contrast, the tyrannical father is again and more strongly associated with the German war machine. (Luftwaffe' is German for Air Force, while 'Panzer', means 'armour'— the soldiers who manned German armoured tanks during World War II were called Panzer' troops.) The German military terms as well as physical traits like neat moustache and Aryan eye reinforce the father figure's German identity (The Nazi Germans, proud of their Aryan ancestry believed in themselves as a superior race;) for them 'Aryan' meant a non-Jewish Caucasian.) The -God-like image of the father, earlier conjured up by the speaker, is now completely discarded and replaced by the 'swastika', the official emblem of the Nazi Party, which is imagined as huge and black enough to cover the sky, its oppressive actuality enveloping the consciousness of the terrified victim, to whom the speech of the Nazi tormentor appears to be 'gobbledygoo' that is, a difficult and pompous language. The power and awe of the father are further consolidated in the image of him as a teacher

standing at the blackboard, while his cleft chin suggests his devilish character, though devils were supposed to have cleft feet. But there is also a disturbing hint of the adoration and fascination felt by masochistic women for their tormentors. (Masochism, named after Sacher-Masoch who described it, refers to gratification derived from one's own pain and deprivation.) The father is called a 'black man' in the sense of having a black, cruel mind, which broke the daughter's heart. Yet the daughter's love-hate bond with the father is so strong that her attempted suicide when she was twenty is seen as an attempt to be reunited with the father, whom she lost at the age of ten (eight ?). However, she was pulled back from the brink of death and made fit to live again. But she could not get rid of her father-fixation, since she chose to live with another man who may be called a surrogate father, another dictator on the model of the lost father. This man too had a black mind and his look was as dictatorial and domineering as that of Hitler. (Mein kampf, 'My campaign' is the title of Hitler's book about his life and political aims.) Besides, he too took a perverse delight in torturing the speaker, the 'rack' and the 'screw' symbolising one of the most excruciating forms of torture. The speaker's submission to this tormentor also suggest, however, an element of thrill and fascination derived from the violence inflicted on her, leading to her desire to give herself to death, for that is what the black telephone being rooted out and the blocking off of the voices suggest.

The transfer made by the speaker from the father to the husband also leads her to purge herself of the oppressive power of the tyrannical male, who in the last four stanzas of the poem adopts the identity of the tormentor. (Another relevant biographical detail is that Sylvia's husband, Ted Hughes, liked to dress in black.) Thus in killing the surrogate father the speaker has actually killed the two male oppressors in her life. The father-husband figure is now imagined as a vampire who sucked her blood for all her married life and the act of killing him has finally exorcised the daughter's love-hate bond with the father. The act of killing is of course symbolic and it is given a ritualistic character. The vampire of folklore has to be killed by driving a stake through its heart. As the speaker gets rid of the blood sucking vampire, the villagers show their approval and relief by dancing and stamping the body. The last line of the poem is equivocal, suggesting not only the death of the tormentor but also perhaps the speaker's 'final self-annihilation.

Thus 'Daddy' is one of Plath's most complex poems, deliberately written in a manner strongly reminiscent of nursery rhyme, which is in ironic contrast to the theme of violence. The raw material the poem can be found in Plath's life, especially in her love-hate relationship with her father and her husband. However, the poem

goes beyond the merely personal by presenting the speaker's personal history of torment in terms of the torture and persecution suffered by Jews in the worst act of genocide in twentieth-century history. There is also an implied parallel between Jews persecuted through the ages and women often suffering passively in the hands of arrogant and domineering values. Plath herself suggested that the poem should be read as a case study of a girl suffering from an Electra complex and the speaker's submission to the violence inflicted on her by the father-figure as well as the explicit hint that women adore fascists makes such a reading possible. Moreover, the poem strongly suggests that the speaker's elimination of the vampire—like figure of father—husband also leads to her own annihilation. The Electra complex is also revealed in the speaker's attraction for the husband because he was a 'model of you', that is, the father. Thus the poem has many layers of meaning matching the range of the speaker's mixed feelings for her father and also matching the stylistic variety achieved by incantatory rhythm, broken sentences, repetition, use of German words and the recurrent rhyme with the sound 'u'. The imagery is similarly varied and striking, as pointed out in the analysis. "Daddy" operates by generating a duplicate of Plath's presumed psychic state in the reader, so that we re-experience her grief, rage, masochism, and revenge, whether or not, these fit the facts. You should now be able to determine for yourselves which of the many aspects of the poem appeals to you most, or whether you are able to respond to all of them simultaneously.

**Questions (Short answered expected):**

1. Which facts of Plath's life throw light on the poem 'Daddy' ?
2. Pick out the German words used in the poem and state the meaning and relevance of each.
3. Name three sites of concentration camps where Jews were confined by the Germans.
4. During which War were the concentration camps organised ?
5. What is the method of killing a vampire ?
6. What is the title of Hitler's account of his life and politics ? What does the title mean in English ?
7. Identify some of the nursery rhyme elements in 'Daddy'.

### Questions (Longer answers expected) :

1. In what sense does the speaker of 'Daddy' suffer from an Electra complex? What is her attitude to her father ? Substantiate your answer with reference to the text.
2. Why does the speaker of the poem equate the father and the husband ? Why are they called vampires ?
3. Attempt a brief critical estimate of 'Daddy'.

### 1.4.2 About the poem 'Lady Lazarus'

Like 'Daddy' 'Lady Lazarus' was published in Sylvia Plath's posthumous collection of poems, **Ariel**, and like 'Daddy' again, 'Lady Lazarus' has an obvious biographical correspondence, since it is well-known that Plath had suicidal tendencies and that she ended her life by an act of suicide. The speaker is a woman who presents herself as a suicide artist demonstrating her skill before a sadistic crowd. The poem, however, ends not with death, but with a vision of resurrection. The Lazarus in the title is a Biblical figure; there are actually two Lazaruses in the Bible, and the poem may be taken to allude to either, or both. The more famous of the two is the Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead, and the story is to be found in **John**. 11/12. The other Lazarus is the diseased beggar who is contracted with the rich man, Dives, in the parable of the rich man and the beggar in **Luke**. 16. Both references are appropriate: the first Lazarus suggests a parallel to the speaker's ironic resurrection after suicide, while the despised beggar in the parable resembles the speaker who is obviously looked down upon by the so-called strong and rich people who derive a sick pleasure from watching her self-torment. While the speaker in 'Daddy' directs her verbal and physical violence towards the father-figure who soon merges into the figure of the husband, the speaker in this poem directs her rage against men in general. In both poems, however, the speaker's suffering and anguish are linked to the persecution suffered by the Jews in the Nazi concentration camps. Moreover, the 'peanut-crunching crowd' suggest by their brutal pleasure and sick curiosity that cultural barbarism did not die with Nazism, but is very much a characteristic of twentieth-century civilization. The crowd are also voyeuristic in the sense that they take a perverse delight from the sight of a woman engaged in an essentially private act. (Look the word 'Voyeur' up in your Dictionary to learn its exact meaning.) She remarks sardonically 'there is a charge, a very large charge'—the reader's voyeuristic thrill has a high moral price tag.

The speaker is obviously a woman and her femininity as well as her hatred of men in general is more evident in this poem than in 'Daddy'. Therefore 'Lady Lazarus' is more amenable to a feminist reading than 'Daddy'. First of all, like the work of many twentieth century women writers, 'Lady Lazarus' shows a greater readiness than the writings of men to express mental distress and to speak without inhibition about the body as it is battered. Secondly many women poets associate feminine sensibility with suffering, presenting the body as the site for pain and injury, as 'Lady Lazarus' does. In such writings physical vulnerability may sometimes lead a woman towards self-rejection. Thirdly, the speaker's anger in 'Lady Lazarus' is directed against men as a class, while patriarchal authority wielded by male figures like 'Herr God', 'Her Doktor', 'Herr Lucifer', is shown to be repressive and tyrannical. Finally, the title, perhaps deliberately modelled on such expressions as 'Lady doctor', betraying the pa-tronzing male attitude to successful women, itself suggests, as does the whole poem, a woman challenging and getting the better of her male adversaries, for unlike the Biblical Lazarus, who was brought back to life by Jesus, the woman resurrects herself. Her resurrection, moreover, is solely motivated by her desire to get even with men. The reversal of gender in the miraculous resurrection is profoundly significant; it is part of the poem's strategy of empowering the women, investing her with authority so that she can defy the traditional, and male, symbols of authority and power.

While 'Daddy' uses nursery rhyme as an ironic contrast to its theme of violence imposed and returned, in 'Lady Lazarus' too we find a similar ironic contrast which only intensified the serious theme. Plath herself called the poem light verse', and one critic has found in it 'a tantrum of style'. The word 'tantrum' is appropriate because it draws attention to the note of childish defiance which can be found in the poem; it is as if the speaker is saying in effect, 'I will teach them a lesson by dying, an act which will make them sorry' But the defiance is not only childish. It has been said that the poet's deliberate use of slang, her adoption of a taunting manner and the note of black humour repeatedly struck in the poem have a peculiarly liberating effect. Those who say this have in mind the forceful manner in which the poem expresses an anger that had been lingering in women's minds for centuries. The anger is the result of masculine oppression and exploitation. In giving powerful expression to this more than personal anger the poem achieves a universal effect.

#### **1.4.3 Analysis of the poem**

The opening lines will always be taken by those who know something of Plath's life and the manner of her death as referring to her attempts at suicide. But from the

beginning the personal experience is linked to a wider impersonal context by the title of the poem as well as by a note of black humour, evident in the reference to the proverbial nine lives of a cat, or in the image of striptease which, instead of titillating the audience, has a terrifying effect. The idea of the suicide-artist performing her act in public suggest two things: The exhibitionism of the performer, who makes a public display of her private wounds, and the voyeurism of the people as well as their insensitivity. The speaker's reference to her periodical suicide attempts—'One year in every ten'—and to its apparent naturalness seems casual, until we begin, to suspect the element of skill and seriousness lying behind it. It is as if her perfection in the matter of committing suicide" is another aspect of her perfection as an artist for suicide is presented as a creative, not merely a self-destructive, act. The personal note is almost immediately transcended, however, by the speaker's linking of her personal history with the history of the Nazi concentration camps where unspeakable acts of horrors were perpetrated on the Jews. There was, for instance, a Nazi commandant whose wife had lampshades made of human skin. There are gruesome accounts of how different parts of the numerous dead bodies of Jews cruelly tortured to death were used to make objects like paperweights. The speaker's reference to her foot being turned into a paperweight and to the skin of her face being transformed into linen is not the product of unbridled fancy. These horrible images are followed by the image of the woman's dead body covered in napki, a corpse that can terrify the viewers by revealing The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth. It is possible to see in the image of peeling off the 'napkin' the further idea of stripping the body of its skin. It is the sort of image that we find in Jacobean playwrights like Webster and Tourneur. The image also links up with the later image of 'the big strip tease', underlying the horror of something that is apparently done to titillate. (A. strip-tease is an entertainment usually performed in a bar or night club, in which a performer slowly undresses in a front of an audience). The implication is that the people viewing the speaker's act of revealing her anguish and suffering derive from it the kind of excitement and thrill that many get out of the public spectacle of stripping.

There are hints of the suicide artist final resurrection in her ability to repair her body and recover her breath after every suicide the flesh eaten away by the grave will be restored and she will become a smiling woman again in a miracle of transformation. The speaker is thirty and this is her third suicide, she has managed to commit suicide every ten years, thus annihilating each decade of her life. But every time she has been restored, though at a terrible cost: she has been reduced to skin and bone, an image that graphically indicates the heavy toll taken by her attempt self at

annihilation. Then there is a bit of the speaker's personal history, which is very much like the history of Plath herself, her first mental breakdown occurring at ten, the second keeping her ill and shut up written herself for a long time, leading to strenuous efforts by her doctors and attendants to bring her back to normality. The speaker imagines that she then actually died, the worms of the grave stuck to her body and had to be removed like 'sticky pearls', an image which twists Ariel's image of the beautiful body changed by drowning in Shakespeare's **The Tempest**. Then there is the assertion that dying is a creative art: her performance is prompted not by external causes but by inner demands which are self-destructive in nature. The casual tone cannot cancel the horror of the act, as the speaker confesses that not only does she 'do it exceptionally well' but that it also 'feels like hell'. There is a touch of black humour again, what one critic has called 'gallows humour': in the slangy remark, 'I guess you could say I've a call'. Performing the act of suicide is easy for the speaker in her own private world; it is only when she is brought back to life, to the apparently joyous shouts acknowledging the miracle of the transformation, that she is rather off, for there is every reason to believe that most of the people gather around her only to gloat over her wounds. In desperation she thinks of charging the spectators a fee for the pleasure of seeing her private wounds, for collecting her hair or clothes as souvenir. The reference to suck relics again leads to the theme of the Nazi attempts to obliterate the identity of the Jewish race. The speaker wants to destroy her own old body in the hope that a new identity will be created for her. This idea perhaps accounts for the image of the phoenix at the end.

The speaker then hurls defiance at figures which traditionally symbolise patriarchal authority and power. The prefix 'Herr' gives a specifically Nazi significance to these figures : Doktor, God, Lucifer ('Herr' is the conventional German title of respect and term of address for a man, corresponding to Mr. Doktor is spelt in a way which reinforces the suggestion of German authority; Lucifer is Satan). The doctor is an easily recognizable type of male dominance, as Plath no doubt realised during her illness. The unusual spelling of the word also reminds us of those German doctors who carried out frightful experiments on the Jewish prisoners 'The equation of God' and the Devil as types of tyrannical male authority is consistent with the poem's satire of religion and religious figures. Thus the references to the speaker's wounds remind us of the broken body of Christ on the Cross. Herr Doktor, Herr God and other think that the speaker is their work ('opus') but she defies them all in a triumphant act of resurrection. There is again a linking of the speaker's situation with that of the Jews in the concentration camps in the reference to objects like soap, ring,

gold filling, made out of the remains of the Jewish victims. (The gold filling in their teeth was extracted to make wedding rings). The unfeeling response of the 'peanut-crunching crowd' to the speaker's suffering is equated with the inhumanly callous attitude of the Nazi guards of concentration camps to the suffering of the Jews. Even the reader of the poem may sometimes have an uncomfortable feeling of complicity in the hurt caused to the speaker. But the poem ends on a note of triumph as the speaker warns her tormentors that she will rise from her ashes like a phoenix. (The phoenix is a mythical bird of great beauty, the only one of its kind, fabled to live 500 or 600 years in the Arabian wilderness, to burn itself on a funeral pile and rise from its ashes in the freshness of youth and live through another cycle of years; It was often used as an emblem of resurrection. The speaker will resurrect herself like the phoenix and wreak havoc on men; she wants to get even with men because the carnage from which she will rise has been caused by them; it is a carnage of her own self.

Thus 'Lady Lazarus' is a poem of rage directed against men, written in a deceptively casual and slangy manner. The speaker is a woman who equates her own suffering in the hands of men with that of Jews in Nazi concentration camps and thereby places her suffering in a wider context. The Nazi torture of Jews was an attempt to obliterate their race, their identity. The torture of the speaker in the hands of men is also an attempt to obliterate her identity as a woman. But the poem does not end in despair; nor does it end, like 'Daddy' with self-annihilation along with the annihilation of the enemy. It ends with a vision of phoenix-like resurrection which will spell down for her tormentors.

**Questions (Short-answer type):**

1. Who was Lazarus ? How is he relevant to the poem ?
2. Who are the figures symbolising patriarchal authority in the poem ?
3. What evidence of mockery of Christian religion do you find in the poem?
4. Why does the poet refer to soap, linen, lampshade in the poem ?

**Question (long-answer expected):**

1. Attempt a feminist reading of the poem.
2. In what sense are the crowd in the poem voyeuristic ?

In what ways do they resemble the Nazi guards ? Why are the figures disliked by the speaker given the prefix 'Herr' ?

3. Write a brief critical appreciation of lady Lazarus'?

Books recommended:

1. Walker, Marshall : **The Literature of the United States of America.**
2. Marsack, Robyn : **Sylvia Plath**
3. Wagner-Martin, Linda : **Sylvia Plath : A Literary Life.**
4. Alexander, Paul ed. **Ariel Ascending**, N.Y. Harper and Row.
5. Newman, Charles ed. **The Art of Sylvia Plath**, London, Faber & Faber.



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## **Unit -1 The Dark Lady of the Sonnets**

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### **Structure**

#### **1.0 Objectives**

#### **1.1 Study Guide**

#### **1.2 Background**

#### **1.3 Approach**

##### **1.3.1 Section 1**

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##### **1.3.6 Word meanings and allusions**

##### **1.3.7 Comprehension Questions**

##### **1.3.8 Section 3**

##### **1.3.9 Word meanings and allusions**

##### **1.3.10 Comprehension Questions**

#### **1.4 Questions**

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### **1.0 Objectives**

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George Bernard Shaw, one of the most influential playwrights in the last part of the nineteenth and the first few decades of the twentieth century, is remembered by later generations of readers mainly for his uncompromising zeal in exploring and representing reality, rather than imitation of outworn conventions in life and literature: As political thinker, pamphleteer, dramatist, philosopher and prophet, Shaw constantly inspires men and women of all generations in unmasking hypocrisy; tearing off illusions and thus in gaining a fuller understanding of life.

Very often he achieves his end by means of wit and humour and other devices like 'bathos' (anti-climax), intelligent juxtaposition of events and characters, etc. His

reading and awareness of literature and all aspects of life are evident everywhere in his works.

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## 1.1 Study Guide

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There are very few one act plays by Shaw. A one-act play depicts a deliberately chosen area of life within a brief span of development. The situations are selected carefully to reveal interaction among characters, the number of which usually does not exceed three to five. As the basis of this playlet, Shaw takes the mysterious relationship between Shakespeare and an unknown ('Dark') lady (both complexion and identitywise), but develops it in his own manner. It actually upholds Shaw's belief in the necessity of drama.

Despite attempts by critics and scholars, not much is definitely known about the identity of the lady and the extent of her relationship with Shakespeare. What is available to the reader is the transmuted form of the relationship in his sonnets. However, Shaw uses his creative imagination in embodying his vision of the relationship.

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## 1.2 Background

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Written in 1910, this play is a brilliant specimen of Shaw's creative imagination, his ability to create arresting dialogues as well as his unsurpassable mastery over wit (a kind of style that brings together in a brilliant, polished manner all that has to be said, so that as a result the reader cannot afford to miss it). It cannot be called a historical play, though some figures well-known in history like Queen Elizabeth or William Shakespeare (the dramatist) appear in it. It deals with no historical issues. Rather it is mainly concerned with Shakespeare's supreme mastery over poetry and drama, his passion for it and also his very human fondnesses for women, and how his own age failed to appreciate the essential Shakespeare. It reveals Shaw's deep reverence for Shakespeare's creative genius, though there is a prevalent misconception that Shaw did think of himself as being a higher or better dramatist. It is based on the famous 'Dark Lady' theme in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Some of the very famous Shakespearean sonnets dwell on a rather dramatically presented relationship between the poet and the 'Dark Lady', who might have been wooed by another friend as well, common to both of them. Shaw here imagines a secret meeting between the poet and the Dark Lady. Besides such a situation, which

is clearly imaginary, Shaw's knowledge about the literary atmosphere of the age is very much in evidence in the playlet. However, the title of the play is rather misleading, because the encounter is not really with the Dark Lady, but with Queen Elizabeth, and reveals mainly the trends of Shakespeare's creative genius.

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### 1.3 Approach

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This playlet or one-act play by Shaw may be roughly divided, for the convenience of the student, into three sections, though it is an integral whole. The first section is the one between the Beefeater (the guard on duty) and the Man (Shakespeare); the second one involves Shakespeare, the cloaked lady (Elizabeth) and the Dark Lady; the third section consists solely of Shakespeare and Elizabeth.

What follows now may help the student in gaining an insight into the play.

#### 1.3.1 Section 1:

On a midsummer night Shakespeare appears near the entry point of the Royal Palace and meets the guard on duty. It is a meeting between a commoner and a budding poet-dramatist. The Dark Lady had bribed the Guard in order that the secret meeting between her and the poet could take place safely. But it also gets leaked out that the lady does similar things to different men every night. On knowing this Shakespeare is primarily shocked as a lover, but as a poet he quickly generalizes the situation as being part of woman's nature. He accepts his friend's (Lord Pembroke) supposed involvement in the secret affair with a similar kind of philosophical awareness. Another important point is his absolute eagerness to absorb or assimilate words or phrases of aesthetic beauty from the lips of anybody.

#### 1.3.2 Word meanings and allusions :

Methinks	: I think
I kept tryst here tonight	: I have come to honour a previously arranged appointment.
new-fangled	: of recent, doubtful origin and construction
a merry lady	: in the sense that she loves to enjoy life
frailty, etc.	: a reference to Hamlet.
Thou, too, Brutus	: Caesar's last words to Brutus in Julius Caesar meaning, you, too, are involved, Brutus.
Words, words, words	: An echo from Hamlet.

- The Spanish Tragedy : A popular play of the Elizabethan period, written by Thomas Kyd and a model for many other popular plays of the period.
- Judas! Judas! : A reference to Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Hence a model of treachery for all time.

### 1.3.3 Commentary

This section introduces the situation. It also mentions the doubtful character of the Lady. The conditions of the new kind of drama Shakespeare was introducing including the public response to it as well as the popularity of plays like The Spanish Tragedy are all briefly alluded to. Shakespeare's personal reaction on being told about the dubious character of his ladylove and also his ability to overcome it through philosophical generalization are some prominent features that are noteworthy. Shaw is able to reconstruct the atmosphere of the age by using some words and phrases of Shakespeare's own plays, notably Hamlet and Julius Caesar. The section also shows Shakespeare's down-to earth outlook in mixing with the commoners and in catching their rhythm of speech, while retaining his own aesthetic sense.

### 1.3.4 Comprehension Questions :

- (i) 'I am not the same man two days together'—Who says so? What else does he say in this context?
- (ii) 'I keep tryst here tonight with a dark-lady'—Who says so? What does it mean?
- (iii) We call one, another names... as children do? What is the meaning of this?

### 1.3.5 Section 2

It may be said to begin when a cloaked lady (actually Queen Elizabeth, walking in her sleep) walks in. At this point Shaw makes her quote some original lines from different plays of Shakespeare and sometimes parodied versions of them. Being awakened, she takes exception and becomes angry because Shakespeare, an unknown young man, goes on praising her words and from an aesthetic point of view begins to make love to her. In a moment of appreciation, he even embraces her. At this point, the Dark Lady enters, sees them and tries to separate them by means of physical violence. Their identities are revealed. The Dark Lady is afraid that the Queen will give her the worst of punishment. However, Shakespeare does not flatter her position but wins her through praise of her physical beauty. The Dark Lady warns the Queen of the flatterings he is always offering. Shakespeare announces switchover

of love to Elizabeth. The Dark Lady is made to go, though the Queen pulls him up for behaving cruelly to her.

### 1.3.6 Word meanings and allusions

Out, damned spot	: Extracts, sometimes distorted from Macbeth
All the perfumes of Arabia, etc.	
Mary's buried, etc.	: A distortion of 'Banquo's buried: he cannot come out of his grave etc. from Macbeth.
Ben	: Ben Jenson, poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan
In the beginning was the word	period. Reference to the account of the creation of the world in the Holy Bible.
een	: = (here) even

### 1.3.7 Comprehension Questions

- (i) 'To me there are but two sorts of women'—What are these 'two sons' that the man (Shakespeare) recounts?
- (ii) 'And now he neither for a space nor a while, but for ever'—Who says so? Whom does he tell it? What does he mean actually ?

### 1.3.8 Section 3

This section portrays greater understanding between Shakespeare and Elizabeth. It also shows more fully his confidence in the immortality of his art. His request to the Queen for building a National Theatre has something in it of Shaw's own long-felt need for the same in Britain. On being asked about the need for a new theatre besides the existing ones, Shakespeare explains that the National Theatre should be able to produce the best works of a writer, whereas commercial theatre-houses cater only to the taste of the audience and stage pot-boilers. Elizabeth is afraid that it may take his country three hundred years or even more to appreciate the need for aesthetics in life. Shakespeare is confident that his works will live for ever and the Queen agrees to recommend to the succeeding generations his desire for the National Theatre.

### 1.3.9 Word-meanings and allusions

1. Jupiter and Semele : A reference to the Greek legend concerning the birth of Dionysus. Semele was loved by Zeus, the supreme one among the Greek gods, and at the instigation of Hera, she prayed Zeus to come to her in all the splendour of a god. Ultimately as a result of this union, she was consumed by

his lightning. Here it refers to the emotional shocks the Dark Lady was subjected to by Shakespeare.

2. "I do not suffer.....to presume too far" : I donot allow persons of your rank to proceed too far.
3. "You lack advancement": You lack originality or distinction.
4. enow: enough.
5. Wantonness: playfulness, capriciousness, licentiousness.
6. goeth : goes.
7. attire : dress.
8. swain : (archaic use) young rustic man, especially regarded as a lover.
9. groundlings : (here) common spectators, people of low birth.
10. "You speak sooth": you speak truly.
11. "to be abed" : to be on bed.
12. "You have let pass": you have allowed.

#### 1.3.10 Comprehension Questions

- (i) 'I could not help my lightnings scorching her'—Who says it? What is meant by 'my lightnings' and 'scorching' respectively?
- (ii) 'I do not suffer persons of your degree ... to presume too far'—What is the meaning of the statement? What does 'presume' mean?
- (iii) "... man cannot live by bread alone... whom God inspires"—What does the speaker mean by it ? What is the meaning of 'man cannot live by bread alone'?

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#### 1.4 Questions

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- (i) What is your idea of the theme of the playlet? (Write in not more than ten sentences).
- (ii) Do you consider the title of the playlet to be appropriate?  
(that is, does the interaction among the characters of the play justify it?)
- (iii) Comment on the characters and dramatic functions of : Elizabeth, Dark Lady, Shakespeare.
- (iv) Comment on Shaw's sense of wit and humour as evident in the playlet.
- (v) Do you think that Shaw's own interest in serious drama influences the theme and the characters of this playlet?

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## Unit - 2 Riders to the Sea :

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### Structure

- 2.0 Objective
- 2.1 Study Guide
- 2.2 J. M. Synge : a brief biographical sketch
- 2.3 The Irish Literary Movement and Synge
- 2.4 The One-act play
- 2.5 Tragedy : various levels of significance
- 2.6 Section-wise summary
- 2.7 Characters
  - 2.7.1 Maurya
  - 2.7.2 Bartley, Nora and Cathleen
  - 2.7.3 The Sea
- 2.8 Questions (Essay-Type)
  - 2.8.1 Some hints about the answers.
- 2.9 Select bibliography

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### 2.0 Objective

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In this unit you are going to study the play Riders to the Sea by J.M. Synge. These introductory and explanatory materials on the play will help to increase your understanding and awareness of the playwright, the play, its background and some of the implications of its themes. In no case should these be considered as being a substitute for a detailed reading of the text by you. Among several editions, the one edited by Profs. B. N. Chowdhury and B. Banerjee and revised by Dr. S. C. Sengupta may be recommended for first-hand study of the text.

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### 2.1 Study Guide

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The materials in the sections which **follow**, will introduce you to several important aspects of the play and the author's objectives in embodying them through the text.

For this, we have provided you with a brief sketch of the writer's life, the literary background in which the play was written, the literary genres in terms of which the play may be judged, the main line of development in the play, its characters, and difficult words and expressions. For the interested student a short reading guide has also been appended along with comprehension exercises.

## **2.2 J. M. Synge : a brief biographical sketch**

Born in 1871 near Dublin, Ireland, Synge did not have a smooth childhood. His father died early of smallpox and he himself was a sickly child too. Early in his childhood his mother took care to hammer the Christian concepts of Sin, death and damnation into him.

As he grew up he sought consolation for the troubles of life in books on theology but found them insufficient and disheartening. In 1889 he formally renounced Christianity though a nameless cosmic religious sense grew up within him.

When he was a student of Trinity College in Dublin he was not a serious student except that of language. But his studies were wide-ranging in language, history and folk culture. When he met W.B. Yeats in 1890, he was already an accomplished and cultured intellectual but he knew very little about the real life of the Irish people. Yeats encouraged him to go to the Aran Islands, (on the west coast of Ireland) where he was advised to mingle with the local people and study folk culture.

Synge spent four months and a half in the Aran islands. There he got involved in the simple and humble life of the local people and came to know about their religious beliefs and their folklore.

His literary output included the account of his experiences gained in the Aran Islands with the name *The Aran Islands* (1901, published in 1907), and the plays—*In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) and *Riders to the Sea*. (1904). Later plays included *The Tinker's Wedding*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*.

Around 1906, Synge was secretly engaged to Molly Allgood. She was an actress. But as Synge was preparing for a blissful home life, his own illness increased and the marriage had to be postponed. An inoperable tumour slowly increased his pain and on 24th March 1909 Synge died. Robin Skelton, a major critic, says about Synge : "... his work is, in any serious sense of the word, international, for he tackled fundamental crises of the human spirit." (*The Writings of J.M. Synge*, Robin Skelton, 1971).

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## 2.3 The Irish Dramatic Movement and Synge

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In the years 1898-1902, Anglo-Irish drama, i.e. drama written by playwrights in Ireland received a momentum. Irish playwrights like Lady Gregory, J.M. Synge, W.B. Yeats and a wide range of enthusiasts (many of whom were nationalist leaders, writers and actors) felt that the Irish theatre needed plays written from a new angle and in a new style and also wanted styles of staging and acting that would match the new fervour in the themes and styles of plays. Under the influence of Yeats and Lady Gregory, Synge started writing his major, plays for the Irish National Theatre Society (founded in 1901): *When the Moon Has Set Riders to the Sea*, *The Shadow of the Glen* and *The Tinker's Wedding*. *Riders* met with mixed response (1904), one critic calling it 'intensely pathetic, and in a sense, supremely human.' Internally the society was strife-ridden, with the earnest nationalists intending to use it for propaganda purposes and people like Yeats and Synge desiring to use it as a forum for art. Out of this conflict the Abbey Theatre was born in 1904 and Synge became busy in its activities. In terms of strikingly new plays and new style of acting and realism on the stage, the Abbey Theatre continued to earn fame collectively and Synge began to get European fame personally. Even James Joyce, who had earlier called *Riders* 'un-Aristotelian', translated it into Italian. Synge's collaborative effort with the Abbey Theatre was a major factor behind his emergence as a major playwright.

*Riders* may be more appreciated as a 'poetic' drama written in prose. The emotional intensity of the play attained through the passionate exchange of dialogues is what makes the play poetic. Another quality of the play is the suggestive reverberating quality of the dialogues. The medium is apparently prose, but it is heightened to maximum effect.

### Short Questions

1. How did Synge learn about the Irish common people and their culture?
2. Name some of the other plays of Synge.
3. What was Synge's attitude to traditional Christian religion?
4. In what ways did Synge contribute to the Irish National theatre?
5. In what ways did the Irish Dramatic movement influence Synge?

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## 2.4 Riders as an one-act play

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It is generally said about the one-act play that brevity is its soul. There must be a brief plot, because it cannot be complex. Characters are very few in number, since

the playwright cannot develop his characters and situations gradually, making use of a cumulative effect. The dialogues, too, must be suggestively meaningful from the beginning to the end. Each sentence is expected to contribute something to the final effect. However, the hallmark of the one-act play is the unified impact that it creates. Normally a single main episode is carried on from beginning to end. There is also the continuity of a single locale. The scene does not change and the middle is connected with the beginning as much as it is connected with the end. As for the dramatic conflict which is the soul of a full-length play, there is not much scope but the unity of impression compensates for it.

*Riders* exemplifies all these major aspects of a successful one-act play. James Joyce had criticised the play on the ground of its being 'un-Aristotelian.' For, it maintains a very

perfect continuity of the setting. Everything takes place in Maurya's cottage, with the meagre household articles spread out in the different corners of it. [See the end of this section for an explanation of this point.]

The brief duration time of the action of the play represents the very spirit of conciseness. In fact the play is composed in a continuous mood of mourning. Anxiety and anticipation over the discovery of the clothes of Michael lost at sea are followed by Maurya's concern over Bartley's going out, Bartley's steady defiance of her entreaty, his departure and speedy return as a corpse. Bartley's death is an off-stage event, thus causing the maximum possible condensation in the unity of impression.

In fact this single-minded unity of action runs through the entire play to make it a successful one-act play. Michael's death is just conveyed to the reader, but it is inextricably linked up with their daily life. Michael's shirt is used by Bartley and even the rope preserved for his burial. Once again, Bartley's death, as seen by Maurya in her 'vision' (hallucination?), is caused by Michael's ghost. In the end Bartley's body, when brought back, reminds her of the deaths in the past and thus, past, present and future are inextricably bound up to convey an absolute sense of fatalism against which shines man's stoic and rather heroic endurance.

Joyce's criticism of *Riders to the Sea* as un-Aristotelian, refers to Aristotle's comments on tragedy in his poetics. In section VII Aristotle says that tragedy is the imitation of an action that is complete and whole, and a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end. He meant that within the play a strict sequence of cause and effect must be established. In *Riders to the Sea* there is no clear sequence of cause and effect. Michael's death at sea, surmised from the clothes which are found, is immediately followed by Bartley's death. More importantly, although the

sea is established as the antagonist, Bartley does not die at sea, but in an accident, as he falls off his pony. James Joyce considered these as structural defects of the play.

In defence of Synge we might say that the undoubtedly slight plot of *Riders*—an old woman losing her one remaining son—makes up for the slightness with its intensity. There is no development in the action and the movement from climax (Maurya's vision) to the catastrophe (Bartley's dead body brought in) is too quick, but Synge makes up for this defect with the details of everyday reality which solidly establish the pressing economic need which compels Bartley, like his father and his brothers before him, to face the dangers of the sea. In fact, it is not necessary to judge all plays by the canons of Aristotle. Synge intentionally used conventions of Naturalistic drama, to convey the reality of the lives of the inhabitants of the Aran Islands.

**Questions :**

1. Show how Synge allows little development of action between the anticipation of Bartley's death and the death itself.
2. Can you establish, with reference to the text, how a mood of mourning is established and maintained from beginning to end ?
3. Can we say that the human characters in *Riders* are mere victims ?

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## **2.5 Tragedy : various levels of significance**

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*Riders* is often praised as a great tragedy. There are, as you may know, some universally accepted concepts of the vision and forms of tragedy. We shall discuss some of those ideas, so that you get a better understanding of the full meaning of the play.

Many of the concepts about tragic drama, found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and accepted by Renaissance critics, have been either modified or challenged later. Aristotle defined tragedy as "imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself." Aristotle was talking about full-length plays, since the one-act short play was not in existence. Aristotle places great emphasis on the tragic hero, who is of noble birth and is endowed with great qualities but also suffers from a tragic flaw (error of judgement or 'Hamartia'). He indicates that tragic drama is expected to move the audience to a 'catharsis' of pity and fear. There has been a lot of discussion about the meaning of "catharsis". It is now generally accepted that Aristotle ascribed this important function to tragedy, since his master Plato had condemned both epic and tragic poets, since, according to Plato, these poets showed gods and great men alike, capable of acting rashly and wrongly, in the heat of passion.

In the Greek tragedies, we find a deep sense of fatalism. Fatalism means a feeling of inevitability, as if the tragic protagonist is doomed to destruction. This feeling, that fate or the gods themselves are responsible for the doom of the protagonist is modified in the tragedies written after the Renaissance. In the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare, there is a greater amount of responsibility resting on the individual as hero. With the tragic heroes of Shakespeare we feel that they themselves bring about their doom.

In the modern period common men and women have been chosen as tragic protagonists. Middle-class or even working-class people in their bewildered, defeated moods have been portrayed in notable tragedies like Arthur Miller's **The Death of a Salesman** (1949). A term sometimes applied to the protagonist of such tragedies is the 'anti-hero', or a person who, instead of being magnanimous, dignified and powerful, is petty, passive or ineffectual. *Death of a Salesman* is such an instance where a pathetic old woman is chosen as the focus of attention, who cannot qualify as a tragic protagonist according to the standards of Renaissance drama, or Greek drama. However, in her stoic endurance and universalized stance of motherhood, she rises far above her insignificant stature as merely a poor Aran island fisherwoman.

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## 2.6 An analysis of the text

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(Any edition may be consulted)

**Section-1 :** When the play begins, both Cathleen and Nora are tense about Maurya who is upset by the reported drowning of her son Michael.

Nora reports that a bundle of clothes have been found and quotes the young priest as saying that this information should be suppressed for they almost expect the grieving Maurya to die with crying and lamenting.

**Section-2 :** When Maurya enters, she enquires about the condition of the weather and insists that Bartley, her last remaining son, must not go over the sea. But Bartley, when he comes in, ignores Maurya's pleading. Maurya is rebuked by Cathleen. Bartley leaves. While Maurya laments, Cathleen discovers that she had forgotten to give Bartley his loaf of bread.

**Section-3 :** Maurya is apprehensive that Bartley is going to meet his doom. She is sent by Cathleen and Nora to offer him both bread and her blessings. In the meantime the two daughters check and confirm that the clothes which had been taken off a drowned man belong to Michael, their brother.

**Section-4 :** Maurya returns with the awful memory of a 'vision' seen and by her. She has seen the dead Michael following the horse of Bartley. Now they, mother and

sisters, too, are almost convinced that their brother would never return. The family would have no male member to look after them. Maurya seems to lose all sense of the present and in her memory the recollections of death of her husband, father-in-law and sons, mingle with those of the present—the recent presumed death of Michael and the anticipated death of Bartley.

**Section-5** : As Maurya kneels beside the dead body of Bartley, she passes through a final stage of realization. She feels that none of her sons is left now and therefore, she will no longer have any need to worry or fear the sea, no cause for mourning and lamentation. She longs for absolute rest and begs God for mercy on all who are living in the world. She accepts the inevitability of death and is reconciled to what fate has inflicted on her.

### 2.6-a Questions

(Consult this section and also the text for the answers)

1. Briefly narrate the conversation of the two sisters at the beginning of the play.
2. Why has Maurya been mourning?
3. Why does Maurya ask questions about the weather?
4. Why does Bartley ignore his mother's pleading?
5. Why does Cathleen send Maurya to meet Bartley after he has left?
6. Describe the vision Maurya sees,
7. When and why does Maurya say that she does not have to care for the sea any longer?

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### 2.7 Characters outlines : Maurya

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She is the leading character. She is physically and emotionally exhausted from the very beginning, since she has suffered innumerable shocks.

She deplores the way in which younger people die early on the islands and leave the older people behind. Her motherly instincts are expressed in her earnest attempt to prevent Bartley from going to sea despite rough weather.

Her helplessness is underlined when Bartley goes away. Her deep belief in local folklore is stressed by the vision she sees.

Before the corpse of Bartley is brought on to the stage, she begins to remember the past deaths in her family, of her husband and sons.

In her recollections, past and present mingle.

When she realizes that Bartley had died, she accepts it and even finds life's deeper meanings in a stoic endurance.

### **2.7.1 Bartley, Nora and Cathleen**

Bartley is like any other active young man who has to carry on the business of life. Calm acceptance of family responsibilities, along with a sombre acceptance of the hardships of life makes him interesting.

Cathleen is the elder, and seems to have a greater sense of responsibility, more self control and greater awareness of the shadow of doom over their family. Nora is younger and more hopeful. She still retains her faith in the consolation offered by the Christian religion. She is less aware of the tragic possibilities of life and reacts in a more direct, more emotional manner.

### **2.7.2 The Sea**

The most dominant presence is that of the sea. There is hardly any other modern play where a non-human entity gains so much prominence both physically and symbolically. Notice how many references there are to the sea. All the characters talk about the sea, are aware of its moods and know about its menace. As the play progresses, notice how the sea gains in symbolic stature. The play seems to present a conflict between the sea and the human beings, i.e. the fisherfolk of Aran.

At the end, Maurya seems to become a representative figure for the entire humanity. The sea seems to triumph in the conflict with man. But Maurya's acceptance of fate seems to be a kind of quiet victory.

Read the play carefully and find out how the references to the sea build up the impression about its might and its importance in the lives of the people of Aran.

### **Questions :**

1. From the play, give examples to show how Maurya is first a helpless old woman, and then acquires tragic dignity.
2. How do we come to know that Cathleen, and not her mother, looks after the family matters ?

### **2.8 Comprehension Exercises [Long Questions]**

1. Discuss **Riders** as a modern tragedy.
2. Discuss the Man-Sea antagonism in the play.

3. Analyse the character of Maurya and show how she attains calm dignity at the end.
4. From the text, find out how simple everyday objects are used to convey a symbolic meaning.
5. Discuss **Riders** as a specimen of modern one-act plays.
6. Discuss the play as a 'poetic drama'.

### 2.8.1 Some suggestions about the questions

#### Question 4 :

You may already know what a symbol is. When something in any artistic representation, in this case a literary text, acquires a suggestive meaning which is not inherent to it, we call it a symbol. Notice how in **Riders** (a good annotated text would give you the details) simple objects in the fisherman's cottage, trivial things spoken by the characters, acquire an additional and more powerful meaning. To give you some examples : Bartley puts on the shirt which belonged to his dead brother Michael although they are not yet sure that Michael is dead; Cathleen forgets to give Bartley the bread, and bread is a symbol of life; there are references to Aran fishermen's superstitions; for example, they had seen a slam beside the moon, which is an evil omen. Bartley takes a rope as halter for his mare and the rope had been chewed by a pig with black feet. In Celtic superstition (the people of Ireland are Celtic) a black pig is associated with death.

#### Questions 6 :

Properly speaking, drama in which verse is used as medium can alone be called "poetic drama". In the two great periods of European tragedy—classical Greek tragedy and English Renaissance tragedy in the Elizabethan-Jacobean period—the playwrights used verse. Synge's play is in prose. But there are other characteristics in Greek and Elizabethan tragedies which we find in Synge's play. For example, although Synge uses naturalistic stage setting and presents the real life sufferings of Aran fisherfolk, there is an emotional intensity in the play, conveyed by Maurya's fatalism, her lamentations, which is more commonly found in poetic drama. Synge's language moreover, has a strong melodic element, a rhythm, reminiscent of poetry. Read some of Maurya's speeches with their repetitions, "and when black night is falling I'll have no son left me...". Notice the many images & symbols Synge uses which give poetic intensity to his play.

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## 2.9 Select bibliography

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## **Unit -3 Mother Courage and Her Children**

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### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Objectives**

#### **3.1 Study Guide**

#### **3.2 Brecht's Germany**

##### **3.2.1 Weimar Republic**

##### **3.2.2 The Third Reich**

##### **3.2.3 Post-War Germany**

#### **3.3 Bertolt Brecht-a short biography**

#### **3.4 Brecht's work-an overview**

##### **3.4.1 Summary of the action**

##### **3.4.2 The Thirty Year's War : parallel and contrast**

##### **3.4.3 Mother Courage : an approach**

##### **3.4.4 Songs in Mother Courage**

##### **3.4.5 Character : dialectical view**

##### **3.4.6 The note of symbol**

##### **3.4.7 Conclusion**

#### **3.5 Questions**

#### **3.6 Select bibliography**

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### **3.0. Objectives**

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In this unit we will consider Brecht's life and age at some length and examine in some detail the key features of his great play: Mother Courage and Her Children. The play belongs to Brecht's great later phase, was written in exile at the darkest hour of World War II (1940-41) and represents his powerful indictment of such evils as war, violence and tyranny. The play has a painful relevance even today because war of aggression is still unleashed by overbearing powers on weaker, defenceless countries and blood is being spilled in neighbouring Afghanistan and Iraq. In the survey that follows, we will briefly discuss concepts and movements such as Alienation Effect and Epic Theatre and see how Brecht integrated these developments in his drama as he matured as a playwright of world stature.

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## 3.1 Study Guide

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There are writers the range and amplitude of whose achievement attract not merely the adjective 'great', but the epithet 'epic' as well. In modern times Balzac, Goethe, Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, Yeats, Bertolt Brecht, Gabriel Garcia Marquez—all seem to be writers of this stature. The reason is not far to seek. The history of their development as poet, novelist, playwright is inseparable from the history of their age and the history of their people. For example, it is altogether impossible to imagine the history of late 19th century and early 20th century Russia without Tolstoy and Dostoevsky or the history of modern Bengal (and of course India) and Ireland without Rabindranath and Yeats.

Similarly we cannot delink Brecht's magnificent development as perhaps the greatest European dramatist of his period from the turbulent history of Germany and Europe in the first half of the 20th century. So it is essential for the student—beginning to study Brecht's plays—to have at least a nodding acquaintance with the main historical developments of this period which exerted a shaping influence on Brecht's art.

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## 3.2 Brecht's Germany

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### 3.2.1 Weimar Republic

When we talk of Brecht's Germany, we have in mind a period of German history which falls into four parts, namely : (1) Imperial Germany which came to an end with Germany's defeat in World War I in November, 1918; (2) the Weimar Republic (1919-1932); (3) Nazi Germany or Germany under Hitler (1933-45) and (4) post-War Germany till Brecht's death at the age of 57 (1945-1956).

Brecht came of age at a turning point in modern German history. He belonged to the lost generation with whose grim predicament Kafka was concerned in his great work. They inherited a defeated, smouldering, ruined Germany with revolution in her veins. Her military collapse at the hands of Germany had precipitated a revolution in 1917 in Czarist Russia. But conditions were different in Germany and though beaten in a war of attrition, the German ruling class managed to hold on to power and the revolution was crushed. But the Kaiser was gone, monarchy was abolished and a brief but stormy interlude of democratic governance was ushered in with the Weimar Republic getting off to a wobbly start. Friedrich Ebert was the first president. His centrist government crushed both extreme left-wing and right-wing attempts to

overthrow the Weimar regime. The economic crisis of the post-War years, however, and the resultant mass unemployment and rampant inflation swelled the ranks of the extremist parties, destroying a sizable section of the middle class. Political murder was not uncommon. Erzberger and Rathenau were killed by the more violent factions of the extreme nationalists many of whom later joined the Nationalist Socialist (Nazi) party of Adolf Hitler on the Nationalist (monarchist) party of Hugenburg. Hindenburg's election as president (1925) seemed to symbolise a nationalist victory but he did not get in the way of and cooperated with a series of coalition governments formed by the Social Democrats, the Catholic Centre Party and the conservative German People's Party which carried out moderate programmes. The currency recovered and a fine economic turnaround commenced (1923-29). The economic prosperity was in no small measure due to Germany's political rehabilitation and return to the mainstream of European diplomacy achieved by her foreign minister Gustav Stresemann (1923-29). His crowning achievements were the resolution of the crisis of German reparation payments and the admission of Germany to the League of Nations (1926). But the global economic depression which erupted in 1929 proved the nemesis of German democracy. Business bankruptcy, mass unemployment and consequent social tensions exacerbated a political crisis which increasingly went out of hand as the Nazi and Communist parties became more and more powerful in the Reichstag. Hitler's support was indispensable in forming a government based on parliamentary majority. The Government was deadlocked. In a bid to break the deadlock and restore stability, the ageing Hindenburg installed Hitler as chancellor.

### **3.2.2 The Third Reich**

Hitler's frenzied, hysterical rhetoric had so mesmerized Germany that his promise to build a Third Reich which would last 1000 years was hailed by the German youth with a degree of naivete and desperation for glory difficult to imagine today. Regimentation in all spheres of life was a harsh feature of this brutal regime. The youth were organized in a semi-military manner and brainwashed with savage and fiendish propaganda that was typical of the Nazi ideology. The state governments were stripped of their powers and the National Socialist Party emerged in the only legal party.

The Gestapo (secret police) snuffed out all kinds of open dissent. The Nazi creed invaded even the domains of science and arts and indeed vast sections of the German people reacted jubilantly to what they thought was a resurgence of German power.

The consequences were incalculable and the country relentlessly moved down the blind alley to another world war. Hindenburg died in 1934 and following a popular mandate Hitler assumed the powers of both the chancellorship and the presidency and became the Fuhrer or supreme leader. The infamous Nuremberg Laws (1935) institutionalised the massive, state-sponsored persecution of the Jews that got under way in deadly earnest. To achieve total regimentation or co-ordination the propaganda ministry now controlled radio, press, theatre and cinema. Propaganda Minister Goebbels's idolatrous propaganda built up Hitler as a German Messiah. Concentration camps and often death were the lot of the Jews and others pushed beyond the pale of the state. Trade unions were abolished and industry brought under state control. Hitler embarked on a rearmament programme till then unrivalled in European history which coupled with massive public works certainly altered the unemployment situation but standards of living did not rise commensurately. Hermann Goering, another trusted lieutenant of the Fuhrer, was mobilising Germany for Hitler's predatory war of violent expansionism. In the rest of Europe, 'fifth columns' were promoted, aided and abetted to subvert and sabotage governments in countries which figured prominently in Hitler's nightmarish scheme of Lebensraum ("living space" for an expanded Germany). Later events chart the surge of xenophobic German nationalism across Europe and the inexorable drift to war through the latter half of the 'low, dishonest decade'.

Germany withdrew from both the League of Nations and the Geneva Disarmament. The Rhineland was remilitarized and Germany formed alliances with Mussolini's fascist Italy and Imperial Japan already waging its ruthless war of imperial expansion in China which would later expand into the 'Asian Co-prosperity Sphere.' German intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), her occupation and annexation of Austria (1938) and demands for parts of Czechoslovakia put the world on notice-if notice was at all needed-that Hitler was on the war path. The Munich Pact (1938) was a hollow triumph of British and French appeasement became by March-April, 1939, the Germans had overrun Czechoslovakia. In August Germany and Russia concluded a non-aggression pact. Meanwhile, pursuing what had already become an ominously familiar pattern, Hitler had claimed Polish territory. By now German mobilisation was complete and Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Appeasement had failed, Poland was being torn to pieces. England and France declared war on Germany. The Second World War had begun.

The military history of the War does not exactly concern us here. What had begun as a European conflagration became a global conflict with the German invasion of Russia in June 1941 and Japan's attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbour

in December, 1941. Six years later World War II ended in 1945 with the total defeat and destruction of the Axis powers, namely Germany, Japan and Italy.

### **3.2.3 Post-War Germany**

After the war and the extinction of the Nazi regime, two sovereign German states emerged: the Federal Republic of Germany (popularly known as West Germany) and the Socialist German Republic (popularly known as East Germany). The emergence of the German states coincides with the early phases of the steadily mounting cold war in a bipolar world between the USA and the erstwhile USSR. It was precisely at this period that Brecht finally ended his life as an exile and settled down in East Berlin (then the capital of East Germany) where he spent the last years of his life.

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## **3.3. Bertolt Brecht: a short biography**

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We have already looked at the different periods in the history of Brecht's Germany in some detail. And it has also been observed that the history of Brecht's great dramatic achievement and the history of contemporary Germany are inextricably linked. So let us now turn to the story of Brecht's eventful life in its creative aspects in this section.

The first of two sons, Eugen Bertolt Friedrich Brecht was born in Augsburg on February 10, 1898 to a Catholic father and a Protestant mother. He grew up in a middleclass environment which later became an abhorrence of his and he received a typical bourgeois education first at an elementary school (1904-1908) and later at Konigliches Realgymnasium. Not surprisingly, he was a reserved, taciturn, modest but intellectually alert student. He had already published his first poems in 1914, three years before he graduated from the Realgymnasium. Meanwhile the theatre had won him over but he was also bent on studying medicine and science at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. Before he could join the university, however, he was conscripted as a medical orderly and served at Augsburg military hospital. World War I had entered its final, most brutal phase and young Brecht's direct exposure to the horrors of modern war shaped in no small measure his lifelong championship of peace and fraternity and his acute hatred of social and economic systems which did not eschew violence and indeed sanctioned war to achieve political ends.

*Baal*, his first play, was inspired by the Bavarian revolutionary upsurge. He was first drawn towards communism when in 1919 he was a member of the Augsburg

Soldiers Council and formed links with the Independent Social Democratic party. The same year began his association with the writer Lion Fenchtwanger whose encouragement sustained the young playwright in his formative years. In 1921 Brecht made his debut as a drama critic even as he finally abandoned his studies. He was already working as chief advisor on play selection at the Munich Kammerspiele in 1920 when he came close to Karl Valentin, a well-known figure in Bavarian folk-comedy. This association was not without its significance in his creative development. In this period Brecht was a familiar figure in Munich's literary cafes where he sang his ballads to his own banjo accompaniment.

Though his first short story was published in 1921 and brought him fame both in Munich and Berlin and though he was awarded the Kleist prize for *Drums In The Night*, 1924 presents a more important landmark in his career because it was in that year that he staged *Edward*, his first theatrical production. He moved to Berlin and at once drifted into the city's cultural life. He had begun discovering his voice and a phase of intense development commenced. Now, along with Carl Zuckmeyer, he was a dramatist at Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theatre. Over the next three years he published three plays and a volume of poems. He was also collaborating with Erwin Piscator at this time and the collaboration resulted in their stage adaptation of Hasek's novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1920-23). Piscator's influence on Brecht is most clearly seen in Brecht's later development of epic theatre (See under 'Epic Theatre'). Another highlight of this period is his seminal association with the composer Kurt Weill. From this association followed a spate of musical plays. The greatest achievement of this phase was of course the production of *The Threepenny Opera*, in 1928. Brecht had now truly arrived. He was famous and he was financially successful too.

In 1928 Brecht married Helene Weigel, a fine actress who would later create memorable stage versions of the female protagonists in Brecht's major plays. And Helene was a communist whose ideology now powerfully attracted Brecht. Meanwhile revolted by the mayhem and violence of war and the crushing misery caused by the economic dislocation of the postwar years, Brecht had immersed himself in a rigorous study of Marxism and emerged a convinced communist.

To many writers, opinion leaders and thinkers in the West, the Soviet Union presented a powerful though somewhat enigmatic alternative as the world tumbled from one crisis to another, the depression derailing capitalist economics everywhere. Germany was the worst hit. If the crash ('Wall Street Crash') which had engulfed the USA and West Europe was disastrous elsewhere, in Germany it was nothing less than

calamitous. The steady recovery of the mid-twenties was soon wiped out unleashing a period of turbulence which inexorably led to the emergence of Adolf Hitler as the unchallenged dictator of the powerful, totalitarian German state bent on the war path. Perhaps Brecht would still have been a great writer even if the German and European nightmare of the 30-s and 40-s had not occurred. But the fact remains that the 'low, dishonest decade' with all its horrors and foretaste of even greater horrors ahead mapped out, as it were, the path his development as a playwright would follow by calling forth from him powerful creative outbursts as crisis after crisis shook Europe and marked the stages in the accelerating drift to another European war.

This pattern of his development first unfolds with the didactic plays called *Lehrstücke* and *The Measures Taken (Die Massnahme)*—his first avowedly communist play in tone and treatment (1930). Together with his musical collaborator Hans Eisler, Brecht also produced a film *Kuhle Wampe*, again avowedly communist in intent and treatment. It portrays the life of the unemployed in Berlin suburbs who lived in shacks. No sooner was it released in 1932 than it was banned.

The coming of the Nazis to power threatened to disrupt and terminate Brecht's dramatic career. Interruption by the police of performances or outright prohibition increased. Then the Reichstag was burnt down by the Nazis on February 27, 1933 and Brecht, no longer feeling safe in Germany, fled the country to settle in Denmark.

Though the *Seven Deadly Sins; Anna Anna (Die sieben Todsunden der Kleinbürger)* had already been performed in Paris in June, 1933, it was not always easy to find stages for the performance of his plays in Europe. Nazi Germany robbed him of his German citizenship, but undaunted he travelled to New York to be present at a performance of his play *The Mother (Die Mutter)*, written 1930-32 and based on Gorky's celebrated novel of the same name).

In exile, too, his powerful repudiation of Nazism and fascism continued and gained intensity. The onslaught lies at the heart of the great plays written during the period. But other complex, contemporary themes also complicate the dramatic discourse in these plays. For example, many readers and Brecht critics maintain that the first successful splitting of the uranium atom, among other things, inspired him in 1938 to explore the disturbing question of the conscience of scientists in the celebrated *Galileo (Leben des Galilei)* which indeed inaugurated Brecht's great phase—a phase which would draw to a close with *The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis)* in 1945.

In 1939 he was again on the run. Fearing a German takeover of Denmark (which occurred soon enough) he moved first to Sweden and then to Finland. In June, 1941,

having obtained an immigration visa from the U.S. consul in Helsinki, Brecht with his family journeyed right across Russia to Vladivostok from where they for the USA, arriving there in July, 1941. Brecht now made serious efforts to make a living by writing for Hollywood, but without much success. Living in California he rediscovered friends who had migrated from Nazi Germany like him and found new ones, particularly in Charlie Chaplin and the drama critic Eric Beutley, One of his greatest interpreters in the English speaking world.

However, Brecht was not received widely by American audiences and *Galileo* which was adapted into English and staged in Hollywood in July, 1947 was praised by the critics, but failed to draw enthusiastic audience response. Meanwhile the infamous McCarthy reaction was gaining ground, communist-phobia was being pushed to the length of hysteria in the US A, a nation-wide witch-hunt for communists and communist sympathisers was on and when he was summoned to testify before the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee about his communist party affiliations, Brecht (Charlie Chaplin a few years later) left the USA in November, 1947 and arrived in Switzerland.

But it was war-ravaged, torn-apart Germany where his heart lay. East Germany had already offered him a theatre and huge financial support—ideal conditions for a major playwright-innovator of Brecht's calibre and it was home-coming for Brecht when he went to live permanently in East Germany in October, 1948. His search through life for a company for producing his own plays now ended with the establishment of the Berliner Ensemble in November, 1949. The Ensemble of which Brecht was the Dramaturg and indeed the mastermind, presented an impressive array of old and new talents and rapidly emerged as one of the finest theatre companies in the world, symbolising in the process Brecht's innovative theatrical poetics of total and epic theatre. At about the same time his most substantial theoretical essay, "Little Organum for the Theatre" and extracts from his unfinished novel, *The Business Deals of the Julius Caesar* came out in print.

After completing *The Days of the Commune* (Die Tage der Commune) in 1949, Brecht more or less ceased writing plays, devoting himself now chiefly to stage management, running the Ensemble and production of adaptations from classics such as Shakespeare plays.

More and more international honour and recognition came his way. He was conferred the Stalin Peace Prize by Moscow in 1955 and the tremendous ovation that marked his arrival at the Paris International Theatre Festival the same year was symptomatic of the global Brecht cult which has over the next decades, increasingly

by brought into focus the essential sanity and vitality of his great plays. Brecht died in East Berlin at the age of 58 in August, 1956.

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### **3.4 Brecht's work—an overview**

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Brecht was a formidably original genius who had continually evolved his own radical views on the role of drama and developed no less radical stage techniques in an eventful playwright's career which produced almost forty plays, adaptations and essays, chief among which is the revolutionary "Little Organum for the Theatre" (1948). His plays in varying degrees translate these views and techniques into vibrant stage reality.

His best known theoretical constructs are those of 'Alienation Effect' (Verrrefindungseffekt) and 'Epic Theatre.' 'Alienation' is indeed Brecht's refinement of the Russian formalist theory of 'defamiliarization'. Brecht suggests that audience and actors alike should develop a degree of critical detachment from a play and its performance. This is needed to promote a questioning, critical, sceptical, attitude which alone can preclude the spectator's and actor's emotional projection of himself into and identification with the characters and action. Such an identification is indispensable for experiencing the catharsis which results from tragedies performed in traditional theatre. This is in tune with Brecht's insistent demand for an 'antihypnotic', 'anti-illusory' theatre which would provoke spectators to enquire, analyse, examine the dramatic action presented in new, disturbing and unfamiliar ways.

The sentimentality and emotionalism of traditional theatre Brecht opposed with a new kind of trenchant objectivity, directness and simplicity so characteristic of his elemental themes and his treatment of these themes. In 'Epic theatre' or 'Theatre for Learning' he found a flexible vehicle for presenting a series of events on the stage which could feature men and women as objects of enquiry and analysis.

Brecht's epic theatre was of course initially inspired by Erwin Piscator's 'socialist theatre' in the 1920-s. Brecht himself clarified that the 'essential point of epic theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feelings than to his reasons.' As developed by Brecht, epic theatre indicates a kind of loosely constructed narrative or chronicle play basically didactic in intent. It evolves through a loosely strung sequence of events or episodes—a sequence in which 'each scene (is) for itself Dramatic techniques used by Brecht in such plays include the use of chorus, slide projection, subtitles, revolving stage (and similar devices), film, placards and of course music. Among

Brecht's great plays. *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) and *Mother Courage* (1941) are in the epic theatre mode.

Yet it has often been seen that his plays, when performed, come to life in ways which do not always conform to his aesthetic theory. Take *Mother Courage* for example. She is so vital a figure that it is almost impossible for a spectator not to identify himself with her, not to project himself into the action or feel implicated in her destiny. This no doubt suggests a hiatus between the impact of his drama and the aesthetic and political themes underpinning the plays. But it is also a measure of the greatness of these plays where Brecht's unerring portrayal of harshness, horror and decrepitude in life and society clearly outstrips theory and moves the audience profoundly. And for good reasons. Brecht is didactic, Brecht is sceptical because he as an idealist, is acutely concerned with the fundamental issues of good and evil and his plays enact in a big way the inevitable struggle between good and evil, evil often overwhelming the former. The progress of evil fills him with pessimistic horror, robs him of his faith in human emotions and sentiments; but the core of his faith in man's ability to redress the balance through corrective political action survives. The faith is inspired by communism and it enables Brecht to come to grips with his pessimism and despair.

The variety and diversity of Brecht's plays compel admiration. He began with expressionistic plays, didactic plays and graduated through the musical and realistic plays of the middle phase to the great innovative masterpieces of the triumphant last period. With masterly ease the great plays unobtrusively fuse a variety of didactic, realistic, lyrical and musical strands that go into their making. *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Galileo*, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* contain much of his greatest work and the majority of his memorable characters. *The Threepenny Opera*, Brecht's first major play, has moments of greatness while *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* and the comically vital *Mr Puntilla and His Hired Man*, *Matti-are* fine works of their kind and come second only to the masterpieces. Given his astonishing range and variety, it is little wonder that Brecht imbibed and adopted numerous ideas and influences. He drew on and sometimes borrowed whole plots from German and English authors. Medieval morality plays, Reformation and Jesuit theatre, Austrian and Bavarian folk comedy and masters of modern cinema like Chaplin, Keaton and the Marx brothers—Brecht drew on all these elements of Western culture as well as some of the characteristics of Japanese Noplayers. Brecht was not merely a German playwright, he was as much a world playwright who made whatever he drew on uniquely his own. Thus taking his cue from the Noplayers he introduced such

didactic devices as a narrator and the use of a chorus and an orchestra. The chorus intervened and gave its view of the action while the orchestra was visible to all present. In his plays an actor would sometimes narrate and perform simultaneously, commenting on and introducing his own action and questioning, criticising the progress of events in the play.

The structural complexity of his plays thus derives from Brecht's cultural plurality. These are often composed of a number of short scenes episodically, loosely woven together with no concession to the new-classical unities. Songs and narratives are the other devices which hold the plays together while prologues and epilogues often clarify the issues at stake. The chorus, too, at times, intervenes to comment or enquire and in doing so, both intensifies and illuminates the core theme. The episodic progress also brings into the play opposing ideas. The result is a juxtaposition of contraries, a dialectics of opposites which tends to create discrepancies on the surface, but the play is the richer for the ironic contrasts underlying the discrepancies.

The unique role of music and songs in Brecht's plays and his techniques of character portrayal will be discussed at some length when we look at *Mother Courage* in greater detail.

For students reading Brecht in translation, it is not easy to understand how flexible, how plastic and varied his stage language is. He created a language sufficiently copious for his theatre as he assimilated in varying degrees a number of sources like the German vernacular, the Lutheran Bible, popular songs and even Kipling. There is no room for sentimental bombast or highflown rhetoric (so characteristic of popular melodrama in Germany and elsewhere) in Brecht's language which blends verse and prose, officialese, colloquialisms and dialect forms in a powerful stage idiom. It occasionally parodies elevated verse forms such as blank verse and contains many allusions. This language is not easy to translate. But a meticulous and sensitive rendering can certainly give the reader an adequate idea of the grandeur and magnificence of the original. In this unit we have throughout used the translation of the play in Bertolt Brecht-collected plays - Vol 5 published by Vintage Books (A Division of Random House, New York)

### **3.4.1 Summary of the action**

But 'the play's the thing' and it is the play to which we must now turn. What follows here is a summary of the episodic sequence of *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941) which is an outstanding example of Brechtian chronicle play based on parallelism. The parallelism is to be found in the setting of the play because it is

a play on the Thirty years War in Germany (1618-1648). The great significance of the parallelism certainly figures in the analysis that follows later and it comes home powerfully because it is mediated by the episodic structure.

In writing the play Brecht adapted the picaresque story of Hans Jakob Grimmelshansen's seventeenth century novel *Simplicissimus*. The heroine is Anna Fierling, a canteen manager who is nicknamed Mother Courage (we shall soon see that the Nickname is rather ironical) as she displays unusual courage and enterprise in salvaging her goods from danger when threatened by enemy gunfire. She has two sons and a daughter, namely, Eilif who is vigorous, reckless, given to daredevilry and not troubled by scruples; Swiss Cheese, honest to a fault and doomed to suffer and die for it and the handicapped Kathrin, so passionately fond of children that she will brave murderous enemy soldiers to save them. They were sired by different fathers. Drawing a canteen wagon behind them, they wander across Europe as the Thirty Years' War ebbs and flows and drives them on. Soon, despite Mother Courage's efforts to dissuade him, Eilif the daredevil is seduced into joining the Swedish Protestant army. The war brutalises him and he wins wide praise for his reckless courage. Swiss Cheese, in his turn, secures the job of an army paymaster and for him it is the beginning of the end because his refusal to hand over the regimental funds to the enemy makes his captors kill him.

Perhaps Mother Courage could have saved his life by bribing the captors if she had not bargained too long and too hard over the ransom price of her wagon. She ends up bargaining away the life of her son. But she successfully saves the life of a Protestant chaplain when the Catholic army gets the upper hand and is in occupation. The Chaplain escapes certain death disguised as Mother Courage's handyman.

But the war grinds on and Mother Courage's war-time business career flounders on, too. She is ideed in an ambiguous position as far as the war is concerned. She denounces the war, yet she is acutely, anxiously aware that her business depends on it and that she makes her living out of it. So acute is this anxiety that when a brief bull intervenes and the fighting stops, she is worried that if peace comes, she will be finished as a businessman.

Eilif's reckless brutal ways now bring about his ruin. He plunders farmers in solidery fashion and is executed because though plundering people in war is a feat of bravery, it is considered a crime in peacetime. The war which keeps Mother Courage's business going exacts its price too, and now only three of them are left—Mother Courage, Kathrin and the cook, their sole companion.

News comes that the cook has received a property in Holland, a small inn which

has passed to him by inheritance. The cook offers to marry Mother Courage and take her to Holland but Kathrin, he insists, will have to be left behind because the inn is too small to support three people. Since she cannot abandon Kathrin, Mother Courage says no to the cook who leaves for Holland. Now the wagon is hauled by mother and daughter. Following the vagaries of the war they arrive in the vicinity of Halle. The Catholic army is preparing to storm and take the city, Kathrin overhears conversation to this effect and she is anguished at the prospect of children being put to the sword. Spurred into action by her boundless love of children, Kathrin, now transformed into a heroic figure, climbs and perches herself on the roof of a farmer's cottage and frantically beats a drum to arouse the citizens of Halle from sleep and warn them of the impending attack. She is shot dead but the townspeople have already been alerted, the guns in the town boom and the Catholic plan to mount a surprise night attack on Halle has certainly failed.

The war has taken its final toll and decimated Mother Courage's family. Forlorn and displaced, she can only go on doing what she has been doing all along. She continues to wander about, pulling the wagon alone. The war has robbed her of her children but left her wagon intact. It is her means of livelihood and she can go on making her living out of the war.

### **3.4.2 The Thirty years, War : parallel and contrast**

In order to understand the dimension of parallelism presented by the dramatic setting of the Thirty Years, War to the Europe of 1940-41 (early phase of World War II when the play was written and first staged in Switzerland), one needs some basic information about this general European War (1618-48) which was fought mainly in Germany. The issues at stake were complex—territorial, dynastic and religious. Characterised by stifling alliances and local peace treaties, the war was to a large extent a struggle of German Protestant princes and France, Sweden, Denmark, England and the United provinces against the unity and power of the Holy Roman Empire as represented by the Hapsburgs, allied with the Catholic princes. Thanks to the weakness of the Holy Roman Empire, disunity among the German states and the expansionism of the other European powers, the war gradually engulfed Europe. The same thing was happening, on a much greater scale, in 1940-41 when Hitler was sweeping everything before him. For a European audience of the period, the' parallelism was too obvious to miss.

Inevitably, the consequences of the Thirty Years' War were disastrous for Germany. Germany suffered a great decrease in population, devastation of agricultural land and

almost total ruin of commerce and industry. The tremendous misery of peasants in Germany during this period was often recalled in songs and writings over the next centuries. World War II (1939-45) inflicted on Germany, Europe, Asia and Africa a similar though much vaster calamity.

Thus the setting of *Mother Courage* was a triumph of dramatic construction. The unfolding action irresistibly induced the spectators to compare and contrast their current nightmare with the older nightmare of The Thirty Years' War. The end result after a performance has always been an acute awareness of evils such as war and the need for collective action to destroy evil. This awareness, however, is not something separable or detachable from the play or superimposed on it. It is inherent in the play and embodied by it. To see how this awareness is created one can do no better than examine how the action develops. So, let us join the action.

### **3.4.3 Mother Courage - an approach**

Brecht's major plays present a complex dialectical view of the relation between history and individuals or characters. The contradictions and conflicts of this relationship are not mechanically injected into the play, but projected into the action and the development of individual characters. Brecht believed that the portrayal of a character as the member of a class or epoch was not possible without his portrayal as a particular human being within his class and epoch.

A historical figure would thus present characteristics of two types, namely, characteristics showing the reality of his age as well as characteristics which express and reveal his unique personality. A character in whom both these characteristics blend and unmistakably link him to his society and age emerges powerfully in the play and fascinates us.

This dialectical view of individual and history is developed and articulated more powerfully by the time we come to *Mother Courage and her Children*. The tussle between the individual and the age and society in which he/she lives is seen in all its subtle complexities. In the world of Brecht's plays a historical figure is not necessarily a hero or a titan. So far from being a hero, Mother Courage is a very ordinary, unheroic woman, almost the polar opposite of Gustavus Adolphus or Wallenstein, heroes of the Thirty Years' War. Yet in the end she emerges as an arresting character who is highly intelligent, enterprising and energetic. She is capable of tremendous hard work and she can keep her cool even when up against very heavy odds. Where others feel inclined to quit or throw in the towel, the irrepressible Mother Courage has the grit and resourcefulness to get on with her job. This and her

stubborn resolve to save her children and carry them through the war unscathed which is entirely natural and just on her part endear her to the audience and draw its sympathy. All this places her where she belongs—at the centre of this moving play.

Sometimes audience sympathy for her terrible predicament grows so strong, overriding other considerations that Mother Courage is projected in performance as a tragic figure, a hopeless victim of a harsh, hostile and inscrutable destiny which works through war.

But Brecht's design was quite different. It is possible to argue that he did not intend to present Mother Courage as a tragic figure crushed by an implacable, irresistible, malignant fate. He provides clues when he makes her speak about why she has embarked on such a business career. She chooses of her own accord to join the war so she can make a living as a canteen manager and it is, therefore, no uncontrollable, hostile fate but this deliberate decision of hers which exposes her family to all the dangers of war. Once she has let herself in for it, she cannot escape the consequences.

On another level, on the impersonal and larger level of history and society (presented here in terms of the Thirty Years' War), the interaction between the character and the segment of society to which she belongs (here the army) has a decisive bearing on what happens to her. Suffering is inevitable because she has thrown in her lot with the military and war. War brings misfortune, misery and catastrophe of which she, too, will have her fair share. Not that she fares badly everywhere. The episodic structure is far from being mechanically constructed. As Mother Courage remarks, even when the army suffers a reverse, individual members can turn it to their advantage. She herself sets an example when she turns a defeat to good account by getting hold of a horse to pull her wagon. The horse is of course taken away with the restoration of order. But this shows Mother Courage's flexibility and dynamism—qualities of character which enable her to adjust quickly to the potentially dangerous situation and even carry on her business when she is captured by the enemy. But the interaction is sure to break down or be disrupted when violence is the order of the day, the armies claw each other out, conditions are dangerous, and one has to be ruthless in business. In this way we get to know the other side of Mother Courage's complex life. She is also the 'hyena of the battlefield' whose business cannot go on if the war which is most evil stops.

In Brecht's plays the larger social and historical factors which powerfully shape the course of events in the dramatic action are underscored in several ways. In *Mother Courage*, too, Brecht employs innovative devices. There are wide-ranging

military and political factors underlying, mirroring and determining the harsh conditions in which Mother Courage, her children and the army find themselves. She has no choice really. If the war drags on for years and there is prolonged devastation, society will be so thoroughly ruined and degraded that small businessmen and businesswomen like Mother Courage will be wiped out as opportunities for independent initiative and action will shrink and disappear. She cannot control or influence the fighting which continues to engulf new regions. Chaos follows because order and discipline are destroyed by war, the worst kind of lawlessness. The rape of Cathrin certainly outrages us but we see it as an inevitable consequence of chaos which is as inevitable as penury, bankruptcy and misery.

As the action progresses, the titles ushering in the scenes become increasingly sombre and grimmer. The life that the scenes enact is not only cold and cheerless, it is horrifying too. Again it is the larger developments in the political and military spheres which mould the conditions, surrounding the lives of the characters.

#### **3.4.4 Songs in Mother Courage**

This larger, impersonal, collective framework or background is continuously touched upon and etched in as a frame surrounding the action not only through titles, but in more subtle ways, too. The characters articulate feelings, thoughts, attitudes and hopes or speak about current disasters of the war. When they do so, they speak not only for themselves, but also for innumerable others, indeed for all those in Europe (and by implication, the world) who suffer the ravages of prolonged Warfare. These universal sentiments are very movingly registered in the songs which form so remarkable a feature of the play.

As she first comes on the stage, Mother Courage declares she is a trader and straightaway gives us a song. The purpose in making her sing this song is surely no mere ornamentation. The song brings home to us with dramatic vitality—as nothing else could—the plight of traders like Mother Courage who are running business of some kind or other in time of war. The number of their customers dwindles with each battle, so they must be persuaded to spend all their money before they go into battle. As long as they remain alive, trade can be done with them and there is no room for the dead in trade. The last stanza which is sung again at the close of the play hammers home the bleak truth that Mother Courage can of course carry on her trade though her children have been destroyed by the war. The effect is two-fold. In the first place the message is monstrous, dehumanizing. Secondly we are reminded that

Mother Courage is one among a vast number of people who share this fate.

The second song in the second scene functions in the same way. It is sung first by Eilif and later by Courage. At the heart of it is a contrast between two attitudes—the casual hearty, reckless and impulsive attitude of a young soldier and the fears and anxieties of mothers, sisters and wives left back home—women generally. The first two stanzas set forth the young soldiers' attitude which can be summed up as "The life of a hero for me! The rest of the song is dominated by the feelings of women whose anguish and apprehension come to the fore at the end of the song and come true with a vengeance. This song lends a kind of universality to the feelings of Eilif and Courage and sets them in the wider context of a war-torn society. And the 'Fraternal Song' (Lied vom Fraternalisieren) sung by the camp prostitute Yvette achieves a similar universality because it illustrates the deadly truth that countless other women have been similarly driven into prostitution because they were too loved and were beguiled.

The fourth scene presents Courage's 'The Song of the Great Capitulation' ('Das Lied von der grossen Kapitulation'). It is a wonderful piece where we can very clearly see how songs function as integral elements in a Brecht play. At this juncture Mother Courage comes to the conclusion that even when injustice occurs, silence and not protest is the wisest policy. Thus the young soldier who has very good grounds for complaining, is dissuaded from doing so. Courage first speaks of the young who believe they are in a class by themselves, but pessimism replaces enthusiasm when one grows old and feeble. This song powerfully underscores the need for collective, largescale remedial action and stresses the truth that if injustice is inflicted, it is the spinelessness of those submitting to unjust orders which is more culpable than overbearing power. Thus the real danger lies in the mental weakness of men and women who suffer and still yield to injustice believing all too easily that they are so very helpless against tyrants and enemies who are invincible. Therefore all those who, like Mother Courage, prefer mute acceptance and abject inaction to protest and action surely deserve criticism.

#### **3.4.5 Character : dialectical view**

When we examine the action in this way, we become aware that one of Brecht's main concerns here is to display the dialectical relation between individual and society ('collective') in all its complexity and demonstrate that of the two, society or collective is the overwhelmingly powerful element. While the changing fortunes of

the family of an unusually energetic and tenacious woman provide the core of the story, the blows that befall the family are caused by political and military developments in a far larger and wider field, in the European context generally. This wider framework overarches the action and reminds us that the events, situations and characters presented on the stage symbolise the fate of innumerable people in towns and villages across Europe caught in similar situations or events and driven by similar feelings, sentiments, motivations and emotions. Here too, as in *Galileo* or *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht has meticulously engineered a complex mosaic of political, economic and social forces which exert a shaping influence on the way the characters develop and act.

This dramatic structure rests on a view of the role and function of the individual in history and society which evolved over the years and which is, at least in the major plays, multi-dimensional. In this view, action, though directly linked to character, is powerfully moulded by large impersonal collective factors (political, social, economic) which eventually shape and determine the world of character or agent. The question of causality or cause for action, therefore, is inseparable, in Brecht's drama, from the individual-society interaction.

#### **3.4.6 The Note of Symbol**

*Mother Courage* is unique because like many other great plays it grows beyond the writer's intent or design and develops a symbolic dimension which altogether transcends theories and precepts underlying the dramatic structure and theme. Brecht's greater plays are basically redemptive parables presented in dramatic terms.

The Christian virtues are embodied in characters and presented symbolically in a schematic fashion. The most notable interpreter of Brecht in the English speaking world, Eric Bentley, notes these features in his characteristic lucid analysis and we recall his illuminating remarks:

“The action divides into three sections at the end of each of which a child is killed. Each child represents one of the virtues. Eilif is called the Brave Son. Swiss Cheese is called the Honest Son. Kattrin (Cathrin) is characterized by kindness in the little charade of the black cross.....Brecht is one of those artists—Ibsen and Conrad are others—who do not really change their subject from one work to the next, but all their life long, worry the same point.”

“Such an artist soon becomes a bore unless that point is of great moment and unless he can present it in various aspects. How can the principle of variety be

applied to the notion of the virtues? One way is by irony. Eilif's bravery turns out in the end to be only what is wrongly called bravery; he is transformed into a foolhardy bandit. Another way to variety is by parallelism and contrast in character and narrative. Not only is one brother offset by a second, the daughter is offset by another kind of daughter (a daughter of joy). Yvette's career yields the one success story in the play. This has its own irony. Yvette's success is doubly ambiguous, it is accompanied by physical and moral deterioration, and it is exhibited with disapproval. Kathrin, by contrast, is a failure at the start,... But...he makes of Kathrin his own type of hero—the activist and confers upon her a kind of glory.”

### 3.4.7 Conclusion

We can now sum up in a few sentences what we have seen of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. It is a loosely constructed chronicle play set in the period of the Thirty Years' War. The structure is episodic, the techniques expressionist, symbolic and the play remains perhaps the finest example of 'epic theatre'—a dramatic form developed to perfection by Brecht in his later plays. Written at the darkest hour of World War II (1940-41), the play which approaches and links up with its own age through parallelism and contrast (Thirty Years War) is Brecht's magnificent indictment of war, violence and follies inseparable from such evil.

Like his great predecessors Ibsen and Chekhov, Brecht also created a number of memorable characters. Though some of his early characters fail to make a lasting impression and though in his view the social group or society (collective) is more important than individuals or characters who receive social motivation from their creator, the major characters in his later plays outgrow limitations and emerge as vital, memorable figures. *Mother Courage*, *Galileo*, *Azdak* are characters of this category. Far from being abstractions projecting forces of history or similar concepts, they represent full-blooded complex human figures implicated in their age and history who live and dominate their worlds like a Hamlet or Lear suffering the consequences of their actions.

It is no coincidence that reading a Brecht play or watching its performance one is often reminded of Shakespearean tragedy. If characterization is one area which provides this reminder, another area is dramatic structure and sequence of action. As Eric Bentley has pointed out incisively. "As action can be transplanted thousands of miles by the changing of a single word! In short there is no concrete locality in Brecht's drama. Place, like time, is abstract."

In Shakespeare's plays, too, we see that the action is absolutely bound up with the

characters who ‘carry place and time with them as they move’ (Granville Barker).

But why should this be so in Brecht? Remember his famous remark that ‘truth is concrete’. His best plays very well illustrate the truth of it, they are a wash with vivid, dramatic details which flesh out the action.

In spite of their splendid wealth of actualising details, the settings are nevertheless not exact, accurate representations of reality, rather they are fluid, suggestive backdrops providing space for the action to unfold and enact the themes. Often, however, in a flash of brilliant inventiveness, a powerful symbolic device such as the wagon in *Mother Courage* is erected to fuse all the layers of meaning and considerably enrich and widen the significance of the experience presented. Consequently, the plays, at least the great masterpieces, certainly emerge as redemptive parables of the upheavals and catastrophies of Brecht’s own age—the first half of the twentieth century. If in the process, occasional improbabilities and oversimplifications occur, the action is not impaired because the story in Brecht’s hands functions as a vehicle to generate conflict which achieves, in the greater plays, an inevitable momentum.

In the end, let us remind you once more that this study material is no substitute for the play *Mother Courage and Her Children*. It is designed to help you to derive maximum benefit from your reading of this very great play by drawing attention to certain key features of the text and by providing background information about Brecht’s life and times.

Please remember that ‘the play’s the thing’ and that in the ultimate analysis you will find the best commentary on the play in *Mother Courage and Her Children*.

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### 3.5 Questions (Essay-type)

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1. Do you think *Mother Courage and Her Children* is a good title? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Show how *Mother Courage* is both a product and a victim of war.
3. Examine the function of songs in the play.
4. How does Brecht use parallelism and contrast in *Mother Courage*?
5. Write a short account of Brecht’s Germany.

#### Short-type

1. Give an account of Brecht’s achievement as a playwright
2. Discuss the character of Swiss Cheese.

3. Write a short note on Epic Theatre.
4. What is 'Alienation Effect' ?
5. Do you think Kathrin emerges as a hero in the end ?

### 3.6 Select Bibliography

1. The Brecht commentaries: Eric Bentley: Eyre Methuen, London (1981)
2. Brecht in Perspective: edited by G. Bartram & A. Wainey : Longman (1982)

DESTINY was first presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, on 22 September 1976. The production transferred to the Aldwych Theatre, London on 12 May 1977, with the following cast:

TURNER	Ian McDiarmid
GURJEET SINGH KHERA	Marc Zuber
COLONEL CHANDLER	David Lyon
MAJOR ROLFE	Michael Pennington
PETER CROSBY	Paul Shelley
PLATT	Clyde Pollitt
MRS CHANDLER	Judith Harte
FRANK KERSHAW	Dennis Clinton
BOB CLIFTON	Paul Moriarty
SANDY CLIFTON	Frances Viner
PAUL	Greg Hicks
TONY	Leonard Preston
MONTY GOODMAN	Paul Shelley
DAVID MAXWELL	John Nettles
RICHARD CLEAVER	Bob Peck
DRUMONT	David Lyon
PRAKASH PATEL	Dev Sagoo

ATTWOOD	David Lyon
MRS HOWARD	Judith Harte
LIZ	Cherie Lunghi
INSPECTOR	Hubert Rees
EMMA CROSBY	Judy Monahan
DIANA WILCOX	Denyse Alexander
CAROL	Cherie Lunghi
PARTY GOERS/MEMBERS	Denyse Alexander
OF THE PATRIOTIC	Michael Cashman
LEAGUE/POLICE	Jack Galloway
	Alfred Molina
	Judy Monahan
	Martin Read
	Hubert Rees

*Directed by* Ron Daniels  
*Designed by* Di Seymour  
*Lighting by* Leo Leibovici

The constituency of Taddley; where most of the play is set, is a fictional town to the west of Birmingham.

The Nation Forward Party, the Taddley Patriotic League, the Association of Diecasters and Foundrymen, the Baron Castings Co. Ltd, the United Vehicle Corporation and the Metropolitan Investment Trust are fictional organisations.

None of the characters seen in the play has ever existed.

ACT ONE

'The Conservative Party by long tradition and settled belief is the Party of the Empire. We are proud of its past. We see it as the surest hope in our day. We proclaim our abiding faith in its destiny.'

Conservative Party Manifesto  
General Election, 1950

'The Right is acutely aware that the kind of Britain it wishes to preserve very largely depends on Britain remaining a great power... Everything about the British class system begins to look foolish and tacky when related to a second-class power on the decline.'

Peregrine Worsthorne,  
Conservative commentator,  
April 1959

ACT ONE

Scene One

*Darkness. We hear a sonorous VOICE:*

**VOICE.** Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long oppressed, finds utterance. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.

*Slight pause.*

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, 14th August, 1947.

*Lights snap up, and with them, sounds of celebrations in the distance. We are in the box room of a British Army barracks, near Jullundur in the Punjab, On the back wall hangs a huge, dark painting of the putting down of the Indian Mutiny. It dominates the set, A door to one side, two chairs, several packing cases, a stuffed tiger, a trunk, all covered with dust sheets. A British Army Sergeant, in tropical uniform, stands by the door. He has just switched the light on. His name is **TURNER**; he is from the West Midlands, about 20, and harrassed.*

**TURNER.** Oh, bloody hell. (*Exit. Shouts, off.*) Khera! Khera! (*Pause*) For Christ's sake. Khera, where the bloody hell you hiding?

*Sound of running feet. The voice of a young Indian :*

**KHERA.** Sir?

**TURNER.** Where the hell you been? *(Pause.)* Aw, come on. Look what I found.

**TURNER** comes back into the mom with **GURJEET SINGH KHERA**, an 18 year-old Sikh servant, who wears a turban, and has a steel bangle on his wrist and a knife at his belt. When talking to **KHERA**, **TURNER** speaks loudly and slowly.

**TURNER.** Right. See this stuff? It's going. Out. You, me, get this stuff out, right? *(KHERA nods and does nothing.)* Well, come on. let's get weaving. Get these sheets off, see what we got. *(KHERA and TURNER begin pulling sheets off furniture and packing cases. KHERA is just dropping the sheets. TURNER notices.)* Hey, you. Don't just drop 'em anywhere. Fold'em up. *(KHERA does nothing. TURNER waves his folded sheet as an example.)* Fold yuh ? Savvy ? *(KHERA nods wisely.)* Well, get a move on, then. *(KHERA, still nodding, starts folding a sheet, very slowly and precisely.)* Jesus Christ.

**TURNER** returns to his work. Sounds of celebration, a little louder.

Your people having a good time then, eh?

*Pause.*

I said, your people having a good time?

**KHERA** *(stopping work)*. Oh, yes. Having a wizard time. *(As if explaining to a child:)* Independence.

**TURNER.** Oh, I wondered what it was.

*Pause.*

All right, get on. *(TURNER pulls the dustsheet off the tiger.)* Now what's this here?

**KHERA** *(helpfully)*-Tiger. Stuffed.

**TURNER.** You know. I just about worked that out for myself.

**KHERA.** They shoot them, then they stuff them.

**TURNER** looks to heaven, then back to folding. Enter a **COLONEL**, 43 years old, upper class. **TURNER** snaps to attention, salutes.

**TURNER.** Sir!

**COLONEL.** It's all right, Sergeant.

**TURNER** looks to **KHERA**, who has not responded. **KHERA** becomes aware of his negligence, slowly and lackadaisically comes to attention. Pause. Then:

Oh, Lord, is this some more?

**TURNER.** Yes, sir.

**COLONEL**, (to the tiger). Ah. What have we here?

**KHERA.** It's tiger, sir.

**TURNER** looking daggers.

Stuffed.

**COLONEL** (smiling). Yes.

**TURNER** (to cover). I found this trunk, sir, I don't know what....

**COLONEL.** Do we know whose it is?

**TURNER** No, sir. Reckon it's been here a long time. Don't think anyone's been in here for years.

**COLONEL.** Well, let's take a shufti. It is open?

**TURNER.** I'll try it, sir. (**TURNER** opens the trunk. **COLONEL** kneels and looks inside.)

**TURNER** (to **KHERA**). You can be getting this stuff down to the lorries.

**KHERA** is taking the stuff out as:

**COLONEL.** Well, well. (He takes out a red hunting coat.) Can't jettison the fancy dress, can we?

**TURNER.** I'm sorry about him, sir, he's-

**COLONEL.** No matter, Sergeant. After all, it's their day. No doubt all his chums are whooping it up in Jullundur.

**TURNER.** Yes, sir.

**COLONEL.** Now, what else...ah. (He takes out a bayonet, desheathes it.) I'll bet this hasn't seen service for a year or two. (He looks at the sheath.) It's certainly not us....Indian Army, I'd say...(He shrugs and sheathes the bayonet, puts it back in the trunk. Finds a bottle of whisky.) Good Lord, it's scotch. That's a tum up for the books. I wonder how long that's been there?

**TURNER.** Don't know, sir.

**COLONEL.** Well, it doesn't go off, does it? Where's the boy?

**TURNER,** *(to the door, shouts),* Khera!

**KHERA** *(off, from a distance).* Sir?

**TURNER.** Let's have you! Sharpish!

*Enter KHERA, who deliberately speaks to the Colonel rather than to TURNER.*

**KHERA.** So sorry, sir, I am taking—

**COLONEL.** Look, will you nip down to the mess and fetch three whisky tumblers. Got that? Say I sent you.

**KHERA.** Right away, sir. There tumblers, right sharpish. *(Exit.)*

**TURNER.** Three, sir?

**COLONEL** *(stands).* Yes. Why not? *(He shuts the trunk.)* I'm afraid I think we'd better take it all.

**TURNER.** Yes, sir.

**COLONEL.** God alone knows where we'll put it.

*Slight pause.*

**TURNER.** There been any trouble today, sir?

**COLONEL.** Not as far as I know. All having a good time. The real shinding here'll be when they decide the boundary. Hence the rush.

**TURNER.** If you ask me, sir....*(He thinks better of it.)*

**COLONEL.** No, go on.

**TURNER.** They didn't have all this trouble in the old days, sir. I was in Calcutta last year, the riots, and I can't see they're much more than savages, sir, whatever they say.

**COLONEL.** Well, ours is not to reason why.

*Pause. Enter KHERA with three tumblers on a tray. He puts, them on the trunk.*

Ah, splendid. Do you fancy a tippie, urn -

**TURNER.** Khera, sir.

**COLONEL.** Khera? *(KHERA doesn't understand. Colonel, waving the bottle:)* Drink?

**KHERA.** Oh, please, yes.

**COLONEL.** Splendid. *(He pours the whisky, handing glasses to KHERA and TURNER.)* Know what you're going to do when we've all gone home, Khera?

**KHERA.** Oh, I don't know, sir.

**COLONEL.** Perhaps you'll come to England one day. See the natives on their own ground, mm?

**KHERA.** Yes, sir, I would like to come to England very much.

**COLONEL.** Well, here's to .... yes, why not. To the King. With whom we need not, I think, couple the name of Mr Attlee.

**TURNER.** Winston, sir?

**COLONEL.** Yes, splendid. The King, and Mr Churchill.

*They are raising their glasses as MAJOR ROLFE bursts into the room. He is nearly 30, brusque, and at the moment, in a filthy temper.*

**ROLFE.** Oh, there you are, Sergeant, I've been looking all over-*(He sees the COLONEL.)* Oh, I'm sorry, Colonel.

**COLONEL.** That's all right, Major. The Sergeant and I just found ourselves caught up in the general atmosphere of jubilation. Do join us.

*COLONEL nods to KHERA, who gives his whisky to ROLFE. As ROLFE takes it:*

**ROLFE.** Some bloody wog's whipped the battery from the Landrover.

**COLONEL.** Oh, not again.

**ROLFE.** Broad daylight. Anything that isn't nailed down. They've stripped the cellar.

**COLONEL.** We'll have to do something about the battery.

**ROLFE.** If we want to get out of here, yes. Your health, Colonel. *(He takes a swing. Slight pause.)*

**COLONEL.** Your health. *(He and TURNER drink)*

**ROLFE (to KHERA).** Well, don't just stand there gawping. I assume all this stuff's got to be moved?

**TURNER.** Yes, sir.

**ROLFE** (to **KHERA**). Well, get moving it.

**KHERA** (with a mock salute). Yes, sir! (He picks up a packing case and goes.)

**COLONEL** (refilling glasses). Quite a bright little chap, that one. Half devil, quite possibly, but hardly half child.

**ROLFE**. I'm sorry. Colonel?

**COLONEL**. Kipling. Don't you know it?

Take up the White Man's burden-

Send forth the best ye breed-

Go, bind your sons to exile

To serve your captives' need;

To wait in heavy harness

On fluttered folk and wild-

Your new-caught, sullen peoples.

Half-devil and half-child.

We used to have to learn it by heart at preparatory school.

**ROLFE**. I didn't go to a preparatory school. Colonel.

**COLONEL**. I know you didn't, Major.

**ROLFE**. Nonetheless, it sounds an eminently appropriate description.

*Pause.*

**TURNER**. Is it true, sir, they'll all be able to come to England now, to live?

**COLONEL**. I believe Mr Attlee is preparing legislation, now India is in the Commonwealth.

**ROLFE**. Do you approve of that, Colonel?

**COLONEL** (quite sharply). Of course. It's an obligation. We are the mother country, after all.

**ROLFE**. I have some reservations.

**COLONEL**. And you're welcome to them. *Pause. The COLONEL drains his drink.*

I suppose I'd better go and sort out this battery business. See all this stuff gets loaded, Sergeant.

**TURNER.** Sir.

**COLONEL** (*meets KHERA coming in*). Carry on the good work, Khera.

**KHERA smiles.** Exit **COLONEL**.

**ROLFE.** Well, Mr Khera, apparently you've just become a British citizen. (*He pours himself another drink.*)

**KHERA.** Sir?

**ROLFE.** Get on with it.

**KHERA.** Do you want tiger, sir?

**ROLFE.** Of course we want the bloody tiger. We shot it.

**KHERA takes the tiger out.** **ROLFE takes out his cigarette case, offers it to TURNER**  
Smoke, Sergeant ?

**TURNER** (*not sure of the protocol*). Er....

**ROLFE.** Oh, for Christ's sake, if Mountbatten can hand over the Raj to a bunch of half-crazed dervishes, you can smoke on duty.

**TURNER** (*takes a cigarette*). Thank you, sir. (*He lights his and ROLFE's cigartte.*)  
Do you think Mr Churchill will do anything about it, sir? When the Conservatives get back in ?

**ROLFE.** When were you last in England, Sergeant ?

**TURNER.** 1945, sir. Just after VE Day.

**ROLFE.** A lot has changed.

*Slight pause.*

**TURNER.** You going straight back, sir ?

**ROLFE.** No, not straight away. I want to go south, to Tiruppur. Old garrison. Just once, again, before I go.

*Enter KHERA.*

Well, best get on.

**TURNER.** Right,.sir. Khera, I want the rest of this stuff down in ten minutes.

*Pause.*

**ROLFE.** You say 'yes, sir', don't you ?

**KHERA.** Yes, sir

**ROLFE.** Let's get this bloody show on the road. (*Exit ROLFE and TURNER.*)

**KHERA** goes to the trunk is about to take the tray off it. Then a second thought, he pours himself a whisky. Then he notices the painting of the Indian Mutiny. He looks at it. He touches the canvas. Then he turns out front, raises the tumbler in a mock toast.

**KHERA.** Civis - Britannicus - Sum.

*Blackout and music: Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks - covers the change.*

### Scene Two

*Dim light on a portrait of the COLONEL, in uniform, in India. Music fades. A spot fades up on the COLONEL, at the side of the stage. He is very old.*

Colonel. In '48. Came on home.

Colonel Chandler. Monochrome.

Another England,

Rough and raw.

Not gentle, sentimental as before,

Became a politician, not to master but to serve:

To keep a careful finger on the grassroots Tory nerve;

Like any born to riches, not to plunder but to give:

Always a little liberal, a great Conservative.

But as his seat grows marginal, his power's less secure.

His responsive elder statements sound increasingly  
unsure;

Colonel Chandler, past his prime :

Dignified. Worthy. Out of time.

Colonel Chandler, oyster-eyed,

One fine summer morning, died.

*Exit. Lights up, the portrait, we now see, is on the back wall of a drawing room. A door. A table, with coffee set out, and a telephone. Enter PETER CROSBY, who is in his late 20s. Like all the men in this scene, he wears a sober suit and a black tie. He goes to the telephone, picks it up, dials.*

**CROSBY.** Extension 237, please. Hallo, Maggie? Look, I'm at - *(Checks on the phone.)* Taddley 3721. T-A-D-D-L-E-Y. Well, it's somewhere near West Bromwich. Anyway, I'll be here 20 minutes, gone an hour, back till about 5.30. *(Smiles.)* No, it really is a funeral. My uncle.

*Enter PLATT, middle-aged, West Midlands accent, unsure of his surroundings. About to speak to CROSBY when he sees he's phoning, so looks at the portrait.*

Hardly. He was very old. Now, look Maggie, can you get me running yields on all the Inter-Americans first thing. That's right. And get Bill! to check me futures on the Chicago softs, sometime before lunch. No, that's all. *(Smiles.)* And you, sweetheart. *(He puts the phone down, notices PLATT.)*

**PLATT.** Business goes on, eh, Peter?

**CROSBY.** I'm afraid the market is no respecter of grief. Coffee?

**PLATT.** Thanks very much. *(CROSBY pours the coffee.)* We were all right sorry to see him go.

**CROSBY.** Yuh, I'd think, actually, you constituency people knew him rather better than I did.

**PLATT.** Could be.

**CROSBY.** Milk and sugar ?

**PLATT.** Just - milk.

**CROSBY** *(giving PLATT his coffee).* I imagine it was a much safer seat, in the old days.

**PLATT.** Oh, ar. Rural, indeed. Now, of course, with the new estates, it's very dodgy.

**CROSBY.** Did he ever think of retiring?

**PLATT.** Talking for ten years. But they don't, do they?

**CROSBY.** Old Tories never die, they just get redistributed.

**PLATT** *smiles.* **CROSBY** *looks at his watch.*

Off, soon.

**PLATT.** Urn, Peter, it's probably not the right time to bring it up, but the by election writ's on the cards any day, and I gather Smith Square were thinking of, keeping it family.... Perhaps we could have a chat.

**CROSBY.** Yes,, indeed. Why don't we, I'm in no hurry to get back up, have a drink or something afterwards?

**PLATT.** Fine. We'll go up to the Club. Get your face known

*Slight pause.*

Be others in the running, of course. Can't take nepotism to excess.

**CROSBY.** No. of course. Anything I should push, or steer clear of ?

**PLATT.** Well, I'd keep quiet about Chicago softs, for a start. Concentrate on hards from Longbridge. (**CROSBY smiles.**) Otherwise, bear in mind we're in Enoch country and you'll be all right.

**CROSBY.** Enoch country?

**PLATT.** The ground fairly thick with our commonwealth cousins.

**CROSBY.** Well, yes on that one, I should make it clear -

**PLATT.** I shouldn't.

**CROSBY.** Shouldn't what?

**PLATT.** Make it clear, cos all they'll say is, you don't have to live with'em.

**CROSBY.** Well, yes but -

***KERSHAW opens the door; lets MRS CHANDLER enter and follows her in.***

*They are both in their mid-fifties.*

**MRS CHANDLER.** Hallo, Peter.

**CROSBY** (*lasses her*). Aunty.

**MRS CHANDLER.** I'm so glad you could come.

**KERSHAW.** Coffee, Sarah?

**MRS CHANDLER.** Yes, I'd love some, please. (**KERSHAW pours some coffee.**)

Oh Peter, I'm sorry, do you know Frank Kershaw?

**CROSBY.** Yes, of course I know Frank.

**MRS CHANDLER.** Central Office very sweetly sent him up to represent the party.

**KERSHAW.** That's not quite true, Peter. Dozens of them wanted to come, but your aunt insisted that she wanted it kept as small as possible. (*He gives MRS CHANDLER her coffee.*)

**MRS CHANDLER.F.R.** Thank you, Frank.

*Pause.*

Do you know if they've arrived ?

**PLATT** *coughs.*

**CROSBY.** Oh, I'm sorry. Frank, this is Jim Platt, foreman, isn't it?

**PLATT.** Works Manager.

**CROSBY.** Sorry, works manager at Baron Castings. local foundry. And more importantly, constituency chairman. Jim, this is Frank Kershaw. whose many commercial concerns are too numerous to mention.

**PLATT.** Oh, yes, we all know Mr Kershaw.

**KERSHAW.** I didn't know my fame had spread so far.

**MRS CHANDLER.** There, you see, Frank-

**PLATT.** Cos, actually, we're one of his numerous concerns.

*Pause.*

**CROSBY.** Small world.

**KERSHAW.** What did you say your -

**PLATT.** Baron Castings.

**KERSHAW.** Oh, yes, of course.

*Slight pause.*

You're doing rather well, aren't you ?

**PLATT.** Weil, that's not quite correct, Mr Kershaw. It'd be a bit more accurate to say we're doing rather badly.

*Pause.* **CROSBY.** No-one's doing well, after all.

*Slight pause.*

**KERSHAW.** See the trade figs, Peter?

**CROSBY.** I did. Of course, a lot of it's still oil...

**KERSHAW.** That doesn't mean we don't have to pay it.

**CROSBY.** Roil on the North Sea, say I..

**KERSHAW.** As soon as Mr Wedgwood Benn rolls off it....

**PLATT** (*breaks in, as a joke*). Oh for the days of Empire, eh, Peter? Send in the gunboats, sort the Saudies out that way.

**CROSBY** (*smiles*). The sun will never set. eh, Jim? Last for a thousand years?

**MRS CHANDLER.** There was something to be said for it.

**CROSBY**, *taken aback by her tone, looks to KERSHAW, who nods at the portrait.*

**CROSBY.** Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean -

**MRS CHANDLER.** It's all right, Peter. Of course, I know it's changed. The nation, and, indeed, the Party. Once we stood for patriotism, Empire. Now it's all sharp young men with coloured shirts and cockney accents, reading the Economist. We stand or fall, how capable we are. Perhaps, however, not inspiring - quite....

Pause.

**KERSHAW.** I think I heard the car--

**MRS CHANDLER.** You should hear Peter, Frank. He's really very witty. Especially when they talk about the Dunkirk Spirit. Says we must be the only nation in the world that's inspired by battles it lost.

**CROSBY.** I'm sorry.

**MRS CHANDLER.** Are you going to stand ?

**CROSBY.** Stand ?

**MRS CHANDLER.** For the candidacy.

**CROSBY** (*carefully*). I had thought of it. But it's entirely up to you.

**MRS CHANDLER.** I'd be delighted.

*A knock. KERSHAW goes and speaks to someone outside.*

**CROSBY.** Really ?

**MRS CHANDLER.** Really

**KERSHAW.** They're ready. Sarah.

**MRS CHANDLER.** Off we go, then.

*Exit KERSHAW and MRS CHANDLER.*

**PLATT.** Look, Peter, if you'd rather not bother today, after the funeral, and that....

**CROSBY.** No. it's fine

**PLATT.** Another day, if you prefer...

**CROSBY.** No, it's fine.

*PLATT goes. Crosby looks at-the portrait.*

You old bastard. You're laughing at me.

*Blackout.*

### **Scene Three**

*In the darkness, the voice of a young Brummie, PAUL.*

**PAUL.** Bob! Hey, Bob!

*Lights. The bar of the Labour Club. A table, on it three pints and an ashtray. Stools. CLIFTON and SANDY are playing darts. He's in his early 30s, dressed in an oldish corduroy suit and tie. She's perhaps a little younger, from the North neatly dressed in denim.*

**CLIFTON** *(throws a dart, then).* Paul!

*PAUL appears, Mid-20s, wearing jeans, jacket, open-necked shirt, carries a rolled-up piece of paper.*

**PAUL.** Bob, I think we done it.

**CLIFTON.** *(making up his score).* How d'you work that out ?

**PAUL.** Well, get a load of this.

*SANDY throws as PAUL makes a space on the table and spreads out his piece of paper. We see it's a map, with sections coloured in. He weighs down the chart with the ashtray and a glass. SANDY marks up and comes over.*

**CLIFTON.** That pint's yours. Hey, have you met Sandy?

**PAUL.** No. Howd'you do?

**SANDY.** Hallo.

**CLIFTON** *(going to the board and throwing).* Paul's in charge of getting me the

nomination. darling. He thinks I'm a bit fuzzy on Clause Four, but he's backing me because of the opposition. He's what the Express calls an unrepresentative, militant minority. He started reading Tribune at the age of two, he hates Roy Jenkins just a little more than Adolf Hitler, and Reg Prentice gets apoplexy at his very name. *(Coming back to the table.)* But what he doesn't know about the Labour Party Rulebook isn't there. That's right ?

**PAUL.** That's right.

**CLIFTON.** Now.

**SANDY.** *to throw, as.*

**PAUL.** Right. Calculations as follows. 40 union delegates eligible. And on my estimate, them as turns up breaks circa 50/50. And odds and sods like women. YS and the Co-op, all for you. OK?

**CLIFTON.** Fine.

**SANDY.** *(returning).* Yours, Bob.

**CLIFTON.** 'Scuse I.

**CLIFTON** *to throw, SANDY looks at the chart.*

**SANDY.** That looks very impressive.

**PAUL.** It's just a matter, know the rules.

**SANDY.** And then, exploit them?

**PAUL.** Use. **CLIFTON** *(returning).* OK.

*He sits, indicating a suspension of the game. SANDY sits.*

**PAUL** *(pointing at the chart).* Right, so the key's the wards. That's over half the delegates. Now, right-wing wards, the ones you lost already, marked in pink. That's Greenside and Fenley Heath. The reds you got, no brother: Grimley and Broughton Park. The floaters, Stourford and West Thawston, see?

**CLIFTON.** I see.

**SANDY.** D'you think, the other feller, what's his name—

**PAUL.** John Smalley? Not a chance.

**SANDY.** Not even-as an ex-MP ?

**PAUL.** Especially, as an ex-MP. *(He takes a xerox sheet from his pocket. To*

**CLIFTON.**) Now, as it happens, neither of the floaters got their full quota fo ward delegates for the General Management Committee. In Thawston, nothing like. And they can nominate from now until they fix election day. And so - the strategy -recruit new members like there's no tomorrow, pack the GMC with folk'll vote for you, it's in the bag. OK ?

**CLIFTON.** Won't Smalley too?

**PAUL.** He'll try. But here's the point. Cos obviously, them two, we're talking of our pals from overseas. And; as it happens, on that, Mr Smalley's got his drawers in something of a tangle.

*He waves the xerox. SANDY comes over to them.*

Hansard, Parliamentary Report. Second reading. Kenya Asians Bill, Feb 1968. The Hon. John Smalley, then MP for Sheffield East. I quote. *(He reads.)* "Whatever one's Sympathies - and I have many - with these unfortunate people, one must accept that the indigenous population will not for ever stay silent, faced with what appears to be the thin end of a very thick black wedge."

**CLIFTON.** He said that ?

**PAUL.** There in black and...well, you know.

**CLIFTON.** That's great.

**PAUL.** We do it as a leaflet. Bung it round. We got him by the plums. Bob. Like a jerbil in a bucket.

**CLIFTON** *goes to throw.*

**SANDY.** So what about the Tory ?

**PAUL.** Eh?

**SANDY.** You got Bob candidated, or whatever. What about the Tory ?

**PAUL.** Well.... *(Confidentially, to both.)* The Tory. Two in it, so I hear, like us. On one hand. Chandler's nephew, chap called Peter Crosby. You know, bright, high-flier, all slim suits and unit trusts. The other, something altogether different.

**CLIFTON.** Well ?

**PAUL.** One Major Rolfe. Wild man, with eagle eye. Who thinks the Carlton Club is in the pay of Moscow, and would put himself just slightly to the Right of Ghenghis Khan.

**CLIFTON.** He's possible?

**PAUL.** Who knows? With that lot. Does it matter, anyroad? (*He picks up his pint.*)  
Whatever, come the day, it's hallo Robert Clifton, honourable member.

**CLIFTON** *raises his glass.* **SANDY** *follows suit.*

I give you, comrades - the Collapse of Capital.

**PAUL** and **CLIFTON** *clink and drink.* *Sandy sips her beer.*

*Blackout.*

#### **Scene Four**

*Lights. Empty set.* **ROLFE**, now in his mid-50s, stands centre. He wears a black overcoat, with medals, and a poppy.

**ROLFE.** In '47. Came on home.

Major Rolfe. A face of stone.

Another England, seedy, drab,

Locked in the dreams of glories she once had.

The Major looks at England and bemoans her tragic fate,

Condemns the mindless comforts of a flaccid, spongers' state,

Despairs of trendy idiocies repeated as a rote,

While the knot of old school tiredness is still tight round England's throat,

Sees leaders fat with falsehood as they lick up every lie,

The people's blood grown sickly with their driving will to die.

Major Rolfe, sees the light.

Calls for a counter from the Right:

Major Rolfe, starboard seer,

Loses, for they will not hear.

*Enter KERSHAW, dressed similarly to ROLFE.*

**KERSHAW.** Lewis.

**ROLFE.** Frank.

**KERSHAW.** How are you?

**ROLFE.** Fine. And you?

**KERSHAW.** I'm fine.

*Pause.*

How's the boy?

**ROLFE.** Alan? He's fine too. Just got promotion. Captain.

**KERSHAW.** Splendid.

**ROLFE.** Sails for Belfast on the midnight tide.

**KERSHAW.** That's fine?

**ROLFE.** Arrives in time to see the dawn rising over Ballymurphy.

**KERSHAW.** Breathtaking.

**ROLFE.** Indeed.

*Pause.*

**KERSHAW.** And business ?

**ROLFE.** Brisk. And yours ?

**KERSHAW** *shrugs, smiling.*

I didn't get the candidacy, Frank.

**KERSHAW.** What ?

**ROLFE.** Do you remember ? I was going for the Tory nomination, Taddiey.

**KERSHAW.** Oh, yes—

**ROLFE.** Didn't have a chance, of course.

**KERSHAW.** Oh, surely, I thought by now you're due for—

**ROLFE.** Up against the perfect opposition.

*Slight pause.*

**KERSHAW** *(smiling).* Well, go on.

**ROLFE.** Oh, Frank, he looked just right. Knew all the right words, too - concerned, humane, constructive, moderate.... With just the right note of apology in his voice when he had to admit to being a Conservative as well....

**KERSHAW.** (*slightly embarrassed*). Bitter.

**ROLFE.** Perhaps. His hatred of privilege, you see, doesn't stop him showing off his stripy tie.

**KERSHAW.** In fact, I know him, Peter Crosby. Nephew of a friend on mine.

**KOLFE.** So then you'll understand.

*Pause.*

What's it mailer, anyway? The state the Party's in.

**KERSHAW.** What state is that?

**ROLFE.** Self-loathing. Gutless. Genuflecting to the fashionable myths.

**KERSHAW** (*with some irony*). What myths might they be. Lewis?

**ROLFE.** Oh, the full employment myth, the ever-rising wages myth, the higher public spending myth, the whole social-democratic demonology of workers good and bosses bad, all those myths....

**KERSHAW.** Now, surely, Lewis. All that's changed. I read my Daily Teleg

**ROLFE** (*interrupts*). Oh, yes, we'll say, the Party's changed, at last we've understood, we have the Right Approach, and yes, of course, at Party conference, our new and True-Blue leaders, to a person. Dang the drum and flap the flag....It's just you see, we learn from history, in practice, come the crunch, the flag they wave omits the red and blue.

*Pause.*

**KERSHAW.** What's the alternative?

**ROLFE.** That is the question.

*Slight pause.*

**KERSHAW.** OK, Lewis. I've got the message. Brimstone and hellfire. So. how must we be saved ?

**ROLFE.** There's a group of us have lunch from time to time.

**KERSHAW** That's nice.

**ROLFE.** To talk about what happens after.

**KERSHAW.** What happens after lunch?

**ROLFE.** What happens when the river breaks its banks.

**KERSHAW,** *perhaps deliberately, not understanding.*

The cold Class War hots up.

**KERSHAW.** Oh, Lewis, surely not.

**ROLFE.** Not what?

**KERSHAW.** Not Suffolk military geriatrics, drilling private armies on their croquet lawns.

**ROLFE.** Of course not. There's no need for private armies.

**KERSHAW.** Well, exactly -

**ROLFE.** When, already, we've a public one.

*Slight pause.*

One of our little group is Alan's Brigadier.

*Pause.*

**KERSHAW.** You're seriously suggesting - army into Government?

**ROLFE** *shrugs.*

In England?

**ROLFE.** All right. What happens? Wage control collapses, unemployed take over factories, council tenants massively refuse to pay their rents, in name or not. another General Strike, the pound falls through the floor, the English pound, the English river's burst its English banks.... So what d'you do? You either let the deluge, deluge, or you build a dam against it. Mm?

*Slight pause.*

We've got to think about it, Frank

**KERSHAW.** Wasn't it R.A. Butler said - politics, the Art of What Is Possible.

**ROLFE.** No. It wasn't.

**KERSHAW.** Oh I'm sure it—

**ROLFE,** Bulter borrowed it. From Bismarck.

*Pause.*

**KERSHAW.** Why talk to me?

**ROLFE.** I'm testing water.

**KERSHAW.** Only mine?

**ROLFE.** No, any Managing Director of a major British company whose shares were two pounds fifty eighteen months ago and at the close on Friday just topped sixty-four.

*Pause. KERSHAW brusque.*

**KERSHAW.** No, Lewis.

**ROLFE.** No? Why not.

**KERSHAW.** Can't see it in those terms.

**ROLFE.** Won't see it.

**KERSHAW.** Still have some faith in people's reason.

**ROLFE.** Reason? Your shop stewards, reasonable men?

**KERSHAW.** In people's loyalty.

**ROLFE.** To what?

**KERSHAW.** The national interest.

**ROLFE.** Whose? Whose loyalty? The miners? Students? Irish? Blacks?

**KERSHAW.** Lewis, there's no need –

**ROLFE.** And whose interest, him? You talk of our national interest, and they listen? Come on, Frank. They know which side they're on. And so should we.

**KERSHAW.** The dogmas of class war...

**ROLFE.** Yes, yes. And why?

**KERSHAW.** Tell me.

**ROLFE.** Because if we turn craven, we collaborate, we are betraying people who, if they're not on our side, are left in no-man's land, ripe for defection. The NCO's. The lower middle-class.

**KERSHAW.** Yes, well?

**ROLFE.** Who, on all counts, have been betrayed. Their property no longer secure. Their social status, now, irrelevant. And in the place of what's important to them, national destiny and hope, we've given them.... You see, Frank, it's not true that

we've lost an Empire, haven't found a role. We have a role. As Europe's whipping boy. The one who's far worse off than you are. Kind of—awful warning system of the West. And to play that role, we must become more shoddy, threadbare, second-rate. Not even charming, quite unloveable. And for those—the people that I come from, that despair is a betrayal.

*Enter DENNIS TURNER, stands upstage. He is nearly 50, dressed soberly, wears a poppy, carries a wreath. KERSHAW and ROLFE, sensing the ceremony is about to start, move to stand upright, together. ROLFE quietly, to KERSHAW.*

And if they go, we've lost. And go they will, unless they feel defended. So for them we must arm the national interest. Fortify it. Build the dam. for them.

*Pause. A VOICE.*

**VOICE.** Let us commemorate and commend to the loving memory of our Heavenly Father, the shepherd of souls, the giver of life everlasting, those who have died in war for our country and its cause.

'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.'

**RESPONSE (TURNER, ROLFE and KERSHAW).** We will remember them.

*A very long silence. TURNER lays the wreath. The Last Post is played on a bugle. As it finishes.*

**VOICE.** The Legion of the Living salutes the Legion of the Dead.

**RESPONSE.** We will not break faith with ye.

*KERSHAW speaks quietly to Rolfs.*

**KERSHAW.** May be.

*Blackout. KERSHAW and ROLFE go.*

### **Scene Five**

*Immediately, a spot hits TURNER.*

**TURNER-** In '47. Came on home.

Sergeant Turner, to a Midlands town,  
Another England, brash and bold,

A new world, brave and bright and cold.  
The Sergeant looks at England, and it's changed before his eyes;  
Old virtues, thrift and prudence, are increasingly despised;  
Old values are devalued as the currency inflates,  
Old certainties are scoffed at by the new sophisticates:  
And big capital and labour wield an ever-bigger clout,  
And it's him that's in the middle and it's him that's losing out -  
Sergeant Turner, NCO:  
Where's he going? Doesn't know.

*Full lights. TURNER's Antique shop. 1970 Election Conservative Party posters on the wall: Vote Conservative for a Better Tomorrow. Enter TONY, blonde, late teem, and PAUL, a few years younger than when we last saw him. They carry an antique table.*

**TONY.** Turner's Antiques. Employee: Tony Perrins. Like the work. And learn a trade. Investment for the future.

**PAUL.** Turner's Antique. Employee: Paul McShane. Dislike the work. But. out of school, job market bleak, just take what you can get.

*They set the table and go out.*

**TURNER.** Selling old things. Beautiful things. Heavy with craft.

*Enter PAUL and TONY with two antique chairs.*

**TONY.** Years ago. June 1970. Election results. Labour lost. Pollsters confounded. Gaffer's pleased.

**PAUL.** Years ago. June 1970. Election results. Tories won. Lame ducks and rising unemployment. Selsdon Men. A Black Day

*They set the chairs either side of the table. TONY takes TURNER's overcoat from him, goes out and re-returns, as:*

**TURNER.** An end to six years of socialist misrule. At last, the little man will get his, chance against the big battalions.

*Enter MONTY, about 30, Jewish, cockney accent, long hair, brushed denim suit, open-necked shirt. He carries a union jack carrier-bag and smokes a thin cigar.*

To **TONY**:

**MONTY**. Morning flower. See the boss?

**TONY**. Someone to see you. Mr Turner.

**TURNER** *looks to MONTY*. *Some distaste*.

**MONTY**. Good morning, Mr Turner. Montague Goodman. New neighbour. Thought it time we had a chat.

*Slight pause.*

Just call me Monty.

**TURNER**. Neighbour.

**MONTY**. That's correct. We are developing next door.

**TONY**. Look of surprise, the gaffer's face.

**PAUL**. Hrrror, more like.

*Exit TONY and PAUL.*

**TURNER** *(sits)*. Developing next door to what?

**MONTY** *(sits)*. A shop.

**TURNER**. I hadn't heard.

**MONTY**. So hence our chat.

**TURNER**. What kind of shop? It might affect my trade.

**MONTY**. It will, old love. Antiques.

*Pause.*

**TURNER**. What d'you mean, antiques?

**MONTY**. Selling old things. Beautiful things. Heavy with nostalgia.

**TURNER** *(stands)*. *Who* are you?

**MONTY**. Didn't I present my card ? *(He stands, gives TURNER his card. Out front)*  
I told him to ignore the company. It being what you might call defunct.

**TURNER**. You what?

**MONTY**. *(out front)*. Quite elegant, the system, as it happens. Buy a name, in our case several, firms that've stopped trading but still have listed Boards and all that

stuff... And in that name you go to an estate agent, in our case several, and buy a series of adjacent properties, separately of course, complete the deals, wind up the firm.

**TURNER** (*sits*), I don't get what you mean.

**MONTY** (*out front*). So told him. Idea was to conceal a whole row being brought by one developer. And, naturally, that developer's identity. But nothing he could do, and liked his face, so told him. (*Sits, to TURNER:*) That you, Dennis Turner, are now a tenant of the Metropolitan Investment Trust.

**TURNER**. You what?

**MONTY**. They've sold the building, love.

**TURNER**. Who has?

**MONTY**. Your landlord.

**TURNER**. But—

**MONTY** (*out front*). Though, truth be told, he put up quite a fight. (*He stands and walks about.*) In fact, eventually, we had to ring the council, do a bit of bartering. Luckily, we found they were but bursting to erect a SupaParkarama down the road, needing to demolish a pair of properties at that time in our gift. So we said, look, old chums, you don't want all the fuss of buying us out, why not slap a CPO on number 27, grounds of rot, and we can call it quits. Well than, of course, we told his landlord, purchase order on its way, you couldn't see his signature for dust. Wouldn't even have matched out offer, see.

**TURNER**. What's happening to my shop?

**MONTY** (*out front*). I told him, plan was for a precinct, geared towards the younger end. Boutiques, hair stylists, soda fountains, drive-in legal aid facilities, antique emporia, self-service massage parlours, all that kind of thing. (*To TURNER:*) And this particular retailing zone is pencilled in as a zen macrobiotic luncheon take, away, old love.

**TURNER**. You're joking. I've got a 12 year lease.

**MONTY** *sits, pick up his union jack bag, plonks it on the bale, takes out a document, as he speaks.*

**MONTY**. Now there you are correct. Unfortunately the law, in that majestic way it has, does give a little leeway. Quote: the rent is subject to a periodical review.

Sunbeam, you have just been periodically reviewed. Direction : up.

**TURNER.** You can't do that.

**MONTY.** Now there you're incorrect.

**TURNER.** I'll pay it. I'll refuse to go.

**MONTY.** Oh, petal, please.

**TURNER.** Why shouldn't?

**MONTY** (*out front*). I hate this bit. (*He stands, facing away from TURNER.*) Tulip. I don't know if you've noticed, but among the merry navvies labouring next door are several of our Caribbean cousins. Simple, cheery folk, all charmers to a man. but tending to the slapdash. Natural exuberance, you see. The kind of natural exuberance that pushes bits of scaffolding through windows, picking off the Georgian porcelain.

*Pause. He neatly stubs his cigar out on the table top.*

**TURNER.** You bastard.

**MONTY** (*back to the table, putting the document back in his bag*). No, not bastard, Selsdon man.

**TURNER.** But why destroy my livelihood.

**MONTY** (*harsh, quick, nearly angry*). Because, my love, destroying you will make someone somewhere some money. All it is. Cupidity. What you got, but just no enough. Cos we, we make our money out of money. We cover on a global scale. We got cupidity beyond your wildest dreams of avarice. And you, the little man, the honest trader, know your basic handicap? You're suffering a gross deficiency of greed. (*Briskly, as he goes:*) You've got three weeks, old love.

**MONTY** *goes. Pause. Enter TONY and PAUL, either side.*

**TONY.** We came in. Saw the gaffer. Shattered.

**TURNER.** Lunch, you two.

**PAUL.** It wasn't half past twelve.

**TONY.** We told him so.

**TURNER.** I said, it's lunch.

**PAUL.** We went.

**PAUL** goes. *Pause.* **TURNER** waves **TONY** out. **TONY** goes. **TURNER** stands, looks at the table and the stubbed-Out cigar,

**TURNER.** So where do I go now.

*Blackout.*

### Scene Six

*Lights on an upstairs pub room. The date is 20 April, 1968. Tables, chairs. On a table an old Grundig tape-recorder. An easel, with a picture on it, covered in a red cloth. MAXWELL, a thin, neat man in his early twenties, is finishing the distribution of the chairs.*

*Then enter CLEAVER, mid-fifties, distinguished, and DRUMONT, a middle-aged French Canadian, who carries a glass of scotch, and has a raincoat over his arm.*

**CLEAVER.** Thanks very much, David.

**MAXWELL** nods *and goes.*

Well?

**DRUMONT** (*tossing his coat over a chair*). Looking good, Richard.

**CLEAVER.** We think so.

**DRUMONT.** Whole world over. Detroit to Grosvenor Square. Particularly here. The sell-out blatant. Deeper rot Unthinkable ideas beginning to be thought. What an opportunity.

**CLEAVER.** Indeed.

**DRUMONT.** I would be so confident, Richard, but for one factor.

**CLEAVER.** Which is ?

**DRUMONT.** You. The revolutionary movement. The essential vanguard. Where are you, Richard ?

**CLEAVER.** Edward, you know....

**DRUMONT.** No, Richard, no. I'll tell you where you're at. You're stuck in 1930. You're still fighting old battles, tearing yourselves apart with petty sectarian squabbles that you should have settled years ago.

**CLEAVER.** Edward, the reason why - (*A knock. Impatiently:*) Yes ?

*Enter MAXWELL.*

**MAXWELL.** I think everyone's here now. They're in the bar, and they're wondering...

**CLEAVER** (*looks at his watch*). Oh, yes, of course, tell them to come up.  
(**MAXWELL** goes. To **DRUMONT:**) The will is there, it's money.

**DRUMONT.** When the movement in Britain demonstrates that it is seriously committed to unity, then money follows. Simple.

**CLEAVER.** We're having talks -

**DRUMONT.** On unity?

**CLEAVER.** That's right.

**DRUMONT.** Then see that they're concluded.

**CLEAVER.** Yes. Of course.

**DRUMONT.** Richard, It's nineteen hundred and sixty-eight. Student riots. Workers striking. Chaos and decay. In ten years time, where could you be? I tell you. Out of the cellars, Richard. Out of the basements and into the sun.

*A knock.*

**CLEAVER.** Come in.

*The door opens and a number of PARTYGOERS enter. In the main, young. Most have drinks. Some greet CLEAVER. MAXWELL is with them. DRUMONT picks up his coat to go. CLEAVER to him.*

**CLEAVER.** You going ?

**DRUMONT.** I want an empty ritual., I go to church. So—au revoir.

**CLEAVER.** Goodbye.

**DRUMONT** goes. **MAXWELL** to **CLEAVER**

**MAXWELL.** Who was that?

**CLEAVER.** Edward Drumont. Canadian. The man with all the money.

**MAXWELL.** And ?

*Slight pause. CLEAVER shrugs.*

**CLEAVER.** Let's get the formalities over with.

**MAXWELL** and **CLEAVER** move to the centre. **MAXWELL** bangs a glass for

*silence. During his speech, the PARTYGOERS group round, some sitting.*

**MAXWELL.** Comrades. If I could have your attention. Comrades. It's my pleasure to ask Dick Cleaver, on behalf of the movement, on this very special day, the 20th of April 1968, to propose the toast of fealty.

*Applause. During CLEAVER's speech, MAXWELL takes a tray of candles from below a table, and lights them.*

**CLEAVER.** Thank you. Comrades, I'm not going to make a Jong speech...,  
**SOMEONE.** That'll be the day!

*laughter. CLEAVER smiles.*

**CLEAVER.** Though I do believe that a good speech should be like a woman's skirt: short enough to arouse interest, but long enough to cover the subject. *(Laughter.)* Anyway, all I really want to say is how good it is to see a group of people like this, particularly the young ones, in this day and age.... *(Laughter.)* You probably know, you probably saw in Grosvenor Square last month, a lot of today's students are attracted to communism as an alternative to the evils of the capitalist system. And they're right. It is an alternative. Under capitalism, man is exploited by man. Under communism, it's precisely the other way round. *(Laughter.)* But we know that, don't we. Anyway.

**SOMEONE.** That's cos you told it last year!

**CLEAVER** *(smiling, good humoured still).* And there's more where that came from! No, just the one, I promise. There's these two Jewish businessmen on a train. And they're discussing ethics. And one says I tell you a story that illustrates perfectly the problem of ethics already. Here am I in this shop I run with my partner Hymie. And this man comes in for his suit. And I give it him and I say that is £10 and he gives me the money. But whea he has gone I find he has given me by mistake £20 already. So here as I say I have the ultimate ethical problem. Do I, or do I not, tell my partner.

*Laughter. Suddenly, serious.*

But I don't have to tell anyone here about that kind of ethic. Or the-degeneracy of youth today. Or how our beloved country is being deliberately destroyed. I needn't tell you that. You've got your noses. You can smell the stink.

*Slight pause. Jovial again.*

Well, that's my lot. So, without further ado, can I ask you to raise your glasses and join with me in toasting the memory of the man whose birthday we have come together to celebrate, David -

*The **PARTYGOERS** take candles from the tray. **SOMEONE** switches off the light, leaving the scene candle-lit. **MAXWELL** takes the curtaining off the picture. It is Adolf Hitler.*

The Fuehrer.

**ALL** (raising their glasses). The Fuehrer.

***MAXWELL** switches on the tape recorder. A German recording of the SS marching song, the Horst Wessell Lied. The **PARTYGOERS** take off their jackets. Some are wearing armbands, showing the sunwheel symbol; others put on armbands, badges^ flashes. By small additions to basically black, brown and blue costumes, their ordinary clothes become uniforms. As each **PARTYGOER** finishes changing, they salute the portrait, and go and stand by the tape recorder, joining in the song, with English words. **CLEAVER** is the last to salute the picture of the Fuehrer.*

**SONG.** We march and fight, to death or on to victory,

Our might is right, no traitor shall prevail.

Our hearts are steeled against the fiery gates to hell

Not shot or shell can still our mighty song.

Our sword is truth, our shield is faith and honour,

In age or youth, our hearts and minds we pledge,

Though we may die to save our people and our land

This course will stand, our millions marching on.

*A knocking starts at the door. The song peters out.*

We close our ranks, in loyalty and courage,

To God our thanks, for comrades tried and true.....

**MAXWELL** (switching off tape recorder). Who is it?

**DRUMONT** (off). Drumont.

**CLEAVER.** Let him in.

***SOMEONE** puts the light back on. The feeling of panic in the group subsides.*

**MAXWELL** admits **DRUMONT**, who carries a folded newspaper. He stands, says nothing.

**CLEAVER.** Yes, Edward?

**DRUMONT** hands the folded paper to **CLEAVER**.

**DRUMONT.** Read that.

**CLEAVER.** What is it ?

**DRUMONT.** Evening paper. Read. From there.

**CLEAVER.** What is it ?

**DRUMONT.** Read.

**CLEAVER** (*upset at being ordered about, nonetheless starts to read*). ‘A week or two ago I fell into conversation with a constituent, a middle-aged, quite ordinary working man employed in one of our nationalised industries. After a sentence or two about the weather, he suddenly said: “If I had the money to go. I wouldn’t stay in this country”. I made some deprecatory reply, to the effect that even this government wouldn’t last for ever.... (*He looks to DRUMONT.*)

**DRUMONT.** Well, go on.

**CLEAVER**... ‘but he took no notice, and continued “I have three children, all of them have been through grammar school, and two of them married now, with family. I shalln’t be satisfied till I have seen them all settled overseas. In this country in fifteen or twenty years time the black man will have the whip-hand over the white man”.’ (*He looks up.*) Edward, who is—

**DRUMONT** (*takes the paper, turns it over, points*). Now, there. Read on.

**CLEAVER.** ‘The cloud no bigger than a man’s hand, that can so rapidly overcast the sky, has been visible recently in Wolverhampton and has shown signs of spreading quickly. As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see.... (*Slightpause.*) “The River Tiber foaming with much blood”.’

*Pause.*

All right. Who is it,

**DRUMONT.** The Right Hon Enoch Powell, Shadow Spokesman on Defence. Saying what no-one but you has ever dared to say. (*Pause. He lets it sink in. Then to MAXWELL.*)

You a tough guy, soldier ?

**MAXWELL.** I like to think so, sir

**DRUMONT.** This hurt? *(He hits MAXWELL suddenly in the stomach. MAXWELL flinches slightly, shakes his head.)* OK, now taake off that stuff.

**MAXWELL.** I'm sorry, sir ?

**DRUMONT.** Shirt, armband. All that fancy dress.

**MAXWELL** looks to **CLEAVER**, who shrugs a nod. **MAXWELL** takes off his shirt and armband. Again, suddenly, **DRUMONT** hits him.

Hurt amy more? The second time?

**MAXWELL** No, sir.

**DRUMONT.** That's good. *(He turns to the rest of the Partygoers.)* Right. Comrades. For years, you have been battering against a bolted door. *(He waves the paper.)* And now, it's open. You can join, and build, and move. To do so, you must spurn the trappings. Spurn the fripperies. But not the faith. Not, absolutely not, the faith. *(He walks around, ALL watching him.)* For as you grow, you will, of course, be faced with heresies. Two heresies, and rather easy to define. Beware the man - the Right Conservative, the disillusioned military man - who'd take the Socialism out of National Socialism. But, also, even more, beware the man - the passionate young man, the Siegfried - who would take the National out of National Socialism. Guard against them both. Keep strong. Keep faith. And keep your long knives sharp. *(He covers the Hitler portrait with the curtaining.)* And so. Not always. For a time. *(He tosses the newspaper to MAXWELL as he goes.)*

Pause.

**CLEAVER.** Where was he speaking ?

**MAXWELL** *(looks at the paper.)* Brimingham.

Pause.

**CLEAVER.** Rivers of blood.

*The scene freezes, and LIGHTS cross-cut to a spot on KHERA, at the side. He's now in his eary forties, bareheaded, short-haired, clean shaven. He wears the protective clothing of a foundry worker, and carries his mask and goggles in his hand.*

**KHERA.** In '58. Came on home

Gurjeet Singh Khera. To a Midlands town,  
Another England, another nation,  
Not the England of imagination.  
The labour market forces have an international will,  
So the peasants of the Punjab people factory and mill,  
The sacred kess and kanga, kachka, kara and kirpan  
The Sikh rejects so he can be a proper Englishman;  
Keep faith in human virtue, while attempting to condone  
The mother country's horror at her children coming home.  
Gurjeet Singh Khera,  
Once a slave,  
Returns to haunt the Empire's grave.

**PLATT** *(off)*. Khera! Khera! For Christ's sake, Khera, where the bloody hell you hiding?

**PLATT** *enters into a little light on the other side of the stage. He's in a dirty white coat, carries a clipboard. Pause.*

**KHERA.** Sir ?

*Blackout. Play Handel.*

## ACT TWO

‘The rise of the Nazi Movement signifies the nation’s protest against a state refusing the right to work.....protest against economic order thinking only in terms of profit and dividends.

Gregor Strasser, National  
Socialist Reichstag Deputy,  
10 May 1932

It is because we wan socialism that we are anti-Semitic’

Joseph Goebbels, 1931

‘The term socialism in itself is unfortunate, but it is essential to realise that it does not mean businesses must be socialised...This sharing of the workers in possession and control is simply Marxism.

Adolf Hitler,  
22 May 1930

‘Only an anti-semite is a true anti-communist.’

Adolf Hitler, 1931

### Act Two

#### Scene One

*Lights. PLATT and KHERA in the same positions. Noise of machines. The CHARACTERS have to shout, PLATT rather more than necessary.*

PLATT. OK.. Now what’s all this I hear.

PATEL, *enters. Dressed the same as KHERA, stands near him. About 25.*

KHERA. About?

PLATT. About your people banning overtime.

KHERA. It’s not decided yet. We’ll let you know. *(He turns to go.)*

PLATT. No good, mate. In your contracts. 28 a month.

PATEL. It’s also in our contract you speed up the track?

PLATT. Nothing against it, bab.

PATEL. And chargers, casters, knock-out men, no increased pay for increased work?

PLATT. You’re not on piecework, mate. PATEL. Unlike the moulders.

PLATT (*angry*). Oh, for Christ's sake -

KHERA (*quietly*). And, obviously, coincidence that all tha moulders white.

PLATT. Look, mate. It's not my fault, all Asians on fixed rates. Not my fault, all the moulders white. You ought to see your union.

KHERA. We are our union. (PATEL. *and* KHERA *turn to go*.)

PLATT (*shouts after thdm*). Cos I don't give a toss, you're black, white, brown, or pink with purple stripes. As long as you keep working, don't -

PATEL. Precisely, Mr. Platt.

PLATT (*shouts after KHERA*), well, Mr. Khera?

KHERA (*turns back*). As shops steward, I have called a meeting. Let you know.

## ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

PLATT. *angry, leaves*. PATEL. *shakes his head, balf smiling at KHERA, and goes out*.

KHERA (*out front*). The Foundry industry. Long hours. Hot, dangerous conditions. Asians lowest paid, least chances of promotion, first to go.

All WOOD, *white foundryman, but ordinary clothes, crosses the stage, giving no acknowledgement of KHERA, ond goes off*.

(*Sardonically*.) And taking British workers' jobs away. *He.goes, as blackout*.

### Scene Two

*Lights. A meeting hall. Table at the back on a raised platform. Microphone. PEOPLE' at the meeting include TONY, longer haired than in Act One, with a guitar under his seat; MRS HOWARD, an elderly gentleperson; and LIZ, lower middle-class, late 20s. Various other PEOPLE TURNER is making heavy weather of pinning up a banner. TADDLEY PATOIOTIC LEAGUE. On the banner, somewhere, is a union jack. MAXWELL enters. He is now nearly 30 slim suit, tastefully fashionable. He taps TURNER on the shoulder. All the dialogue until, the meeting proper/is unprojected, part of bubbub of general conversation. During it, ATTWOOD enters, and sits.*

TURNER. Oh, hallo David Nearly ready for the off.

MAXWELL. Fine. Just rung Cleaver. Think it's go.

TURNER. That's great

MAXWELL, *sits*. TURNER'S task is complete. TONY goes over to him quickly, as if he's been waiting to catch him,

TONY. Urn. Mr. Turner

TURNER (*looks at his watch*). Yes, Tony?

TONY You won't forget the poem, will you?

TURNER. Poem? Oh, no, of course not.

TONY *grins, sits*. TURNER *to himself, as he goes behind the table*.

Right

MAXWELL. *Suddenly stands, and goes over to him*.

MAXWELL. Oh, Dennis.

TURNER. Ar?

MAXWELL. Just one thing. I noticed. On the banner.

TURNER. Ar?

MAXWELL. You've got the flag the wrong way round.

TURNER, (*coming round to look at the banner*). Oh, blimey, have I?

MAXWELL, (*smiling*). Doesn't matter. Sadly no-one notices But, p'raps, for next time.

TURNER. Sure.

*He grins at MAXWELL. MAXWELL, smiles back, and sits again. TURNER behind the table again. He speaks through the mike, which feeds back.*

Good evening ladies and gentle - Oh God. (*He adjusts the mike. It still feeds back.*) Good evening, ladies—(*Away from the mike, he calls.*) Could we, is there anyone in the box? (*Pause. Grins.*) Technological miracle. (*Pause. This time, the mike's dead.*) Testing, testing. Now we've lost it altogether. Testing, test - (*Amplification in.*) - ing, testing. Ah. One, two, three, four. That's better. Ladies and gentleman, as I was saying before being so rudely interrupted, good evening to you all. Now I've called this meeting, as most of you know, to discuss two

things, both of which are related to each other. One is the forthcoming bye-election, in Taddley, and the other is the possibility of the Patriotic League joining forces with a national organisation. And with this in mind, we have here tonight Mr Maxwell, who's leader, is that right, David?

MAXWELL. General Secretary.

TURNER. Sorry, general secretary of the Nation Forward party, a truly patriotic organisation as I'm sure you'll all agree when you've heard what he's got to say. First of all, though, there is the question of paying for the room, and I wonder if someone.

LIZ. I'll do it. Mr. Chairman.

TURNER. Oh, thanks, love.

*LIZ goes round collecting.*

Always collect before the speaker, eh? Now, first of all, I hope you've all seen the new bulletin. If any of you a'n't, we've got a great new system which might not quite work yet. Anyway, I've got a spare or two. *(He picks up a bulletin)*. Now, we've gone as far as we dare on some of this I don't mind what the Race Relations people say, but the printers get a bit jumpy. Anyway, one thing I would like to draw your eye to is on page four, the item about parasitic worms at Thawston Junior, cos I did write to the Medical Officer of Health about it. I think he's getting a bit fed up with me, actually. Perhaps eventually he'll get fed up enough to do something about these immigrant problems in our schools. Anyway, he wrote back in his usual soothing vein. I hope some time he'll realise that the patriotic people of Taddley can't be soothed that easily. One of the things ( said was that the thing about these parasitic complaints is that they're passed on by cutlery and using the same toilet. Of course that's when these people sit on the toilet. Usually they do other things as you know. Anyway, he didn't say much about that in his reply. Anyway, there was just that one point I wanted to point out before I handed over to Mr. Maxwell to explain to us all about Nation Forward. Thank you.

*He sits, polite applause. MAXWELL, goes behind the table, TURNER adjusts the mike for him.*

MAXWELL I think, actually, I'M dispense with the electronic aid. *(Not into the mike.)* In fact, I thought, despite Mr. Turner's splendid build-up, that I wouldn't lunch off into a great diatribe, I think you all know something about Nation

Forward, and I think it'd be a lot more useful if we threw the discussion open now, so that you can ask the questions you want answering, and, most importantly, that I can listen to what *you* have to say.

*He sits. Pause.*

TURNER. Well, that's stunned 'em all into silence, Mr. Maxwell.

MAXWELL, *smiles. Pause.*

Come on, I'm sure somebody

*Pause. To fill in.*

Well, I think one thing people might want to ask is -

MRS HOWARD *stands and interrupts. During all contributions.* MAXWELL *takes notes.*

MRS HOWARD. Mr. Chairman.

TURNER. Ah, Mrs. Howard. I thought you'd find voice sooner or later.

MRS HOWARD. Mr. Chairman. I have been a member of the Conservative Party for 40 years. That's what I wish to say. *Pause.* TURNER *starts to ask her if that's it.*

TURNER. Is that, er -

MRS HOWARD, *(interrupts).* It would be complete anathema to me to support or vote for any other party.

*Pause. Again:*

TURNER. Are you saying

MRS HOWARD, *(interrupts).* However. I am afraid that the Party is not what once it was. It has become craven. Once it represented all the finest values of the middle class. Now, gangrenous.

*Pause. Again:*

TURNER. Yes, well, I'm

MRS HOWARD, *(interrupts).* Values sneered at. Sniggered over. In the Party. The Young Conservatives, who often seem more socialist than the socialists themselves. They look embarrassed, when you talk about the Empire, or self-help, or discipline. They snigger, talk about the Common Market Sneer, and talk about a wind of change.

*Longer pause.*

TURNER. Mrs. Howar—

MRS HOWARD, (*interrupts*). I'm sure it's infiltrated. From the left. The cryptos. Pale-pinks. Sure of it.

*Pause.* TURNER *does not interrupt.*

I recall it, you will understand, as once it was. That's all I have to say. (*She sits.*)  
MAXWELL. Mrs. Howard, could I say that yours is exactly pur view.

LIZ (*stands*). Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say something. I'm sure what the lady says is true, but it's not just politics. My husband - he can't be here tonight - he lectures at the Poly. And he's become convinced of several things. One is that half these so-called foreign students aren't studying at all. They turn up once, then disappear. And, also, he's quite sure at least 75 per cent of the lecturers, and some of them are immigrant, are communists. Andcos of this, he may loss his job. Cos he's a patriotic person, and makes no secret of it, when they cut back, and they're going to, he'll be the first to go. The union won't lift a finger. And another thing. It's folk like us, who work for Britain, who are suffering the most. Like when they talk about home ownership, the Tories in particular. What happens? Mortgages go up so far we can't afford the payments. So we say, OK, we'll sell. But even that's impossible. Our house is in West Thawston, and you know, you say that you're from Thawston and they all start talking pidgin English. So we can't sell. Or buy. So people get desperate. Really desperate. There seems no way, you see. (*She sits. Pause.*)

TURNER. Anyone else?

MRS HOWARD, (*stands*). In my opinion -

TURNER. Mrs Howard, if anyone else wants -

MRS HOWARD. Just one point. Mr. Chairman. Following on what the young lady said.

TURNER, (*shrugs*). The floor is yours.

*During this.* ATTWOOD *is growing irritated.*

MRS HOWARD. In my opinion, the lady is quite right. It is the silent majority who are suffering in silence. As they watch their green and pleasant land become more and more like an Asian colony. And the do-gooders. Isn't it time. Mr Chairman,

that we thought about the victims for a change? And hasn't the tide of permissiveness; the erosion of old values, gone too far? That's what they're saying. The people on fixed incomes. With inflation. No big unions protecting them. What about the people without a union. What about us?

ATTWOOD *stands and interrupts*. TURNER *whispers his name to MAXWELL*.  
*After a few moments, MRS HOWARD sits.*

ATTWOOD. Look, Mrs. let me tell you something. I reckon I'm patriotic as you are, but I'm in a union, and I've voted Labour all my life, and I'll tell you what's bothering me. I'm in motors, steward in a foundry, and what concerns me, with the business like it is, is that if it's a British firm it's going bankrupt and if it's American, some great Detroit tycoon picks up his phone and says, more profit it we shift the lot to Dusseldorf. And there's summat else. Cos what jobs there are we're not going to get. I doubt if you know Baron Castings, where I work, but come dinnertime there's that many turbans in the canteen, it looks like a field of bloody lillies. And smells like the Black Hole of Calcutta. And if one of 'em gets the push, they're all up in arms, shrieking about discrimination. It's happening now. And I'll be quite frank about the blacks. I hate 'em. And no-one's doing bugger all about it. That's what bothers me. Not the erosion of your bleeding middle-class values (*He sits.*) Sooner or later, summat's got to be done. (*Angry, to MRS. HOWARD.*) So don't you talk to me.

*Tense pause. TONY stands.*

TONY. Er, Mr Chairman

TURNER. Tony?

TONY I think, what the last speaker was saying. You know, I mean, you're middle class, and you lost your business, didn't you. I hope you don't mind me saying, but I mean it was the same, big firm taking over...And take me. I'm on the dole, in'I? Like you were saying. It just does seem to me, what class you are .... same, kind of...

*He's run out. MAXWELL, stands. TONY sits, relieved.*

MAXWELL. If I could perhaps come in there. Well, my friends, I said I thought I'd learn a thing or two from you, and by God was I right. We've heard about subversion in the colleges. From Mrs. Howard about the Tory Party. And from Mr. (*Checks a note.*) Attwood on the local industry. But it's my view that the last

speaker really grasped the point. That what we have in common is greater by far, than what divides us. I'm sure, for instance, that Mrs Howard does not oppose trade unions as such, but only their perversion for political ends. I am convinced that Mr. Attwood does not oppose honest profit, but speculative profiteering. Of course, we disagree on many issues. But more, much more, unites us than divides us. It's an old saying, but you can change your class and your creed. But you can't change the blood in your veins.

*The odd 'Hear bear' MAXWELL, smiles.*

But I'm afraid we've something else in common here. To use a light-hearted phrase, we all feel 'Fings ain't what they used to be'. More seriously, we all of us observe a gradual decay, disintegration, in our fortunes and the fortunes of our nation. And perhaps there is a reason - that we have a common enemy.

Oh, of course, it looks like many, different enemies-to the young lady it's the college reds, to Mr Attwood it's the multi-nationals, to Mrs. Howard it's the banks who recklessly promote inflation and destroy her savings. And it's called by many names-names representing things we're taught to see as opposites-socialism, liberalism, communism, finance capital. Things that, in fact, aren't opposites at all.

You know, there are those who still laugh when we talk about conspiracy. Even when we look at those people who are promoting immigration. Even when we look at those supposed guardians of free enterprise who talk about detente and sell their grain to bolster Bolshevism. There are people, still, who laugh at the idea of a conspiracy. A world wide conspiracy.

But there's one, small group of men and women who don't laugh. There is one, small, growing party which knows what is happening and is determined to reverse it. That is Nation Forward. And I hope, with all sincerity, that you will wish to join this party, join with us, and make our country great again.

*Pause, He sits.*

TURNER. Well, follow that, I think we'd best move straight to a vote. Urn - that the Taddley Patriotic League henceforth is amalgamated within and serves as a branch of the Nation Forward Party. I think that does it. All in favour?

*All except ATTWOOD vote. Pause. ATTWOOD votes.*

Nem. con.

MAXWELL. I think I can say on behalf of the whole movement how delighted I am a this decision.

TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Maxwell, I'm sure we

MAXWELL (*interrupts, smiling*). I *can't* say, on behalf of the movement, anything specific about the bye-election yet, but we are hoping to stand, and my personal view is that there could be no more suitable candidate than your Chairman. Dennis Turner.

*Applause.*

TURNER (*pleased but taken aback*). Well, David, I don't know what to say .... I think anyway we better call it a night...

TONY *puts his hand up*.

If there's nothing else-

TONY Mr Turner

TURNER. Oh, I'm sorry. One other item. Tony Perrins, here, with a fine show of initiative, he's written a patriotic song, and I'm sure it'd be a very fitting epilogue ro such a good meeting. Come on, bab, let's have you.

TONY, *nervous, stands, picks up his guitar, goes to the platform.*

(*To MAXWELL*) I think, move into the stalls, eh, David? (*MAXWELL and TURNER move and sit in the body of the ball.*)

TONY (*sits on the edge of the table, takes his guitar out of its case*). It's—I didn't write the words, it's a poem, I just set it to music—(*He strikes a chord, to check the tuning, and breaks a string.*) String gone. Won't take me a second. (*// does Some snuffling of feet.*) That's it. Um - The Beginnings. By Rudyard Kipling, 1914. Set to music by Anthony Perrins. (*He has a little cough. Then sings. At first not very well, unsure, but growing increasingly assured, barsner. building to the climax.*)

It was not part of their blood

It came to them very late

With long arrears to make good

When the English began to hate

They were not easily moved

They were icy willing to wait  
Till every count should be proved  
'Ere the English began to hate

Their voices were even and low  
Their eyes were level and straight  
There was neither sign nor show  
When the English began to hate

It was not preached to the crowd  
It was not taught by the state  
No man spoke it aloud  
When the English began to hate

It was not suddenly bred  
It will not swiftly abate  
Through the chill years ahead  
When time shall count from the date  
That the English began to hate.

*A grin.*

That's it.

*Blackout. In the darkness, to cover the change, we hear the message of a car  
loudspeaker.*

MAXWELL'S VOICE. People of Taddley. This is Nation Forward, the party which puts Britain first. Our nation is under threat. The scourge of unemployment still ravages. Working people are made to suffer for the mistakes of corrupt politicians, while property sharks and speculators live off the fat of the land. Most of all, treacherous politicians have conspired to flood our country with the refuse of the slums Arrica and Asia. Vote for a change. Vote Nation Forward. Vote Dennis Turner.

*The tape fades.*

### Scene Three

*Lights. The Labour Club. CLIFTON and SANDY with drinks.*

PAUL *with* KHERA, *in a suit, and* PATEL., *in casual clothes.*

PAUL, Gurjeet Khera, Prakash Patel; Bob Clifton, Sandy Clifton.

KHERA. How d'you do.

SANDY. Hallo.

CLIFTON, (*brisk, but not aggressive*). Right. So what d'you want?

KHERA. We wondered, Mr Clifton, if you knew about the Baron Castings situation.

CLIFTON. Yuh. In part.

KHERA. And if, well, you could -

PATEL. We want support.

CLIFTON. Go on.

PATEL. We gave you ours. We voted for you, delegates from Thawston, and gave you our support. Now we want yours.

CLIFTON. I see. So could you, for the detail, fill me in?

PAUL. Well, Bob, as I was saying -

CLIFTON. Not you, Paul.

KHERA. (*aiding himself with notes*). Well. The dispute at Barons began as a conflict over retimed jobs, required a higher workload for the same reward. And as only unskilled workers don't receive a bonus, and as most are Asian, this job retiming is itself discriminatory. But also this had highlighted discrimination in promotion, whereby high-paid moulders' jobs have gone exclusively to whites. Because of this, the unskilled workers, after due negotiation, have imposed a ban on overtime.

***Pause.***

CLIFTON. Yuh. Go on.

KHERA (*not using the notes as he grows in confidence*). There is a union, Association of Diecasters and Foundrymen. In fact, within the foundry, it was-we who built the union. Now, for five weeks, we have fought, banned overtime, without assistance. We have passed motions, sent letters, proceeded through the correct channels. Even when dismissal notices were served on us, they did nothing.

CLIFTON. So -

KHERA. We occupied their offices.

SANDY. The union?

KHERA. That's right.

CLIFTON. And then?

PAUL. They've made the ban official.

CLIFTON. Good. So what's, the problem?

PATEL. So, the ban on overtime's official. On a piece of paper. Registered at Congress House, wherever. Doesn't mean, for moulders, it's official.

CLIFTON. No, of course.

PATEL. And with a racist party, in the bye-election. Making propaganda. Leafletting. And so on.

CLIFTON. Yes.

*Pause.*

OK. It's clear discrimination. Ban's official. Legal. So I'll make a statement. Backing your dispute. OK?

*KHERA is about to reply when PATEL stops him with a gesture. CLIFTON notices.*

Problem ?

PATEL. Question.

CLIFTON. Shoot.

PATEL. What's in all this for you ?

CLIFTON. Why do you ask ?

PATEL. We don't have that much reason to have faith in Labour-any British politicians.

CLIFTON. No, you don't. The answer to your question's nothing. It doesn't gain me anything at all, to swim against the tide. So, why? Don't know. Tell me.

*Slight pause.*

KHERA. Thank you.

CLIFTON. Not at all.

KHERA, PATEL. *and* PAUL *go*. PAUL *giving* CLIFTON *a thumb's up sign*.

CLIFTON (*to* SANDY). Members.

SANDY. I beg your pardon ?

CLIFTON. That's what he meant. D'you member. Paul's recruiting drives in Thawston?  
In a sense, they got me nominated.

SANDY. Ah, I see.

CLIFTON. Not that it's - I mean. I would have backed them anyway.

SANDY. Oh, sure Bob ?

CLIFTON. Yuh ?

SANDY. What are you apologising for?

*Slight pause.*

CLIFTON. Dunno.

*Blackout. In the darkness, another car loudspeaker message.*

TURNER'S VOICE. People of Taddley. This is Nation Forward, the party which puts Britain first. Our nation is under threat. The scourge of inflation still ravages. Independent businessmen are being squeezed out by punitive taxation while social security scroungers live off the fat of the land. Most of all, treacherous politicians have conspired to flood our country with the refuse of the slums of Africa and Asia. Vote for a change. Vote Nation Forward. Vote Dennis Turner. Fades.

#### **Scene Four**

*Nation Forward Campaign HQ. Tables, chairs, typewriters. Too much paper too little space. LIZ is sitting at a table, addressing envelopes.*

*Two doors one, with a spyhole, leads into the street : the other to an inner room.*

*Bell. LIZ stands, checks through the spyhole, admits TONY and TURNER. They both wear union jack rosettes.*

TURNER. Hallo, Liz. Mr Maxwell about?

LIZ. He's in the back. Said you'd want to see this. Evening Post. (*She gives him a newspaper.*)

TURNER (*sits*). Oh, ta.

LIZ. Coffee ?

TURNER. That'd be lovely.

LIZ. Tony, could you -

TONY. Sure. (TONY *sits, addresses envelopes. LIZ goes into the inner room.*

TURNER *laughs.*) What is it, Mr. Turner ?

TURNER. The Labour candidate. Battering on about this nig dispute at Barons  
Gonna get his prick caught in his zip, he don't watch out. (TONY *smiles. Enter*  
MAXWELL. *from inner room.*)

MAXWELL. Hallo. Dennis. Seen the story ?

TURNER. Ar, I have. And the Tory's not much better.

MAXWELL. What? No. I meant our statement on the immigrant voters. Page three,  
top of.

TURNER (*turns page*). Oh, ar?

LIZ *eaters with a tray of coffees.*

LIZ. Dav'd ?

MAXWELL. Liz, you're a treasure.

TURNER (*taking a cup as he reads*). Ta. (LIZ *gives TONY a cup sits with her own,*  
*addresses envelopes, as :)* This is good stuff, David.

MAXWELL. I think it'll capture the initiative.

TURNER. Got to be right.

MAXWELL. By the way, did you manage to glance through the draft election address?

TURNER (*puts down the paper, finds a typescript in his pocket*). Oh, yuh.

MAXWELL. Any worries?

TURNER. Well, yes, actually. One or two.

MAXWELL (*sits*), Shoot.

TURNER. Now, you'll laugh at this, but I found some of it a bit left-wing.

MAXWELL, (*smiles*). In what way?

TURNER. Well, a lot of it's great - all the stuff on the nigs, law and order, you know-  
red hot. But this business about import controls and nationalising banks, I mean-  
you know what I mean?

MAXWELL. Not exactly.

TURNER. I'm not sure how it'll go down.

MAXWELL. With Tory voters.

TURNER. Yes.

MAXWELL. But we're not just after Tory voters.

TUTNER. Well, no. But there's stuff in here about opposing wage controls -

MAXWELL (*slightly impatient*). Of course we are opposed to wage controls. (*Pleasant again*). Only insofar as we believe that the crisis is created by ruthless international speculators and that it should not be paid for by the British working class. You see?

TURNER. Well, still -

MAXWELL (*stands*). That's good.

TURNER. And there's the parasitic worms.

MAXWELL. I beg your pardon?

TURNER. The Medical Officer's report on parasitic worms among immigrant schoolchildren.

MAXWELL. Well, yes, I did think, best to keep it fairly general ...

TURNER. But it proves what I been saying all along.

MAXWELL. Yes, surely but I do think, we've got some general statistics -

TURNER (*stands*). But this is bloody dynamite

MAXWELL (*patiently*). Look, Dennis. We're not - we can't be, just a pressure group, on any issue, even one as central as the colour question. We're party, and as such, face other parties whose ideologies are total, all-encompassing. We too must, therefore, show we have a comprehensive view. We are not, merely, hard-line patriots. We are not, certainly, ersatz Conservatives with a particular distaste for immigration. We are British Nationalists, with a cogent and distinct world-picture of our own. You see ?

TURNER. I don't think you know them round here.

*Pause. Bell. LIZ goes to answer the door as.*

MAXWELL. All right. All right. I'll bow to your superior local knowledge. We'll insert a specific reference.

LIZ *checks, admits* CLEAVER. *He is slightly older than when we last saw him.*

CLEAVER. Ah. Splendid. Veritable hive.

MAXWELL *nods ballo.*

TURNER. Afternoon, Richard.

CLEAVER. Soldiering on. Tony? How's it going.

TONY. Fine, thank you, sir.

CLEAVER. Splendid. Keep it up. *(To TURNER and MAXWELL Mulling over the address?)*

MAXWELL. That's right.

CLEAVER *(taking the typescript)*. Any problems?

MAXWELL. Dennis was worried about some of the economic stuff. Living standards. Banks.

CLEAVER *(leafing through)*. That's right ?

MAXWELL. I pointed out the need to pose a definite alternative to the bankrupt policies of the old parties.

CLEAVER *-(still leafing)*. That's good.

MAXWELL. Particularly, that we should dissociate ourselves completely from backwoods Conservative elitism.

CLEAVER. Of course. You see. Dennis, unlike the Tories, we are not unconditional supporters of the economic status quo. Specifically, we oppose the spivs and parasites of credit or financial capital. At the same time, of course, as seeking to eliminate the Marxist wreckers in the factories. Indeed, our view is that financial capital mid communist subversion are, in essence, just two pincers of the same conspiracy to undermine the nation's enterprise.

TURNER. It doesn't say that here.

CLEAVER. So it would

*Pause.*

Dennis, why don't you and Elizabeth go and map out the visiting.

TURNER. Right.

LIZ and TURNER go into the inner room. CLEAVER still reading. TONY listening as he works.

MAXWELL. Jesus Christ.

CLEAVER. What's the matter?

MAXWELL. Turner's obsession with disease.

CLEAVEJR. I didn't know he had one.

MAXWELL. He has, for starters, a positive paranoia about parasitic worms.

CLEAVER. Parasitic whats?

MAXWELL. Worms.

CLEAVER. David. I'm not totally happy with this.

MAXWELL. Well, it's got to be at the printers by tonight.

CLEAVER. Oh, it's just a few omissions. Tony, go and see if Mr. Turner wants a hand.

TONY. Yes, sir.

*Exit TONY into the inner room.*

MAXWELL. Well ?

CLEAVER. Well. *(He reads.)* 'Nation Forward believes that the cause of our present crisis is not the legitimate wage demands of British workers, but the domination of our economy by a tiny elite of international capitalists—the very people who deliberately import cheap foreign labour and cheap foreign goods to undercut our wages and to throw us on the dole.'

*Pause.*

MAXWELL. Well?

CLEAVER. Drop the wog-bashing and it could be Tribune, David.

MAXWELL. So what d'you want? Wicked unions holding the country to ransom? Eastbourne uber alles? Cos that's what Turner -

CLEAVER *(angry, stabbing at the typescript)*. Where, amongst all this jolly stuff on the thieves' den of the Stock Exchange, is the support of free productive industry? Where, amid all this merry rhetoric about the plight of ordinary working folk, is the need to isolate the Commie wreckers? Where, in the midst of all this happy talk of democratic structures and meaningful participation, is the hint, no more, the hint that all men are not equal and that some were born to lead and others only fit to follow?

MAXWELL. Richard, we can reprint Mein Kampf if it'll make you-

CLEAVER. David, I am liable to lose my temper -

MAXWELL. Richard, I've had Turner down my throat all afternoon. I am trying to .run a campaign from a disorderly shoebox staffed by juvenile mental defectives and to be frank I couldn't give a toss about your temper.

*Pause.*

CLEAVER (*icy calm, ripping up the typescript as he speaks*), were it not, David, for the boundless charity of those of us who, against all the evidence, saw behind your gauche facade the faintest glimpses of potential, you would still be in your army surplus pants and scout-hat goose-stepping up and down in Epping Forest, or, perhaps, organising Nordic Kulturfests on Clapham Common, or, perhaps, being sent down for laughable offences like attempting to arrest the Premier for treason, or, perhaps -(MAXWELL, *furious, takes a wild swing at CLEAVER, who catches his wrist.*) Well done, David. For a moment, then, you ceased to look neanderthal. Almost, a prepossessing specimen. For once.

*Belt.* CLEAVER and MAXWELL, *still locked. Bell agdin.* CLEAVER releases MAXWELL, *who sits, furiously, and engages immediately in busy activity as LIZ. enters, goes to the door and checks through the spyhole.*

LIZ. I don't know who it is.

CLEAVER *looks through the spy-bole.*

CLEAVER. Oh, now this is a surprise. Go and fetch Mr Turner, Elizabeth. He has a visitor.

LIZ *exits.* CLEAVER *admits CROSBY, who carries a newspaper.*

Good afternoon. Mr Crosby My name is Cleaver. And this is David Maxwell.

CROSBY. Dennis Turner in?

CLEAVER. Just coming. Do sit down.

CROSBY *sits.*

I read your statement in the Post today.

CROSBY Oh. yes ?

CLEAVER. Do tell me, is it sexual ?

CROSBY. What.

CLEAVER. This kick you get from batting for the other side.

*Pause.*

Nice for you, though. Uncle kicks his boots off, you step in.

CROSSBY *is about to reply, when TURNER comes in.*

TURNER. Oh. Mr. Crosby. To what do we owe -

CROSBY (*stands, gestures with the paper*). Mr Turner, I've just been studying your plans to sabotage this bye-election.

TURNER. Sabotage?

CROSBY, I've come to ask you to reconsider your plans to harass immigrant voters.

Quote. We do intend to monitor all immigrants who in our view aren't bonafide voters, during this election, at the Polling Stations.' Well?

TURNER. Oh, after the nig-vote, are we ?

CROSBY : I - have most unwillingly come.

TURNER. Look, you know as well as I do, half of them's not entitled, and the other half votes twice.

CROSBY, wilt you reconsider?

TURNER. Will I hell.

CROSBY. Then I shall report you to the Returning Officer.

TURNER. You do that.

*Pause.*

CROSBY (*angry*): There's no need, you know, to make the wholething mucky, drag us all. No need, but I suppose it's aH part of your national regeneration, using these Gestapo tactis - Oh, I'm sorry. You'd probably view that as praise. These - red Boishie bully-boy tactics then (*He turns to go.*)

MAXWELL. We'd have the reds any day, Mr Crosby. Blood in their veins. Our most committed people, working-class ex-reds.

CROSBY. Oh, I'm sure you recruit from various lunatic fringes, not just the one.

MAXWELL. Better to be extremely right than extremely wrong.

CROSBY (*going to the door*). What a fatuous remark, can't you do better than that?

CLEAVER. Mr Crosby, I have an uncle-

CROSBY How nice. Mine's dead. Goodbye, Mr Turner -

CLEAVER, who lives in Southall. Never been involved in politics. Probably votes Labour. And this harmless old fellow is quite genuinely terrified that after he's dead, some time in the future, an Indian temple may be built over his grave. Which may seem absurd, and, what's the jargon, paranoic to you. And it might seem very passe, very old-fashioned, very unhip to say that old boy did not fight in two world wars to die, for whatever reason, an unhappy, lonely, terrified old man.

*Pause. CROSBY is completely thrown.*

CROSBY. I think ... I think I... I don't think there's any moment can usefully be said.  
*He goes.*

CLEAVER (*briskly, as he goes to the inner room.*) You see what we mean, Dennis? Feeble. Flabby. Like all Tories, a slave to sentiment.

*He's gone. TURNER looks at MAXWELL. MAXWELL a wry smite as blackout and a spot hits CROSBY, one side of the stage, and PLATT on the other.*

CROSBY (*to PLATT*). And it was very strange, when talking to these people; thought, oh, no, these can't be, with their grid xenophobia, they can't, or are they, our creation. Demons. Alter-ego. Somehow. (*PLATT smiles.*) And I remembered, being small, the Coronation, and the climbing of Mount Everest, a kind of homely patriotism, sort of, harmless, slightly precious self-content. A dainty, water-colour world, you know. (*PLATT looks embarrassed*). And then, their monstrous chauvinism. Dark, desire, for something...Kind of, something dark and nasty in the soul.

*Pause. PLATT hits a little cough.*

Felt out of time.

PLATT. Beg pardon ? Out of what ?

CROSBY. I'm scared.

*Blackout*

### **Scene Five**

*During the following, -fade up lights. PLATT is still there. KERSHAW, in an overcoat and with an overnight case, comes in to him.*

VOICE. This is Taddley. This is Taddley. The train just arrived at platform two is the 15.57 from Birmingham New St, forming the 16.1-8 to West Bromwich, Dudley, Bilston and Wolverhampton. Platform two for the 16.18, all stations to Wolverhampton.

PLATT *hands* KERSHAW *a thick file*. KERSHAW *'opens it. then looks' back to* PLATT.

KERSHAW. Look, words of one, Jim. What they after ?

PLATT. Extended bonuses. An end to so-called promotional discrimination.

KERSHAW. Can we concede the latter, ditch the former ?

PLATT. No chance. Whites won't wear it.

KERSHAW. Why ?

PLATT. No cash in it for them.

KERSHAW. And giving them the lot ?

PLATT. You'd still have bother, now.

KERSHAW. 1 see. We'll have to break it, then.

PLATT. Or allow it to break'us.

KERSHAW (*looks at* PLATT). Jim, you do understand, why I'm here.

PLATT. Not really very small dispute.

KERSHAW. It was. While they were banning overtime.

PLATT. Now, look, that's not my fault. That's bloody union. They said they'd back the ban. They let the whites work normal, didn't they. No wonder that our sunburned brethren lost their rag. Not my fault, that they're coming out on strike.

KERSHAW. Not my fault, sadly true, that with no manifolds or brake-drums, can't make motor-cars.

*Sight pause.*

PLATT. Think that's called the hyper-mutuality of capital-intensive high technology.

*Sight pause.*

According to my lad's Financial Tunes.

*Sight pause.*

KERSHAW. So, Can the police do nothing ?

PLATT. They say no.

KERSHAW. Why not ?

PLATT. They can. But won't.

KERSHAW. But come on. Jim, an unofficial strike -

PLATT. You tell the good Inspector. (KERSHAW *looks at* PLATT.) You can see their point. The cameras, press, and all. It's tough for them, politically.

KERSHAW. Can see my point ? Three plants, dead stop. Tough, economically, for us.

PLATT. I see. I think that's called a contradiction.

KERSHAW. Jim, for heaven't sake.....

*Pause.*

PLATT. I know a young man. Who's in something of a crisis. He decided, about a week ago, he couldn't cope with being a Conservative. Which wouldn't matter if he wasn't standing for election as a Tory in four days. We all have problems.

KERSHAW. Yes.

*Pause.*

Remind me, the percentage. Black to white.

PLATT. 'Bout six to one.

KERSHAW. Bad odds.

PLATT. What for ?

KERSHAW. The picket line.

*Pause.*

D'you know if Nation Forward know about the strike?

PLATT. Why ask ?

*Slight pause.*

KERSHAW (*suddenly, briskly, walking out.*) An English river, brimming English banks. (*He has gone*)

PLATT. I don't get what you mean.

*Blackout.*

## Scene Six

*In the darkness, on a cassette tape recorder. TURNER practising a speech. He's not doing it well. During this recording, lights fade up on Nation Forwards HQ, evening. CLEAVER and MAXWELL, sit. LIZ and TONY who has the tape recorder near him - are working on a banner upstage. TURNER is standing behind a chair, which he'll use as a lectern.*

TURNER *(on tape)*. People of Taddley. You've all heard the smears. The lies. The what's this ?

MAXWELL, *(on tape, at a distance)* Denigrations.

TURNER *(on tape, after a breath)*. Denigrations You've heard the - is this mewlings?

MAXWELL, *(on tape, at a distance)*. Yes!

TURNER *(on tape)*. All right. The - mewlings of the vested - of the commentators with a vested - sorry, can I start again? MAXWELL *gestures to TONY, who switches off the tape recorder*. TURNER *smiles, shrugs*.

MAXWELL. OK, let's leave that. Try some questions.

*Slight pause. CLEAVER asks the first question.*

CLEAVER. Mr. Turner, would you admit to racial prejudice ?

TURNER. We all have a natural and healthy preference for our own kind.

MAXWELL. Colour ?

TURNER. That's what I mean. Certainly, giving an Asian a British passport doesn't make him British.

MAXWELL, *(prompting)*. Cat.

TURNER *(rushing slightly, as if a line learnt by heart)*. After all, just because a cat is born in a kipper box, it doesn't make it a kipper.

LIZ and TONY *look up, react to the joke*. CLEAVER *looks at MAXWELL* And have you heard the one about -

CLEAVER *(interrupts)*. Turner, there's pressure from the Pakkies for a separate girl's school, religious grounds. Approve.

TURNER. All for it. As long as it's in Pakistan.

CLEAVER No!

TURNER. Why not ? It's funny.

CLEAVER. Flip. You say it shows the immigrants themselves can't integrate.

TURNER (*shrugs*). Ask me another.

MAXWELL. Repatriation.

CLEAVER *holds up three fingers*.

TURNER. Ordered.....compassionate.....humane. (*He stops. CLEAVER gestures him on.*) But we are honest enough to say that it cannot be voluntary. And that includes all immigrants who were born here.

CLEAVER. No!

TURNER. What's wrong?

CLEAVER. How on each can an immigrant be born here?

Remote control?

TURNER. Well, you know what -

CLEAVER. That's exactly what the hecklers want.

MAXWELL. And on the same score, Dennis, don't say they breed like rabbits.

TURNER. Why?

MAXWELL. Cos then some joker shouts that Queen Victoria did too.

*Pause. CLEAVER looks at MAXWELL.*

CLEAVER. All right. This strike at Barons.

TURNER. The main priority must be - to resist, present attempts to secure a backstairs deal, between the immigrants and the company, um - above, uh -

MAXWELL. Over the heads -

TURNER. Over the heads of the British workers.

MAXWELL. A deal which once again would prove -

TURNER. Would prove -

MAXWELL. The common interest -

TURNER. Of the multi-nationals and the multi-racial elements in our midst.

MAXWELL. So ?

TURNER. So, naturally, in the event of management renegeing on the interests of the ordinary white workers, we must show our support.

MAXWELL. No. Dennis, no. In the event of management renegeing on the interests of the ordinary white workers, we must show our support.

TURNER. Oh, at That's right. I'm sorry.

CLEAVER *looks at* MAXWELL. MAXWELL, *rather self satisfied, stands and goes to look at* LIZ's work *over her shoulder*. CLEAVER *learns back in his chair*.

CLEAVER. Mr. Turner, I wonder, could you tell us just a little more about this common interest, between the multi-nationals and the blacks?

TURNER. Well, it's them attracts them. Them as advertised in all the papers over there. And when they're here, it's them the multi-nationals - who encourage them to so-called integrate.

CLEAVER. I see. Now why would they do that?

MAXWELL *(still looking at* LIZ *and* TONY's work). Wages.

TURNER. Yuh, to undercut the wages of white workers.

CLEAVER. Only wages?

MAXWELL, *(still looking at the work)*.-Jobs.

TURNER. That's right, to take jobs that would normally be given to the whites.

CLEAVER. No more than that ?

MAXWELL, *looks at* CLEAVER.

Nothing to do with - make-up? Breeding? And the aim, perhaps, to mongrelize.

TURNER. You what?

CLEAVER. To turn out nation to a mongrel race of khaki half-castes....

TURNER. Ar. and that as well.

MAXWELL. *(walks back to* TURNER *and* CLEAVER, *firmly*). Come on. Turner, you're just Fascists in sheep's clothing. Look at Cleaver's Nazi record!

CLEAVER *(scratching his ear)*. Look at Maxwell's.

MAXWELL. You're just tinpotFuhrers, out to overthrow democracy!

TURNER. That's not -

MAXWELL. Come on! Question! Answer in *(He sits.)*

TURNER. If you'll just let me. There's simple answer. We want more democracy. We think that at the moment we're controlled by an undemocratic cosmopolitan elite

Wall Street - puppeteers - who are behind the plot to undermine the nations, the free nations, and impose a One-World State, which would be under their control. Their methods include strangulation of the national economies by saddling them with debt, and (*Looks to CLEAVER.*) and mongrelisation and communist subversion, and (*B looks at MAXWELL.*) the creation of the multi-national monopolies.

MAXWELL. Well done.

TURNER (*during this speech, CLEAVER starts laughing, long and loud*). In its place we wish to build - a truly democratic...nationalist society, in which the views, of everyone are as it were...What's funny?

CLEAVER (*laughing*). Oh dear me.

TURNER (*quite angry*). What's funny?

CLEAVER. Wall Street? In alliance with the Communists? Oh dear me.

TURNER. Well, they financed the Russian Revolution -

CLEAVER (*laughing even more*). Financed the Russian Revolution? New York bankers'; Oh, that's good, that is.

TURNER. Well, it's been said -

CLEAVER (*still jovial*). I mean, for heaven's sake. Name names.

TURNER. Well, Jacob - Schiff, and Otto .....

MAXWELL. Warburg.

TURNER. Warburg, they gave cash to pay the Bolsheviks to -

CLEAVER (*laughing even more*). Schiff and Warburg? Oh, that's rich, that is. That's really rich. I mean, now, what on earth had they in common with the Communists? Just tell me. What on earth?

*Pause. Still smiling.*

Just tell me. What on earth. In common.

*Pause.*

TURNER. Richard, I don't get -

CLEAVER (*not smiling any more*). Or put another way. What British landlords. British tenants. British workers. British bosses. Have in common.

TURNER (*quietly*) Race.

CLEAVER. Can't hear.

TURNER. Their race.

CLEAVER. And so - the others ?

*Pause.*

Warburg. Marx. Schiff. Rosa Luxemburg. Rothschild. Lev Davidovitch Trotsky.  
What have they in common.

TURNER. Richard. I'm not an anti-sem—*(He stops himself. Pause.)*

CLEAVER. Dennis. The man who took you shop away. What was his name.

*Pause.*

TURNER. Goodman. Monty Goodman.

CLEAVER. Yes.

*The telephone rings. CLEAVER answers it.*

Yes ? Oh, yes, indeed. Hold on.

*He covers the receiver.* And so the questioner's remark about democracy. What is democracy?

TURNER. What serves. Is in the interests of. The Race.

CLEAVER *(stands, walks towards the exit, carrying the telephone on its long lead).*

That's right. *(To MAXWELL.)* Goodnight, David. *(He turns at the exit, gestures with the receiver to TURNER.)* It's for you.

CLEAVER *goes out with the telephone.* TURNER *shrugs at MAXWELL, follows.*

TONY, *his work done, stands, sits on a chair.* LIZ *looks up at MAXWELL.*

MAXWELL. Well?

LIZ. Well what?

MAXWELL. Can't you see what he's doing?

LIZ. who?

MAXWELL. Herr Obscrstgnippenfuhrer?

LIZ *goes back to her work.*

LIZ. Tell me.

MAXWELL. You know, he has this vision of himself, he really sees himself in cap and flashes, striding through Earls Court or somewhere, flanked by cohorts of the brightest and the blondest....

*Slight pause.*

You see, Liz, what he'll never realize, you can't, now, operate a show on Nordic runes and Wagner, there's some people out there going to need convincing, and we must appear...

*Slight pause.*

I mean, OK, the Triumph of the Will, but not just his ...

TONY. Don't matter what we say, as long as we get votes, that what you mean?

MAXWELL (*drops into a chair*). Oh, blimey. What's the point. LIZ, *her work done, stands. She takes out a cigarette.*

LIZ. I like things neat.

*She lights her cigarette.*

I used to do a lot of sewing. Not just clothes, but things around the house. The curtains, chair covers, I even did a bit of tapestry, picked it up at school. The house was getting really nice. But then, with everything, there didn't seem much point.'

There was this tenants' group, a lot of them, in fact, were Patriotic League, you know, the thing that Dennis ran. And what was good about it wasn't that they said the things. I thought, but that, with them, I could express myself, without apologising.

Why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't I be proud of what I am? Our country's rotting. Fabric's perished. Ripping at the seams. Cos people won't be proud of what they are I don't care how it comes about I want a reason to have children.

TONY. Yuh. That's right

*Enter CLEAVER.*

MAXWELL. Well, who was that on the -

LIZ (*interrupts*). Banner's finished Richard.

CLEAVER. Let me see.

TONY and LIZ lift up the banner. A union jack, behind an applique white family  
The slogan, "The Future Belongs To Us".

Yes, that's very good.

*Slight pause.*

MAXWELL, *(suddenly, almost desperately)*. Oh, for Christ's sake, Tony, told you, hundred times, the top left white band's broader, look, you got the thing the bloody wrong way round -

TONY. I'm not the only one.

*Pause.* CLEAVER, *as if noticing MAXWELL/or the first time since in came back in.*

CLEAVER. Oh, David. You still here?

*Pause.*

Tony, get Mr. Maxwell's coat.

MAXWELL. I haven't got a coat.

CLEAVER. Tony, get Mr Maxwell out of here.

TONY *goes to.* MAXWELL, TURNER *has entered, he watches the scene.*

MAXWELL. Look, I... Tony, look, you-

TONY Heard what Mr. Cleaver said ?

MAXWELL. Oh, God Almighty.

*He turns and quickly gestures at the banner.*

CLEAVER. It doesn't matter. Been a long night. *(He sits.)*

TURNER. What's happening? Why's David gone?

CLEAVER *(patiently)*. Dennis. There is, in Nationalist politics, a heresy, it's more or less perennial, which argues that true patriots should be opposed, not just to international finance, but to private enterprise in toto. And what follows? An obsession with 'democracy'. Masses, as against the individual. Distrust of leadership. Marx, decked out in patriotic weeds.

*Pause.*

We've had a little purge.

*Slight pause.. Briskly.*

Right. Once more. The speech.

*Blackout.*

## Scene Seven

*Immediately, a spot on TURNER, in front of the banner. He is miked. His speech is cool, assured, professional. It echoes round the theatre.*

TURNER. People of Taddley. You've all heard the smears. The lies, the denigrations. You've heard the mewlings of the commentators with a vested interest in the notion that our British nationalism is a passing fashion. Well, let me tell them. And tell you.

That from tonight from Taddley, from this by election, we are here to stay. Whatever barriers we may encounter, whatever set-backs we must overcome; however long the journey and however hard the road...we are the future. What can stop us now?

*Applause, but also heckling. A chant from the HECKLERS. 'Nation Forward, Nazi Party.' It's drowned by the singing of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Sounds of violence, chairs being turned over. The HECKLERS attempt the Internationale. It's drowned by a much louder chant, as sounds of violence grow. The Reds, the Reds, we gotta get rid of the Reds, 'The spot on TURNER fades, as his face progresses from triumph to alarm. Blackout as the chants and sounds of violence go on growing till, suddenly, they cut out, and two single rifle shots are heard.*

## Scene Eight.

*Lights. ROLFE Stands. He is in a dark overcoat, over a suit which shows signs of hasty travel. The stage is empty, though we are in fact in the Army HQ. Lisburn, Northern Ireland. ROLFE holds a union jack, crumpled, in his hands. He almost cradles it, as he would a baby. He looks up at the audience.*

ROLFE. There is a moment in one's life, more terrible, traumatic, even than the ending of a first love, or the consciousness of failed ambition, or awareness of the fact of growing old. It is the moment when you realise you have more time, regard, respect, for those who are your enemies than those you view as friends. That moment came to me at night, while sitting in an aeroplane, and flying northwards, west, across the Irish Sea' to fetch the body of my son.

He was, they told me, on the Lower Falls. Arms raid, just turned his head, a second. And the little boy, the schoolkid at the tenth floor window, with his sniper's gun, aimed just above the hairline, dead on true. Probably been there for hours. Waiting for that second. Patiently.

And on the plane, I realised, I had more time for him, the 12 year old boy killer

in the Divis Flats, the dark child with his Russian Generals. The Ministers Assured us that the sun would never set. The Generals, could not prevent my son, in his high morning, his sun going down.

Yet you still won't see.

Will you? You generals, you ministers, police-chiefs, you won't see, we are at war. Same war. In Belfast Bradford. Bristol, Birmingham, the one we lost in Bombay thirty years ago, the one we're going to lose in Britain now. Unless you see in time. Not thugs or lunatics, nor dupes of Moscow. They are ordinary men and women, sane and normal thousands of them. And there is no time. They're everywhere. Deep, deep, inside the gut. There is no time.

*He is crying.*

The sun has set. And we should not remember. We should not look back, but should, instead, think only of the morning.

*He looks at the crumpled flag.*

His fault. He turned his back.

*The tears stop. ROLFE raises the flag, holding it in a high salute.*

We need an iron dawn.

*He stands there, holding up the flag. Lights fade to darkness.*

## ACT THREE

The misshapen hulk of the modern democratic state poses a serious threat to the ideals that it was originally intended to serve. The tentacles of bureaucracy and egalitarian socialism are strangling private enterprise.

Robert Moss,  
in *The Collapse of Democracy*,  
1975

'Private enterprise cannot be maintained in the age of Democracy, it is conceivable only if the people have a sound idea of authority... All the worldly goods which we possess, we owe to the struggle of the chosen.'

Adolf Hitler,  
20 February 1933

### Act Three

#### Scene One

*House-lights down. A baby is crying. A doorbell rings, twice. Lights. CLIFTON's living room. A sofa, chair, coffee-table, on it dirty cups, glasses, a bottle of whisky, a telephone. Letters, documents, newspapers and children's toys on the floor. CLIFTON has switched the light on. He's in a dressing gown. He goes and answers the door. The baby's crying fades. Outside the door is CROSBY, muffled against the cold.*

CROSBY. Hallo.

CLIFTON (*surprised*). Hallo.

CROSBY. I wondered if I could have a word.

CLIFTON. It's rather late.

CROSBY. It's rather urgent.

*Slight pause.*

CLIFTON. Do come in.

CLIFTON *admits* CROSBY, *closes the door*.

CROSBY. I'm sorry about the time. CLIFTON. Well, we were up anyway. The baby.

*Pause.*

Drink? I'm afraid I've only got scotch.

CROSBY. Lovely.

CLIFTON. Lovely. (*He pours whiskies, gives one to CROSBY, pause.*) What a nasty day it's been.

CROSBY. I'm sorry. It's a social situation on which Emily Poste is sadly mute. The proper etiquette on taking cocktails with one's class enemy at one in the morning.

CLIFTON (*smiles, sits*). What do you want?

CROSBY. I want to collaborate.

*Enter SANDY, wearing a nightie.*

SANDY Hallo -

CROSBY. Hallo.

CLIFTON. Ruth OK ?

SANDY. Fine. She was hungry. Look, if it's not impolitic to ask -

CLIFTON (*stands*). I'm sorry. Peter Crosby, Tory candidate My wife.

SANDY. I do have a name. Bob. And being your wife isn't the sum total of my existence.

CLIFTON. I'm sorry. Sandy. Who works for the Thawston Community Project and is, in her spare time, my wife.

SANDY (*sits*). Thank you. Hallo.

CROSBY. I'm pleased to meet you.

*Pause. SANDY waves at CROSBY, to sit. He sits. Pause.*

SANDY. Well, what a privilege. To be the witness to a cross bench hobnob. What I think is known, in parliamentary parlance, as the 'usual channels'. Right?

CROSBY (*smiles*). That's right.

CLIFTON (*sits*). OK, then. What d'you want?

CROSBY. Yuh.

*Slight pause.*

You know they're coining out, tomorrow, the Asians at Barons?

CUFTON. Yup. I do.

CROSBY. And that the whites 'll try and break the picket?

CLIFTON. Yup again.

*Pause.*

CROSBY. Look, Bob. I'll be quite open. As you know, both parties, have traditionall attempted, well, to keep race out of politics. Put up a kind of - common front against the; sort of demagogy that Nation Forward's using over Barons. Now, I just felt, I might be, both our interests, to declare this strike, well, out of bounds politically. Fo just the last three days. To - try and. salvage ... Well. You know.

*Slight pause.*

That's all.

CLIFTON. You want it out of bounds.

CROSBY. That's right.

CLIFTON. Mm.

CROSBY. Well?

CLIFTON. Well, the common front. On race. Your deal, in '62. Then ours, a higher bid, the Kenyan Asians Bill, restricting entry purely on the grounds of colour. So, not to be outdone, the stakes go higher, back to you in '71, Keep Race out of politics. Keep Blacks out of Britain.

CROSBY. Well, yes, but -

CLIFTON, But some people who won't play that poker game - who stick their necks out. I like to think .I'm one of them. In fact, had quite a postbag on the subject. *(He picks up a pile of letters, waves them.)* Not just from the public, either. Party workers, saying they won't canvas. So. when you talk about mutual benefits. I would but mention that I've already made my stand. Selling out now won't help me one iota. You, on the other hand -

CROSBY. Well. I'm sorry, I'd hoped you'd take a more moderate .... CLIFTON. Oh, for -CROSBY, *(stands.)*. All right.

*Slight pause.*

You heard about Nation. Forward's meeting? What they said?

CLIFTON. I heard.

CROSBY. And what they did? To hecklers ?

CLIFTON. Yuh. that too.

*Pause.*

CROSBY. Well, then. Goodnight.

CLIFTON. I'll see you Thursday.

CROSBY. Yes. *(He puts down his empty glass.)* Thanks for the scotch.

CLIFTON. Don't mention it.

*Exit CROSBY.*

SANDY. Poor little man.

CLIFTON. Why ?

SANDY. Charity. He's going to lose his uncle's seat.

CLIFTON *(stands)*. I wouldn't bet on it. At the moment, it's a race to see which of us loses most to Nation Forward.

*Pause.*

SANDY. But of course you're right.

CLIFTON. Sometimes I wonder.

SANDY. Like when?

CLIFTON, *(pausing another drink)*. Like when I'm on the doorstep, confronting the massed Alf Garnetts of the West Midlands. *(Accent.)* Oh, ar. Mr Clifton, we're with you on import controls, gotta be right, but it's the darkies, I'n it? I mean to say, we know they live twenty to a room and breed like flies and don't use toilet tissue -

SANDY. Shut up, Bob.

CLIFTON. Why?

SANDY. Cos you're making me angry.

CLIFTON. Why?

SANDY. Because you've no right to patronise people you know nothing about.

*Pause.*

CLIFTON. Oh, come on, love, I've just had Peter Crosby -

SANDY. I just get a little fed up with your assumptions about people you meet for two minutes on a doorstep once in a blue moon. Because, unlike you, I actually work in the field, and I meet ordinary people all the time.

CLIFTON. Well bully for you.

SANDY. Working-class people.

CLIFTON. Even bullier.

SANDY. And if you don't think there are real problems in integrating large numbers of people from a totally different cultural background then you need your head examining.

*Slight pause.*

CLIFTON. Oh, sure, dead right. And so ... This week control, next week call a halt, week after send 'em back -

SANDY. You do annoy me sometimes, Bob -

CLIFTON. Love, we're both tired -

SANDY. I'm not tired.

*Pause.*

CLIFTON. Urn, to what do I owe...

SANDY (*angry now*). Look. Bob. You make your great bloody statements about unrestricted immigration and institutional racism. Well, you can afford to.

CLIFTON. I can't, that's exactly -

SANDY. You can afford to. But you just take a walk, leave the car for once, take a walk round West Thawston. You might even stop occasionally and actually listen to what people are saying. You know, listen? Then you might find out.

CLIFTON. I know -

SANDY. You don't know, so I'll tell you. Widow I visit. Only white face in the street. No English shops any more. Can't buy an English newspaper. The butcher's

gone. The kids smash up her windows. Yes, of course, you'll say, all kids do that, but when the street was white it didn't happen. Bob. So I call her a racist?

CLIFTON. No -

SANDY. Old man. 'Bout 60. A T&C shop steward who refused to take a cut in bonus rates. What happened? Got the push, his job went to a Pakistani. He's a fascist?

CLIFTON. You know the answer. They're blaming the wrong people.

SANDY. Who should they blame? Themselves?

CLIFTON (*as much for his own benefit as hers*). You know perfectly well. That there was bad housing long before they came. That the worst housing in Britain's in Glasgow, with hardly any blacks. That the years of highest immigration were the years of fullest employment *That* the people who are responsible for unemployment and bad housing are bosses and property sharks and very few of them are black. You know that. So why -

SANDY. Oh, great. Pavlov reaction. It's the system. So what do I do? Lead them to the bloody barricades?

SANDY. Well -

*Crash, offstage.*

SANDY. What's that?.

*The phone rings.*

CLIFTON. You answer it.

CLIFTON *goes*. SANDY *picks up the phone*.

SANDY. Hallo? Paul. What? No, he's ... All right. I'll tell him. *She puts down the phone, goes to exit, meets CLIFTON who enters holding a piece of paper. He stops her going through.*

CLIFTON. I've checked. Ruth's all right. It's a brick through the window. And stuff, through - on the carpet.

SANDY. Stuff ?

CLIFTON. Excrement. Human shit.

SANDY. Oh Christ.

CLIFTON, *(gives her the note)*. And this.

SANDY, *(reads)*. Take care of your snivelling little whore spawned bastard Clifton the dark nights are coming.

CLIFTON. 'Where' as in 'H.O.A.R'.

SANDY. But not a bad stab at 'snivelling'.

CLIFTON. Who was that on the phone?

SANDY. Paul. He's heard Nation Forward are going to be at Barons, first thing. Breaking the picket.

*Pause.*

CLIFTON. Now that is all we need. *(He sits.)* Another uncompromising stance? And hailo Peter Crosby, Honourable Member.

SANDY *(kneels beside CLIFTON, takes his hand. Very gently)*. Bob. Once - you may remember, you said, about the Party. Why you're in it.

CLIFTON. Mm?

SANDY. You said, despite - oh, all the right wingers, all the selling out, you said at least, at least there was a chance of changing things. Of, really, changing things. You could have joined some, tiny, fringe, some two-horsed revolution, kept your ideas pure, you said, but at the price of never being any real use to anyone. You wished to be of use, you said, with all the compromise, retreat, the scorn that implies.

CLIFTON, *looks at SANDY*.

And that struck me as being rather brave.

CLIFTON, *smile at SANDY*.

Let's go to bed.

*Slight pause.*

CLIFTON. OK.

CLIFTON, *stands and goes*. SANDY *moves to go, turns, looks round the room. She switches out the light.*

## Scene Two

*Dim lights. Outside the Foundry. Near the gates. KHERA, PATEL, PAUL, perhaps other PICKETS, placards. DO NOT CROSS PICKET LINE, OUR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT, DON'T SCAB. A few moments, then.*

KHERA (*out front*). Seven a.m. A winter's morning, picket line. For most of us, the first. And some surprise, we're doing it at all.

*Enter PLATT and a Police INSPECTOR, with possibly, other POLICE on one side of the stage. KHERA looks at them.*

But here we are.

*He joins the other PICKETS.*

PATEL. (*to PAUL*). Police, with Platt. PAUL. You bet.

PATEL *goes over to KHERA, talks to him.*

PLATT. They'll be here soon.

INSPECTOR. They will.

PLATT. Your tactics?

INSPECTOR. Keep well out Long as they keep to peaceful giving or obtaining information peaceful persuasion to work or not.

PLATT. Is that the law ?

INSPECTOR. That is the law. I know their rights.

KHERA. (*to PAUL*). What are they saying?

PAUL. I can't hear.

PLATT (*pointing at PATEL.*) You see that one ? The young one. He's the lad I mentioned.

INSPECTOR. Yes?

PLATT. With the interesting past

*Enter CLEAVER and LIZ, the other side of the stage.*

KHERA. Nation Forward ?

PATEL. Think it is.

PATEL. *has a word with PAUL, who nods.*

INSPECTOR. And who are they ?

PLATT. Dunno. Perhaps they're passers by.

INSPECTOR. At seven in the morning? Passers-by ?

PLATT. It's possible.

*Enter TURNER and TONY, with union jacks.*

INSPECTOR. With union jacks?

PLAIT. I'm wrong. That's Turner. Nation Forward.

INSPECTOR. So it is.

PAUL, *(to PATEL)*. That's Turner.

PATEL. Yes.

KHERA. What now ?

PATEL... Just wait.

*Enter ATTWOOD to centre stage.*

OK.

*The PICKET forms.*

PLAIT. You're doing nothing?

INSPECTOR. As I said. We wait for an offence.

*Pause. Then ATTWOOD looks at his watch.*

ATTWOOD. Well. Half-past seven. Time for work. *(He walks to the PICKETS.)* O now look at this. *(NATION FORWARD move closer to PICKETS.)*

An unofficial picket-line.

*The PICKETS move closer together.*

Barring my path to work.

*Pause.*

Please let me pass. *(Suddenly, pulling at KHERA.)* Comes on> Harry Krishna.  
Clea my road.

*Freeze action.*

KHERA. And I nearly did. When he said move, I nearly did, as reflex action, move to let him through. But then -

PATEL. *(to ATTWOOD)*. You scab.

KHERA. And then again -

PATEL. *(pushing ATTWOOD)*. You bastard scab.

KHERA. And then again.

PATEL. *(pushing ATTWOOD)*. You bastard blackleg scab.

ATTWOOD. Get your filthy hands off me, you dirty nig black scum.

PATEL. *(takes ATTWOOD by the throat)*. The name. The name's Prakash Patel. And, brother, we are staying in your road.

*Freeze breaks.*

PLATT. *(quickly, marching over to the PICKETS)*. Now, come on, lads, why not just let him through -

PATEL. *(to ATTWOOD, referring to PLATT)*. Now look, you, look. Look at his smiling face -

*A whistle blows. NATION FORWARD rush the PICKETS and blackout. At once, as pot hits KERSHAW, side of stage.*

KERSHAW. Unpleasant. But we got ten in. Unthinkable, to use these people, but impossible, not to. All other options closed. Unease, but then necessity. Better embrace the butcher, soil the bed, than perish with clean hands.

*Blackout.*

### **Scene Three**

*A police station. Most of the stage area is a corridor, lit. PAUL, reading a crumpled newspaper, sits on a bench. To one side an area representing an interview room. A SUSPECT sits at a table in this area, facing upstage. The INSPECTOR enters with TONY.*

INSPECTOR. There.

TONY *shrugs, sits on the bench. Exit INSPECTOR PAUL puts down his paper; recognises TONY.*

PAUL. Tony.

TONY (*turns, recognises PAUL*), Paul

*Pause. It sinks in. They both laugh.*

BOTH. Well don't you meet -

TONY. People in the strangest places.

*Pause. They laugh again,*

PAUL. Well. How are you ?

TONY. I'm fine. And you?

PAUL. Just, great, as well.

TONY. That's good.

PAUL. Apart, that is, from being stuck in here.

TONY. Ar. Right.

*Pause.*

PAUL, (*mock confidential*). Um, look, bab, don't want to pry or anything, but, uh ...  
what you doing here then?

TONY. Got arrested.

PAUL. Snap.

TONY. I'm waiting, to be charged.

PAUL. Well, snap again.

*Slight pause.*

Um-?

TONY. Bit of aggro, up at Baron Castings.

*Slight pause.*

PAUL. Yuh?

TONY. You know, there's this dispute -

PAUL. Yes, sure, so ... You were on picket line?

TONY. Of course I wasn't on the bloody picket line.

*Slight pause.*

Were there to break the bloody picket, weren't we?

PAUL. We?

TONY. Yuh, we. Nation Forward.

*Pause.*

PAUL. I was on the picket-line.

*Pause. TONY laughs.*

TONY. Oh. blimey -

PAUL. So what's funny?

TONY. Blimey. Paul McShane. Great fighter for the working class. Siding with a gang of nigs to undercut the wages of his brother - ^

PAUL. Tony, that's a load -

TONY (*angry*). Why don't people ever realise? We didn't ask for it.

PAUL. For what?

TONY. Have Pakkies take our jobs and houses. Timing England's green and pleasant land into an Asian slum. We didn't -

PAUL. Green and pleasant? Yuh. Just like round here. With all them lovely trees and verdant foliage. You know, they had a poster in the war. This is Your England, Fight For it. A picture of a village green. Thatched cottages. How many English soldiers died had ever seen a country cottage? Thatched or otherwise?

TONY. They did it, if you want to know, Paul, cos some people hat for their own side.

PAUL, *laughs*.

PAUL. For Christ's sake. Tony who have you been talking to?

TONY. No need to talk. I know it. Any white man knows it. In the blood.

PAUL. The blood?

TONY. The spirit of the Race.

*Pause.*

PAUL. Oh God. *(He stands and shouts off.)* Hey, Sergeant! Did you know, you got the bleeding Master Race in here? You can't do him for causing an affray...

*Pause.* PAUL, *turns back to TONY, for his reaction.*

TONY *(quiet, calm)*. You really don't know, do you?

PAUL. What ?

TONY. Your real enemy.

PAUL. Well, actually. I do take the old-fashioned view, that for the working-class the enemy's -

TONY. Oh, ar. The bosses. Which ?

PAUL. Well ? Answer ?

TONY. Have a sniff, Paul. Got a nose. Can smell the alien stink. Or can't you?

PAUL. Oh, sure, yuh. can do. Smell the foul stench of all those black speculators. Those Pakky stockbrokers. Jamaican Managing Directors.

TONY. Not them, Paul.

PAUL. No, not them. The Ruling Class.

TONY. No. Paul. The Ruling Race.

*Pause.*

PAUL. All history's the struggle of the classes.

TONY. No. All history's the struggle of the races.

*Pause.*

PAUL. The workers of all races must unite.

TONY. The workers of all classes must unite.

*Pause.*

PAUL. Come down to it, the choice is socialism or barbarity.

TONY. Come down to it. It's Zionism, One-World Tyranny, or us.

*Slight pause. TONY stands.*

And when we win, get rid of them, there'll be no need for conflict. Class war, Strike and all. Then capital and labour work together, in the interests of the nations. Puttir Britain first. The nation, over all.

*Pause.*

'Course, you can sneer. At race and blood. But everything you got, Paul, comes from that. Everything healthy, worthy, everything with any meaning, values from the blood Cos seed don't die, what we are doesn't die. Passed on. From generations, passed on, from the legions of the dead to legions of the living, legions of the future.

PAUL. Tony, last time they said that, it ended up with putting people into -

TONY, *(simply)*. No, no, Paul. It never happened. Auschwitz, n'all. Just factories. The holocaust, just photos forged. Invented by the Jews.

PAUL. *Looks at TONY.* TONY *still*.

PAUL. You Nazi.

TONY. Yuh. TTIat's right.

*Suddenly, PAUL out front.*

PAUL. And, you know, it was like looking in a mirror, looking at him, me old mate; Tony. All correct, the same, identical. Just one thing wrong. Left's right Class - race. As different as can be. The opposite. The bleeding wrong way round ...

*Lights cross-cut to INSPECTOR and SUSPECT. We now see the SUSPECT is PATEL. INSPECTOR holding an Indian passport.*

INSPECTOR. Right, Mr. Patel. Let's go through it just once more. You claim you entered when?

*Blackout.*

#### **Scene Four**

*Lights on a Pakistani restaurant. A couple of tables. CLIFTON and SANDY are sitting eating. PAUL and KHERA have just come in, are standing.*

PAUL. They've arrested Prakash Patel.

CLIFTON. What?

PAUL. And they're reckoning to do me for assault.

*Slight pause.*

CLIFTON. Sit down.

PAUL *and* KHERA *sit.*

PAUL. Now look, Bob, if you rang the dailies, now, you could get a statement in tomorrow morning, demanding his release -

CLIFTON. Patel's being done for assault?

PAUL. (*impatient*). No, he's -

CLIFTON. Thought you said -

KHERA. Illegal immigrant. Under the '71 immigration Act. Easier than jailing strikers. Just fly them back to India.

SANDY. But there's an amnesty.

KHERA. It doesn't cover. He's an overstayer. came in as a student, just didn't go back.

CLIFTON. Poor sod.

PAUL. So you see, Bob, it'd be great, day before polling -

CLIFTON. Where is he?

PAUL. At the copshop.

CLIFTON. And they found out -

PAUL. Platt. It has to be. The bastard knew, and shopped him.

CLIFTON, (*non-committal*). Yuh.

*Slight pause,*

PAUL. Well ?

CLIFTON, (*businesslike*). Right. Now, he's an overstayer, you ?

PAUL. Well, so they say.

CLIFTON. But he is ?

PAUL. Well, I suppose so.

CLIFTON. So, in fact, he's breaking the law.

*Pause.*

PAUL. Well, yuh -

CLIFTON. Now that does make it rather difficult.

PAUL. Why ?

SANDY. Because, if he's breaking the law, Bob obviously can't demand his release.

PAUL. Why not?

SANDY. Obviously.

*Pause.*

PAUL. *(to CLIFTON)*. But it's just what you been saying all along. Oppose the immigration Act.

SANDY. That's not what you're asking him to do.

PAUL. Yes, it is. Here's a case, a guy -

SANDY. Bob's asking for the law to be changed, not, broken.

*Pause.*

PAUL. *(to CLIFTON)*. Well, say something.

CLIFTON. What do you want me to say.

PAUL. Well, actually, that your good lady is talking through the back of her neck.

*Pause.*

CLIFTON. She isn't.

PAUL. Oh, I see.

CLIFTON. No you don't, so I'll explain.

PAUL. I'm all ears.

*Slight pause. Strain in CLIFTON's voice.*

CLIFTON. Now. I'm standing for election as a legislator, right? That is the job-description. And I'm doing that, can only do that, if I believe that laws should be made, OK? And that it's possible to change society by making them.

PAUL. But -

CLIFTON. So how, if that has any meaning, can I say that once they're made we shouldn't keep them?

PAUL. Well, what about me? Assault, on Fascists.

SANDY. Paul, the law can't not protest a guy just cos you happen to regard him as a Fascist.

Pause.

CLIFTON. It's just a matter, simple, of the rule of law.

SANDY. You've got to see the problem, Paul.

PAUL. I can. I'm talking to it. It's sitting there, stuffing its face with chicken byriani.

Pause.

CLIFTON. The law's a car, Paul. Goes whichever way you steer it.

PAUL. So why, whoever's driving, does it always go one way?

Pause.

KHERA. There is a story, 'bout the rule of law. In Amritsar, 1919. A Brigadier-Genera Dyer, ordered his troops to fire on a crowd of unarmed Indian demonstrators. Nearl 400 killed. Facts took some time to come out. Then, of course. Dyer was investigatec Strict legality. Censured. Asked to resign.

SANDY, *(quietly)*. 1919.

KHERA. That massacre. Defence of British rule in India.

SANDY, *(quietly)*. Which ended thirty years ago.

KHERA. Oh, yes, of course. I'm sorry.

*Slight pause. As he speaks, softly, KHRA looks at no one, perhaps just playing with the ashtray on the table.*

I come from Jullundur, the Punjab. Sikh upbringing. Train the children to be quiet subservient respectful. So to England, land of tolerance and decency, and found

it hard to understand. But last year, I went home, on holiday, to India. Saw, with new eyes, just what the English did. And then I understood. There is more British capital in India, today, than 30 years ago.

It runs quite deep. Even the poor, white British, think that they, not just their masters, born to rule. And us, the blacks, the Irish, all of us - a lesser breed, without the Rule of Law.

But that's your problem.

*He stands. To SANDY.*

You'll forgive me I'm on picket duty, seven in the morning. *(He goes.)*

*Long pause.*

PAUL. Well, that's put you -

CLIFTON. Did you see Crosby, in the Evening Post? Feared some of his remarks might have been misinterpreted. Wanted to make it clear, completely opposed to any further coloured immigration. Already signs of, social strain.

PAUL. Well, by tomorrow, there'll be one less, won't there?

*Slight pause.*

Ar, I saw it.

CLIFTON *(hands PAUL a note)*. You won't have seen this. Came through the window last night. Accompanied by a brick and a neat little pile of excreta.

PAUL, *reads the note*.

PAUL. So you retreat? Because of this? You see what these bastards can do, and you retreat?

SANDY. Ruth's eight months old, Paul.

PAUL. Oh, ar. And doubtless the law will give her every protection.

CLIFTON, *(loses his temper)*. You know, sometimes, Paul, your self-righteousness reaches a pitch of messianic fervour that I find quite terrifying.

PAUL. Oh, ar ?

CLIFTON. Ar. And that's surprising. Because what you're doing isn't very difficult. It's rather easy, comfortable, your anger, rather cosy, in its steel-eyed way. Because

you think in absolutes, in dogmas, you needn't face the real fights, the real, mucky struggles, you keep clean. And if your - sterile constructs ever touch the real world and its diseases, they're cocooned in rubber, scrubbed a thousand times, to keep them pure.

*Pause.*

PAUL, (*quietly, gently a genuine need to explain*). You know, there's a funny moment, comes to you, you see your real friends. Came to me, a meeting of the Barons strikers. Oh, yuh, sure, all clenched fists and synthetic Maoist fervour. Just, amid all that, some people learning. Talking for the first time, 'bout just how to do it, working out, quite slowly, tortuously, quite frustrating, you know, for us old pros, to sit there and listen to it all.

But it is listening to people grow. Learning that it's possible for them to make their future. Bit like the morning. Sun comes up, so slow, can't see it's changing. But it's growing lighter. Think of that.

Their fault. No turning back. The need, to be our own. To change, the real world.  
*He stands.*

Tara.

*Exit PAUL.*

SANDY. Well done.

CLIFTON. Hm. In two days' time we'll know. What profits it a man to lose his party's soul.

SANDY. You haven't.

CLIFTON. Well, I didn't have much choice.

SANDY You did.

CLIFTON. Well, still.

*Slight pause.*

I better win.

*Blackout.*

## Scene Five

*In the darkness, we hear the voice of the MAYORESS of Taddley, through a mike.*

MAYORESS'S VOICE. I, the undersigned, being the Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Constituency of Taddley, hereby give notice that the total number of votes cast for each candidate was as follows.

*Lights. The Election Result, Standing from left to right : CLEAVER, TONY TURNER, PLATT, EMMA, CROSBY, MAYORESS, WILCOX, CLIFTON SANDY, PAUL and KHERA. The first three and last two slightly apart. EMMA is CROSBY'S wife. WILCOX is a liberal. As the MAYORESS announces the result. PLATT and SANDY note the figures down. A VOICE identifies the candidates.*

MAYORESS. Clifton, Robert John.

VOICE. Labour.

MAYORESS. Ten thousand and ninety six.

*A splatter of applause. CLIFTON looks worried, the TORIES pleased.*

Crosby, Peter Senderson -

VOICE. Conservative.

MAYORESS. Eleven thousand -

*Big applause. CROSBY can't believe it. EMMA kisses him. CLIFTON shakes his hand. MAYORESS attempts.*

Eleven thousand, eight hundred and thirty-two; "Rimer, Dennis ... Turner, Dennis...  
*Applause dies.*

Turner. Dennis Stephen.

VOICE. Nation Forward.

*Sudden burst of chanting: 'Nation Forward, Nazi Party', Dies.*

MAYORESS. Six thousand nine hundred and ninety-three. *Applause. Booing.* N FORWARD look delighted. Wilcox, Diana..

VOICE. Liberal.

MAYORESS. One thousand and fifty two.

*A little applause. SANDY gives CLIFTON the note and kisses him. CROSBY, PLATT and EMMA confer. As.*

And that the undermentioned person has been duly elected to serve as member for the said constituency. Peter Sanderson Crosby.

*She turns to CROSBY, shakes his hand. CROSBY taking over the mike, as CLIFTON speaks to PLATT.*

CLIFTON. Well done. Jim. Think we can conclude, they won you the election.

PLATT. Only if, took more from you than us. Bob. And who knows where the buggers come from.

CROSBY *(down the microphone)*. Um -

*Snap blackout A very short time. Lights. The central section of people, and the microphone, have gone. Those left -TONY, CLEAVER a/w/TURNER on one side. PAUL and KHERA on the other, are left looking at the place where CROSBY stood. Then, as the lights fade down to dim, night lighting, the two groups become aware of each other. They look across the space. Edgy. Nervy. Then, on PAUL and KHERA's side, blocking their exit. ATTWOOD enters. KHERA and PAUL move towards centre. Pause. Then, CLEAVER taps TURNER on the shoulder, makes to go. TURNER not going. CLEAVER gestures him to follow. TURNER follows CLEAVER out.*

TONY. Well, here we are..

PAUL, *(to KHERA, makes to go)*. Come on.

TONY. Hi, Paul.

PAUL, *(to KHERA)*. Come on, mate.

TONY. And hallo, Paul's pet monkey.

Slight pause.

KHERA. *(to PAUL)*. No.

TONY. OK.

TONY, goes for KHERA, PAUL, to protect him. ATTWOOD for PAUL. Before he can get to TONY, PAUL aware of ATTWOOD, turns and knees him as TONY knocks KHERA down. ATTWOOD doubles up. TONY about to kick KHERA

when he hears two clicks^ TONY turns, thinking they come from behind him.

TONY. Wha

Quickly. KHERA slides one of the two flick knives he holds across the floor to PAUL. TONY and ATTWOOD realise. PAUL, picks up the knife, slashes at ATTWOOD, who manages to avoid the knife and runs out. TONY tries to stamp on KHERA's hand, misses. KHERA up, slashes at TONY's face. TONY turns to run, faces PAUL. He stops. Blood is beginning to run down his cheek. TONY is looking very, very scared.

KHERA. Right. Now tell me. Who you think you're doing all this for.

Blackout.

### Scene Six

Lights on a hospitality room in a merchant bank in the City of London. Leather chairs. On the wall, a huge, dark painting of the putting down of the Indian Mutiny. CLEAVER sits. TURNER stands, looking at the picture. A moment or two. Then CLEAVER looks at his watch. TURNER touches the picture, feeling its texture. Then he turns to CLEAVER.

CLEAVER. He said they might be late. A meeting - implications of the Deutschmark doing something or other.

TURNER. Oh, ar ?

CLEAVER. Yes.

TURNER back to the painting. CLEAVER stands, goes to TURNER.

TURNER. I was there, you know.

CLEAVER, (*smiting*). In 1857?

TURNER. No, from 1945. In Calcutta, bastards stoned us. Lot of lads, the troops, you know, refused to fire. They saw it as a kind of, justified revenge. (*He nods to t) painting.*) You know, for that, and all.

CLEAVER, guilt complex. Liberal masochism. What we've got to -TURNER. Oh, sure. It makes you sick.

*Sight pause.*

D'you suppose they'll -

*Enter KERSHAW, ROLFE and CAROL, ROLFE's secretary.*

KERSHAW. Richard. I'm sorry.

CLEAVER. Doesn't matter.

KERSHAW. Richard, this is Lewis Rolfe.

ROLFE *and* CLEAVER *shake hands.*

CLEAVER. How d'you do.

ROLFE. Hallo.

KERSHAW. And Dennis Turner, Lewis, who I think you've met.

ROLFE *(to TURNER, shoes his hand)*. Indeed. Long time ago. Congratulations, Dennis.

TURNER. Thank you, sir.

ROLFE. *(smiles)*. No need for that.

KERSHAW. Well. 23 per cent. You'll be delighted.

TURNER. Well, low poll. But it's a start.

CLEAVER. A deposit saved is a deposit earned.

*All smile.*

ROLFE. Carol, any chance of sherry?

CAROL. Yes, of course, *(She goes)*.

ROLFE. Do, please sit.

*All sit, except ROLFE.*

KERSHAW *(to TURNER)*. I imagine Richard's filled you in?

TURNER. He has.

*Slight pause.*

KERSHAW. Well, then.

CLEAVER. We need to know your reasons.

KERSHAW. Yes, of course.

*Enter CAROL. with a tray of skerry which she passes round.. Then she goes out.*

ROLFE. Right, gentleman. In answer to your question.

*Slight pause.*

We are under threat. The British Nation, and its enterprise. The two are indivisible. A blow at one's a blow against the other. We face a common threat, we face a common enemy. We have a common need.

A glue. To stick the nation to itself. And, yes, to make its enterprise secure. Unite the Durham miner with the Surrey stockbroker. The East End navy with the Scottish laird. An ideology.

We know what we've been offered. Liberalism. From whatever source. A community of tolerance, compassion, moderation. Tolerance of crime, permissiveness. Compassion for the multi-coloured misfits of the world. And moderation, military reserve, low profile, in the face of insurrection. To a point when gangrene's gone so deep that - we must think about extremes.

You offer an extreme. An old idea. Not merely nation. Race. Roots deeply twined into the universal gut. To bind the barrel fast with hoops of steel.

Not pale. Not weak. Not atrophied. Red, white and blue - in tooth and claw. *(Half smiling)* Mm?

CLEAVER. There's more to it than that, of course.

KERSHAW. Fighting the Reds, wherever they appear. The schools, the factories.

CLEAVER. Why not the police?

KERSHAW. The police don't know. They're isolated. You the Reds are on your streets. You know.

CLEAVER. The army?

ROLFE. Can contain, perhaps. They can't destroy.

CLEAVER. We also combat international capital.

KERSHAW. We also need protection.

CLEAVER. If it means control?

ROLFE. You scratch us, we'll scratch you.

CLEAVER. You'd sacrifice the 'free' of enterprise?

KERSHAW. Yes, to preserve the privacy of property.

*Pause.*

One doesn't, like, the dentist.

*Slight pause.*

But to save the tooth.

ROLFE. Physicians. Army, police. Just tranquilize, to numb the pain. You - surgeons. Use the passions. And rechannel the hot blood, and send it gushing down another artery.

*Pause.*

CLEAVER. Conditions.

KERSHAW. (*sharply*). There's no question of conditions. There's no question of a deal.

*Slight pause.*

But if you ask ...

*Slight pause.*

A tendency, among your people, shall we say, a little too far to port?

CUBAVER Oh, yes. Our little group of Racial Trotskyites. Well, Maxwell and his Bolshie band aren't with us any more.

KERSHAW. I see.

CLEAVER. It is our view that the working class need not be wooed by slogans drawn from Marxism. Indeed, it is our view they can't be wooed by any such approach.

ROLFE. Indeed

CLEAVER. So. Money?

KERSHAW. No, not yet. Not yet at all.

*Pause.*

CLEAVER. Is this - approach, just you ?

KERSHAW. Oh, yes. Just us. Hardly United Vehicles. Not now.

ROLFE. Hardly the Metropolitan Investment Trust. Not now. Not yet.

TURNER, *suddenly looks up.*

CLEAVER. I see. Of course -

TURNER. What did you say?

ROLFE. I'm sorry?

TURNER. What did you say, your firm -

ROLFE. The Metropolitan Investment Trust.

KERSHAW. Shall we continue over lunch?

CLEAVER, *(stands)*. Why not.

ROLFE. Let's go.

*He gestures the COMPANY out. CLEAVER, KERSHAW and ROLFE exit, leaving TURNER, who is forgotten in the general exodus. As they go. ROLFE to CLEAVER, conversationally.*

ROLFE. I thought we'd try a new place on Comhill. That's if you don't mind Italian...

*They're gone. TURNER goes and looks at the painting.*

*Enter CAROL., with a tray, to collect the sherry glasses.*

CAROL. Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you'd all -

TURNER. They have.

CAROL. Are you not lunching ?

TURNER. No.

*Slight pause.*

CAROL. Fine.

*TURNER is still looking at the painting. CAROL collects the sherry glasses. When she's finished, to TURNER, conversationally, about the painting.*

CAROL. Ghastly, isn't it?

TURNER. It's him.

CARO. I'm sorry?

TURNER. Didn't realise. Your boss.

CAROL. My boss?

TURNER. That he's the Metropolitan Investment Trust.

CAROL. I don't quite see -

TURNER. The people took my livelihood away.

*Slight pause.*

You may not notice I'm suffering a gross deficiency of greed.

*Sight pause.*

You're right.

CAROL. What's right ?

TURNER. It's ghastly.

*Enter CLEAVER.*

CLEAVER. Dennis? What's the matter? Aren't you coming?

TURNER. No.

CAROL. He said - we took his -

*CLEAVER stops her with a gesture. She shrugs and goes.*

*CLEAVER to TURNER.*

CLEAVER. Dennis. I understand. I know exactly how I feel. I feel that way as well.

*TURNER looks at him.*

Of course it's disappointing. Pinned our hopes. The crock of gold.

*TURNER understands CLEAVER.*

But, Dennis. In the long term. When their precious law and order falls apart, the citie burn, the centre cannot hold ... When it's the ultra left or us ...

*Slight pause.*

Whatever barriers we may encounter...However long the journey, hard the road ..  
What on earth can stop us now?

*A long pause. Then TURNER. to CLEAVER.*

TURNER. So tell me. Tell me. *Tell me.*

*Suddenly, lights change. CLEAVER and TURNER lit from behind in silhouette.  
A VOICE is heard: gentle, quiet, insistent. It is the-voice of ADOLF HITLER.*

ADOLF HITLER. Only one thing could have stopped our Movement if our adversaries had understood its principle, and had smashed, with the utmost brutality, the nucleus; of our new Movement.

*Slight pause.*

Hitler Nuremberg. Third of September, 1933.

*Blackout.*



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## **Unit - 4    Destiny**

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### **Structure**

#### **4.0 Modern Drama in England**

#### **4.1 David Edgar- a short biography**

#### **4.2 Background of the Play**

#### **4.3 Synopsis of the Play and dramatic significance**

#### **4.4 Characterisation**

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#### **4.7 Significance of the painting**

#### **4.9 Model Questions**

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### **4.0 Modern Drama in England**

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The late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a vigorous drama with strong social messages sweep the English stage. The central figure of this dramatic resurgence was George Bernard Shaw, whose comedies drew attention to the social evils even while tending to amuse an audience which paid its way into the theatre in order to be entertained. Shaw's plays replaced a vapid genre emptied of intellectual challenge or social content, which, with its emphasis on unreal situations and predictable plotting, supported by stereotypical characters spouting stale dialogue, had lost touch with the changing times. Shaw's plays reflected the new ideas about society and man that an industrialized society dominated by class-exploitation in a capitalistic economy, threw up. Henrik Ibsen, in Europe, was making waves with his plays of protest which relentlessly focused on contemporary social evils. He was exposing class and gender exploitation in a degenerating society, where values had gone defunct and people were loosely held together by obsolete social conventions which forced them to lead double life of hypocrisy and deception. His plays revealed a diseased society emptied of sustaining values. Ibsen's plays were shown to an audience used to ignore the misery and suffering that lay beneath the social veneer, and they made them sit up and think.

Bernard Shaw, a member of the Fabian society, an intellectual organization which believed in socialism, and an admirer of Ibsen's plays, wanted to convert contemporary

playwriting into a meaningful activity reflecting socio-economic problems that an industrialized capitalist society gave birth to and to spread new ideas. Thus he hit hard at contemporary British social evils like the landlord's monopoly in house-renting, prostitution, sexual hypocrisy, religion, attitudes to war etc. through often hilariously presented comic situations which turned audience expectations upside down. John Galsworthy, on the other hand, struck out boldly to write plays which had a more directly social and political message. In a play like **Justice**, Galsworthy explored the victimization of man in the name of justice, by a social system that mechanically judges and punishes offenders without caring to look at the social pressures that gave rise to their crimes. Galsworthy tried to focus on the irony of a judiciary that destroyed individuals instead of saving them from crime and criminal careers. In **Strife** Galsworthy looks at the employer-employee relationship in a confrontational situation, where the opportunistic attitude of Management and Trade-Union defeats both the labour leader's idealism and the company patriarch's idealism and stand. These playwrights, writing in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, brought a social consciousness and content to a moribund drama in England. Side by side, the Irish dramatic movement, with its nationalist overtones created a theatre movement that brought the lives and culture of a long-neglected people on to the stage. They could not only express a distinct Irish identity and voice but also introduce innovative techniques and performative languages into the drama that helped change the complexion of modern English drama. Eliot's verse drama, successful upto a certain point, could not turn out to be the living medium for a compelling drama.

The advent of the Labour government in 1945 in England brought about a big change in direction and purpose to drama with State encouragement and funding of theatrical endeavour. There was a euphoric belief that with reforms and an emancipated social and political consciousness, a new socialist order would emerge. With the new educational policy that widened the range and reach of education came a new generation of writers who had directly benefitted from it and were able to define their outrage against a social system that could be so calm about the horrors of two world wars. These new voices were crying out to society to look at and understand the valueless society fruitlessly mouthing principles which they either did not believe in or that had lost their relevance in a vastly changed world. Osborne's working-class, foul-mouthed hero of *Look Back In Anger*, Jimmy, was an instant hit with the young people of the times. He spoke for many young people of the time who could neither integrate with their own community nor approve of an effete irrelevant upper-class society. He was the angry young man the misfit, who could not see a meaningful role

for himself and the plays of hit out madly at society. Edward Bond, Harold Pinter or Tom Stoppard were an attempt to understand and reflect the sweeping changes that had come about due to the Second World War, the loss of Empire, the formation of the Welfare State, the 1944 Education Act, and the workingclass empowerment. Drama moved firmly away from the drawing room drama of Terence Rattigan to the kitchen and sinit setting of a contemporary drama struggling to express the new urgencies of a post-war Britain.

During the 1960s drama became more aggressively political debating the limits of social democracy and the welfare State. That the world seemed to have become apathetic to human suffering and violence was shockingly brought home in a scene from Bond's **Saved (1966)** in which a group of working class people stone to death a baby on the stage.

A number of legislative reforms passed by the Labour Government in the 60s; the Abortion Act of 1967, the abolition of State censorship of the theatre in 1968, the Divorce Act of 1969, and the Equal Pay Act of 1970 reflected a growing freedom in individual and social life that automatically had their impact on the theatre. It enabled a newer, bolder kind of drama exploring relationships with an openness and presenting politics with a directness never possible before.

This climate of dramatic permissiveness brought a new generation of play wrights with a political agenda who shared some features in common. They determinedly moved away from familial and domestic settings, and understood the political mechanics of Britain in a general way. While Howard Brenton's epic play, **Romans in Britain (1980)** deals with violence as the key moral and political issue". David Edgar's **Destiny (1976)** and **Maydays (.1983)** give a close look at the post-war British political scene which seems to promise a new more egalitarian socialist society but fails to deliver it, Edgar's plays analyse the weaknesses of the left movement in Britain in the fight against fascism in politics. The abolition of State censorship also brought with it a freedom to use a freer and more intensely violent language which becomes a metaphor for the writer's bitter indignation or castigation of a failed society.

The third wave of dramatists were mainly women, black and white, Asian men and women, gay writers who were coming out of their voicelessness into a voluble world of writing themselves down. With them came new structures of experience, reality and points of view. Dramatists like Pam Gems and Caryl Churchill were already moving into new spaces experimenting with language in an attempt to forge meaning out of the chaos of existence. Besides, these people were also trying to

understand their own location on the socio-cultural map of Britain through a powerful medium. But playwriting is an expensive affair if the play has to be put up. Recent playwriting has been adversely affected by cuts in Government spending on culture. Playwrights are moving on to TV and scriptwriting for films. But some plays are still drawing viewers like **The Weir**. But what had emerged as a major movement in drama with individual and collective participation seems already a thing of the past.

#### **David Edgar's views on modern developments in drama**

“One could see post-56 British theatre as a kind of three act drama, reflecting the political debates which surrounded it. So, Act one asked how the working. Class would use its new-found wealth and power; set Two proposed a drastic answer to that question; and Act Three articulated a radical politics based not on class but on race, gender and sexuality. But while each sought to confront and overthrow what had preceded it, a particular dialectic slithered through all of them.”

David Edgar, *state of play* (1999)

“In essence. David Hare's *Plenty*, Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* and my *Destiny* pursued elements of a single ground narrative which very roughly went like this: Britain had been on the right side in the war against Hitler, but had squandered its moral capital afterwards. There had been a chance after the war to create a genuine egalitarian, emancipatory socialism, but it was implemented too half-heartedly by the 1945-51 labour government and the opportunity was lost. The country then held a kind of party in the 1950s and the 1960s, squandering its post-imperial riches, and in 1970s had gone into free-fall political, economic and moral decline, at the end of which, it was assumed, final collapse would occur and 'true socialism' would emerge phoenix like from the ashes.”

David Edgar.

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### **4.1 David Edgar (1948)—a short biography**

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David Edgar was born in Birmingham, and went to Manchester to study drama. He began his career as a journalist in Bradford and it was at this time that he started writing seriously for the stage in a radical style. As a young socialist at the time, he believed that drama had a responsibility towards inspiring people to bring about a socialist world order.

He became a playwright with a small touring theatre company. **General Will**, which produced four of his plays. **The National Interest** (1971). **The Rupert Show**

(1972), **Rent, or Caught in the Act** (1972), and **State of Emergency** (1972). Of these, **Rent**, a play written specifically as part of a fight against an anti-tenant Act brought in by the Conservative Government, struck a chord in the minds of many people, with 30 tenants' groups inviting it to be played.

Edgar moved on to write several plays charting the history of the British Labour and Left in play after play. He wrote **Destiny** (1976) when he became actively involved in the Anti-Nazi League in a campaign against the National Front, a rightist party with a racist agenda. It was around this time that he started contributing regularly to Searchlight, an avantgarde journal, specially on anti-Nazi themes.

Edgar attained dramatic fame with his dramatization of **Nicholas Nickleby**, the Dickens novel in 1980. Subsequently he went on to write a number of plays with deep social commitment, like **Maydays** (1983), **Entertaining Strangers** (1985) and **That Summer** (1987), **Shorts** (1990) and **Pentecost** (1994).

Edgar has also written for the television and radio, and many of his plays have been adapted for the television. He goes on contributing to several journals from time to time. From 1989 he has been teaching Playwriting at Birmingham University.

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## 4.2 Background to the Play

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There was a debate in Britain in the mid-seventies about whether or not the National Front, a rightist political party, was a fascist organization or an anti-immigration pressure group. Through the 1950s and the 1970s large groups of people from the Caribbean and from Asia came into England to settle, thereby forming the basis of a multicultural society. The membership of the National Front soared following the decision of the Heath government to take in the Ugandan Asians expelled by Idi Amin in 1972. During the next 4 years, the party made substantial gains in terms of support and membership in the East End of London, the Midlands and the North. By 1977, the silver jubilee year of the Queen, the National Front could claim to be the fourth and fastest growing party of Britain. It was in this climate of an apparently growing support of what the Left clearly recognized as a Fascist presence that David Edgar wrote his anti-Fascist play. **Destiny**.

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## 4.3 Synopsis of the play (scene by scene)

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### Act I

The first act begins with two quotations from a) the Conservative Party manifesto of the general election of 1950 and b) the speech of a conservative party commentator

in 1959. In the first, the manifesto expresses its abiding faith in the Empire in the second, the party spokesman expresses the view that they want to see Britain as a great power as otherwise, the class system looks foolish.

### Scene 1

Destiny opens in Jullunder, Punjab, in India, on 14 August, 1947, on the eve of Indian Independence, with a voice, presumably Jawaharlal Nehru's speaking in the darkness. We come to hear the most memorable lines of Nehru's speech, in which he refers to a pledge that the countrymen had made to bring the country to "life and freedom". Nehru claims that the time has come to make it true, for the country will "awake" to freedom at the stroke of midnight. At this point the lights start up and the scene opens to the Military barracks in Jullunder. A young British military sergeant, Turner, calls for an 18-year-old servant. Gurjeet Singh Khera, and asks him to pack and carry out the things that are still left in the barracks. The servant is clearly reluctant to take orders from the white man as if to rub it in that the Indians are now free. A Colonel, an upper class Englishman, walks in, notices a trunk lying around and discovers a bottle of scotch in it. He sends the servant to the mess for three whisky tumblers, as if in acknowledgement of the newly found freedom of the servant, Khera. As the servant returns, three tumblers are filled and handed in to the three men but in comes a major, Rolfe, to whom Khera has to hand over his drink. Rolfe is angry over the theft of the engine battery of the military car in broad daylight. Khera, on being asked by the colonel if he would like to come over to the mother country, shows, himself quite willing. Turner and Rolfe do not approve of natives coming over to England but the colonel feels that as members of the commonwealth Indians are entitled to do so. The three white men are skeptical of the Indians being able to govern themselves. But the colonel feels that is none of their business. The colonel's old world values are indicated by his quoting lines from Kipling's poem about the "white man's burden". While it reveals his imperialist mindset it also implies his sense of responsibility towards the ruled. Rolfe's attitude is much more belligerent and selfish. He will not even leave behind the stuffed tiger as he snaps at Khera, "Of course we want the bloody tiger. We shot it." The scene ends on an empty stage with Khera left standing before a painting of the putting down of the Sepoy Mutiny to which he mockingly toasts with the drink he has poured himself, "Civis-Britannicus-Sum" (highest British citizen).

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 1)**

This scene provides the background of the play, whose main action takes place in the 70's in Britain. All four characters (of whom the colonel dies very soon, indicating a dissolution of the sense of responsibility towards Britain's erstwhile subjects in the colonies) move on to Britain to carry on their lives in a vastly changed political and social environment. The seeds of their later attitudes and political stances are sown early, and we are not surprised at what they become and how they react in the later part of the play. The word 'destiny' crops up, both in the conservative party manifests, and Prime Minister, J. L. Nehru's speech, that its significance as the title of the play would have to evolve through a dialectic between the two meanings of destiny presented in the two discourses.

### **Scene 2**

The scene begins with Colonel Chandler, whom we had met in the earlier scene, now a considerably older man, speaking in rhyme. The verse sums up his career in England, and his growing unease with a fast—changing country. He had become a Tory M.P but had been discovering that in a changed country his days were over. As the verse announces his death, the lights come on to show a drawing room with the colonel's portrait hanging on the wall. His nephew, Peter Crosby, in his late twenties, is calling up his secretary to inquire about share prices. We learn from Peter's conversation over the phone that it is his uncle's funeral he has come down to attend. The year is probably 1970. In comes Platt, the works manager of a factory called Baron Castings, and the constituency chairman. Platt offers Crosby the Conservative candidacy for the seat left empty by the colonel. Peter does not seem unwilling but rather keen on it. Platt is already interested in grooming Peter for the post and advises him to be quiet about his liberal views on a multicultural society as there are lots of non-white people and the whites, particularly the conservative voters, are apprehensive about the rapidly growing non-white presence in the locality. Mrs Chandler and Mr Frank Kershaw come in to attend the arrival of the hearse. Mr Kershaw is the representative of the Conservative Party sent to attend the funeral; and an industrialist who also owns Baron Castings. Platt lets him know by way of conversation that the factory is not doing well. Mrs Chandler is hurt when Peter and Platt joke about a dead empire which means nothing to them but she approves of Peter as a Tory candidate.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 2)**

This scene provides the setting of the action of the play, presenting a change in the political environment of Britain. The colonel, the old world conservative is dead, and with him die old-world values of liberalism and responsibility. Peter Crosby, representing the new generation, is a hardheaded economically dour young man eager to play at politics, but flaunting liberal views on racism. Platt suitably warns him about airing his liberalism in that constituency as the conservative voter is alarmed with the rising non-white presence, and resents it.

### **Scene 3**

The scene begins in darkness with a voice calling out the name of Bob loudly. The lights come on to reveal the bar of the Labour Club, where a young man and a young woman are playing darts. Paul, who had been chatting Bob Clifton, comes in and speaks to the young man playing darts, who introduces him to his friend, Sandy, the young woman. Clearly the three young people are Labour Party members, and Clifton informs Sandy that Paul will get him the Labour Party nomination for Taddley, the same constituency for which Peter Crosby will be competing for the Conservative candidacy. Paul has brought a chart which shows the breakup of the voting predictions for each of the wards. He assures Clifton that the previous candidate has messed up his chances of winning the Labour candidacy by having expressed apprehensions about immigrants during his Parliamentary tenure while deliberations were on in Parliament on the Kenya Asian Bill in 1968. Taddley had a sizable non-white population. Paul also informs that there is a similar contest for the conservative candidacy between Crosby and a hard rightist, Major Rolfe.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 3)**

The political scene is warming up, with a tussle for the labour candidacy in Taddley constituency on the cards. Paul the Labour Party waiber, calculates that Clifton has a fair chance not only to win the candidacy, but even the election. His predecessor had messed his chances by expressing apprehensions over the large scale non-white immigration, which means that the non-whites would not support him. As a strategy, Paul wants to induct hard non-white members who will support Clifton's candidacy in the Labour Party. This makes it clear that the Labour Party supports the non-white immigrant population and thrives on their support. Above all, even Labour Politics thrives on calculations, and not ideology.

#### **Scene 4**

Major Rolfe, in his mid-fifties, speaks in verse and fills us up on what has happened in between 1948 and now. He is a deeply disillusioned man aghast at the decline he witnesses all over a weak and effete England unwilling to work for the revival of lost glory. We also learn that the Conservative Party has not given him the nomination and chosen Crossby, the man of moderate views, instead. As his friend, Kershaw, enters, we learn that Rolfe's son is serving in the army too. Rolfe reveals his disillusionment with the party as well, which, he feels is "genuflecting to the fashionable myths" of full employment, higher wages, higher public - spending, workers being good and bosses being bad etc. When Kershaw asks what alternative there could be, Rolfe reveals that they have a group which meets regularly to talk about how to counter, the rise of the working classes. He informs Kershaw that they are a group of army men who are bent on providing an effective alternative. He sounds Kershaw on whether he is interested to join the group. Kershaw has his doubts about the need for such a group in England, as he feels that people will act in the national interest. Rolfe, who does not come from the upper classes, tells him that the lower-middle-classes will feel betrayed by them if they do not stem this tide and England will remain Europe's whipping boy if nothing is done. At this point, Turner enters, and a ceremony of remembering soldiers who died for their country, begins. By the end of the scene, Kershaw agrees to Rolfe's proposal convinced by his concern for the "national interest".

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 4)**

We are introduced to an altued Major Rolfe, whose impesionalist attitude has hardened into racism oven the years. He has lost the Conservative Party candidature for Taddley, but speaks of another alternative to stem the liberalist politics that the Conservative Party seems to be espousing. He is a member of a group committed to safeguard capitalist interests which he feds, is synonymous to 'national interest'. Kershaw, his friend is ultimately convinced and would like to join the group. Thus, we witness the consolidation of fascism in the guise of national interest, with some people convinced that they have the right to control the State irrespective of other people's views.

#### **Scene 5**

A spotlight catches Turner, speaking in verse, recounting his own fortunes from when he came back to England after India became independent to the present day. Turner

feels that it's the big-capital" and "labour" who wield the clout while men like him who are at the middle, who are losing out. As full lights come on, we see Turner's antique shop in 1970 which has Conservative party posters on the wall. Tony and Paul, much younger than when we last saw him, are employees at Turner's shop. Both Tony and Paul recall the 1970 election when the Labour party lost and the Tories won. Tony goes out and reenters as in comes Monty, a Jew with a union jack flag. His language is typically cockney. He barges into Turner's shop, and tells him to wind up his shop in three weeks at this property has been bought by a company which has hiked the rent. When Turner agrees to pay the hiked rent, Monty gives him the sinister warning that the labourers working next door would damage his antiques, as if in accident if he does not give up the property. Turner is moved out by such sinister threats by property developers who want to convert small houses and lands into huge complexes with the illicit support of the local council.

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 5)**

It is people like Turner who are betrayed by capitalist entrepreneur property developers in this case. Turner's fury is directed at the Jewish Monty who, however, is only the facade of his employer company and not responsible for ruining Turner's livelihood and life. The sinister face of capitalism supported by conservative politics hiking out at people who belong neither to the labour class nor the owner class, and are therefore not organised, is exposed here. A purhated funner becomes later an easy prey to vascism, being easily convinced that the extra burden of immigrant population is steeling away cheap accommodation and availability of opportunities for whites.

#### **Scene 6**

The date, as the lights come on. is 20 April, 1968. Three people. Maxwell, Cleaver and Drumont are present in an upstairs pub. As Maxwell is asked to leave, Drumont comments at the sorry state of England with students rioting, workers on strike and all round chaos, which, he feels, is a good opportunity for the fascist movement to spread its wings. He advises Cleaver to resolve all bickering and internal differences and money would be no problem. As he leaves, Cleaver informs Maxwell that Drumont is a financier. Cleaver addresses the gathering of young people, beginning lightly with a joke. Soon he gets serious and points at the general rot and degeneracy that has set in. It is followed by a toast to the memory of Hitler, a man whose birthday they have gathered to celebrate. As the SS marching song is played on the tape-

recorder, there is a knock and Drumont comes in. He tests Maxwell's physical endurance by hitting him suddenly in the stomach. Then he warns the assembled young men about cutting out either the "national" or the "socialism" out of National Socialism. Drumont has, just before he hit Maxwell, asked Cleaver to read out a speech of Enoch Powell, a Far right M.P., in which he spoke of the alarming rise of the black population in terms of the apprehension of an unknown ordinary working man. Then everyone walks out, and the dark stage lights up to reveal Khera who had come over to England to make his dreams come true. He too speaks initially in verse to provide information about all that has happened since we last saw him. He speaks of dreams that never really came true. From outside comes Platt's voice, calling him, and as Platt himself enters, the scene ends.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 6)**

We are provided with an inside view of Fascist politics in England which goes by the name of National socialism. People have gathered in a room to celebrate the birthday of Adolf Hitler, the German fascist and racist who killed millions of people before he died. Drumont an inflexible financier enters and Cleaver, as instructed by him lays the blame for all ills in England on immigration and non-white presence. Maxwell, who really believes in National interest, is treated rudely by Drumont. Drumont also provides a newspaper item quoting Enoch Powell, Tory M.P. who is a hard-hitting racist, to be used as ammunition against the non-racists.

The interaction between Khera and Platt is strongly reminiscent of Khera's reluctant submission to Funer in scene 1. Apparently, the white/black relationship does not seem to have changed over the years.

### **Act 2**

The second Act begins with four quotations from Nazi sources, all belonging to the early thirties, which expose the hypocrisy and doublespeak of the Nazi leadership. The first quote from Gregor Strasser, a senior Nazi official, pretends to espouse workers' interests, seeking the "the right to work". The second says, "It is because we want socialism that we are anti-semitic", and was said by Goebbels, Hitler's public spokesman in 1931. In 1930 Hitler had claimed that "socialism" didn't mean "businesses must be socialized" and "the sharing of the workers in possession and control is simply Marxism". By 1931 Hitler was claiming that "only an anti-semitite is a true anti-communist".

The quotations expose the hypocrisy of the Nazi party headed by Hitler. The Nazi's had initially declared themselves to be socialists in favour of workers. But as they began consolidating their power, they started to blame the Jews for every ill in society. Soon Hitler given up the deception that they were for workers and their betrayal of the workers cause comes out into the open, to the extent that they declare that having Jews is equivalent to hating communism, and that is desirable. Act II will trace the growth of the Nation Forward Party which pursues the same strategy Hitler did in the thirties in Germany.

### **Scene 1**

In this scene which is set in Platt's factory, We see Khera, a worker, in confrontation with Platt about the exploitation of the Asian worker. When Khera protests against making the non-white worker do more work in the name of overtime which is in the contract, Platt points out that he is going by the contract which says nothing against it when Khera points out along with another Asian worker, Patel, that the white workers are on piecemeal payment, so that they get paid more for extra production, Platt advises them to consult their union. Khera informs Platt that as shop steward, he has called a meeting of non-white workers, and Platt angrily leaves. Atwood, the white foundryman, enters and passes without acknowledging Khera.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 1)**

The setting. Baron Castings, becomes the site of racial conflict on the basis of discrimination. The white worker are being shown a preference in terms of work and payment which Khera, the Asian worker protests against. There is a rift between white and non-white workers as well. Hence, Khera is trying to organise non-white workers.

### **Scene 2**

The scene opens at a meeting hall, with preparations on for a meeting to be held. People present are Tony with a guitar. Turner who is the Chairperson of the meeting, a fashionably dressed Maxwell, Mrs Howard, an elderly lady, Liz, a lower-middle-class young woman, and many others. Atwood enters and sits down.

Turner introduces Maxwell to the congregation as a Leader of Nation Forward, a national party with whom their organization, the Patriotic League is planning to tie up for the forthcoming elections at Taddley. Maxwell begins by waiting for the

people to ask him questions. Meanwhile we have heard Turner reporting about the outcome of their complaint to the Medical Officer about non-white children using toilets and cutlery in schools from which white children in the local school might be catching parasitic infection. This sets the racist tone of subsequent happenings in the scene.

During the rest of the meeting we listen to the growing sense of crisis and threat in the lives of people who have come to the meeting. Mrs Howard makes it clear that she has always voted for the Tories but is now disguised with the new generation of leaders” who seem almost embarrassed to talk about the sorry state of things in England. They talk of the common market and the wind of change but do nothing to save the declining income of people with fixed incomes as inflation hits them. Atwood declares that he has always voted for Labour but the party cannot do anything when British firms go bankrupt and American firms decide to move to other locations. He feels that the Asian community is taking their jobs away and he hates the Blacks. He wants someone to do something about it. Tony complains about Turner losing his business to property sharks and his losing his job and being on the dole. They all seem to feel that the immigrants are somehow responsible for their woes. Maxwell uses this dissatisfaction to drive home the point that all sections of society, irrespective of class or creed are suffering because of a weak Government which cannot stop the coming in of blacks and Asians who steal their jobs, and which sells out to communists. The chairman then puts the proposal that they support the Nation Forward to vote and the decision to work together is unanimous. The scene ends as Tony sings a poem by Kipling on the justification of British hatred which, however, has nothing to say about why the English should hate anyone. The stage then becomes dark and we hear a car loudspeaker campaigning for Birner as the Nation Forward’s candidate in Traddley. The issues are unemployment, corrupt politicians, property sharks and immigrants.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 2)**

The meeting very realistically points out how people suffering from an economic decline are made to feel that non-white presence is responsible for all their woes. Here are a bunch of people disillusioned both with the Right and Left, who would like to try another option, the Nation Forward Party. Edgar has cleverly shown how political dissatisfaction is capitalised by Fascist powers to further their own interests.

### **Scene 3**

Khera and Patel approach Clifton, the Labour candidate, to support them in their fight against a discriminatory management. They inform Clifton that when the whites dominated union did nothing for them they forcibly occupied the union and made the ban on their overtime an official union decision with a proper notice. Clifton agrees to make an official statement in support of the decision. When Khera and Patel leave Clifton explains to Sandy that these people won him the nomination which is why he was supporting them. He corrects himself, saying that he would have supported them anyway. But throughout, he had been very brusque with the Asians and is embarrassed when Sandy asks why he sounds so apologetic. The scene ends with a blackout and the words of the racist party loudspeaker message can be in the darkness. This time people living on social security are seen as enemies too while private enterprises seen as victimized by excessive taxes.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 3)**

Clifton's reluctant support for the Asian workers of Baron Castings exposes the hypocrisy of the Left Party candidate. Clifton admits that his support is related to the support the Asian workers gave him to win the nomination though he tries to cover this up by claiming he would, in any case, have supported them. Clifton is being actively drawn into a racist controversy which will become an acid test of his ideological integrity. The Nation Forward is revealing its true colours by open support for capitalists, and criticism of social security. Its efforts to move towards building up a fascist, anti-welfare state become obvious. Clearly, it is the immigrants who live mostly on social security, who are their target.

### **Scene 4**

The scene begins at the Nation Forward Campaign Head Quarters. With Liz, Turner, Maxwell and Tony. Turner is delighted with Clifton's support for the non-white workers of Baron Castings as he feels it will spoil his chances with the white population. Turner is also not happy with the supportive statements included in the draft of his election speech. He feels the Tory voters who might support him would be put off. Besides he wants an inclusion of the parasitic worms issue in which they have scored a victory. Maxwell feels that such parochial issues are out of place in an election address. Cleaver enters and expresses his objections to the election draft as it seems to support workers' interests and fails to include the Fascist implication

of all people not being equal and some people being born to lead. This leads to a quarrel between Cleaver and Maxwell. They have an unexpected visitor, Peter Crosby, the Tory candidate. Crosby has come to ask them to reconsider their decision to monitor all immigrant voters as that would amount to harassment. When Turner refuses to do so and faults Crosby for being after “nig” votes Crosby threatens to complain to the Returning Officer. As he is leaving. Cleaver makes him listen to a sob-story about an old, lonely man who had fought in the two World Wars, and who now lives in the fear that someday a Hindu temple will be built on his grave. Crosby is disturbed by the story and as he leaves. Cleaver laughs at his sentimentality. The lights fade and two spots catch Crosby and Platt, as Crosby is plainly disturbed and fascinated by his encounter with the sheer power of Fascist ideology.

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 4)**

Election preparations are holding up at the Nation forward office. Turner, the candidate, is too bogged down in local issues to understand the implications of fascism. Maxwell is not a fascist, and cannot support the fascist anti-worker stand, which leads him to quarrel with Cleaver, who wants a pushing through of the fascist program openly in the Election campaign speech of Turner. Crosby's visit and his obvious discomfort on hearing Cleaver's story, shows him to be weak and malleable. It is this wavering attitude that fascism builds upon.

#### **Scene 5**

Kershaw and Platt meet at the station and Platt hands Kershaw a file containing all the update on the impending strike of non-white factory workers. The moulders, being whites, would not join. Kershaw-asks if the strike could be prevented by conceding to their demands but Platt tells him that there will still be a bother, as it will not go down well with the white workers. As a strike will mean heavy loss to Kershaw, he would like to break it. But the police will not do anything to break it as it will attract media attention and they will get a bad image Kershaw asks about the percentage of striking workers in terms of Colour. When he learns that it is heavily coloured he asks if the Nation Forward party is aware of the strike. He leaves without explaining why he was asking, to Platt.

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 5)**

Kershaw, the factory owner, wants to break the strike and decides to use Nation forward cadres to do so. He is a capitalist who wants to protect his business interests

at any cost This is a realistic, convincing instance of Capitalism. Racism and fascism tying up for mutual gain.

### **Scene 6**

The scene opens with Turner practising his election speech, which he cannot remember. As he is not much good at it, they move on to practising taking questions. He is asked whether he is a racist to which he answers in the affirmative. Turner is asked questions on issues which he is being groomed to answer. He is told, for example, that if Pakistanis want a separate school for girls it shows they cannot integrate. If asked questions on repatriation, ie, sending the immigrants back, then the answer has to be yes, but the matter will be conducted in a “humane”, “compassionate” and “ordered” manner. Again no reference is to be made to too many children as hecklers might shout that Queen Victoria had too many children too. The next issue is the strike at Baron Castings where the response is that the interests of white British workers should not be sold out. The answers, prepared by Maxwell, fail to satisfy Cleaver, who wants the issue of racial purity to be included. So he persuades Turner that if all British classes, landlords, workers, tenants and bosses have their race in common, then race can also be considered the single denominator between global financiers like Schiff, Warburg, Rothschild and communists like Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky ie. being a Jew. When Turner is aghast at this idea Cleaver quickly reminds him that the man who ousted him from his shop was a Jew, Monty Goodman. While Cleaver draws Turner aside to talk to him. Maxwell tries to show how unreasonable such reasoning could be, and how close it sounds to Fascist talk from Hitler’s Germany but neither Tony nor Liz support him. When Cleaver re-enters, he orders Tony to get Maxwell out, and calls it a “purge”. He justifies the move by telling them that if people are too obsessed with democracy then they are actually Marxists in patriotic clothing.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 6)**

The hardening stand of Nation forward which clearly emerges as a fascist party, becomes evident in Maxwell’s ouster, and Cleaver’s dominance. According to Cleaver, Jewish financiers and communists are responsible for the woes of English people. When Turner tries to protest, he is reminded of Monty Goodman, a Jew, who ousted him from his rented premises. Nation forward spokesman, Cleaver, openly denounces ‘democracy’ as ‘communism’ which is unacceptable.

### **Scene 7**

Turner is speaking at an election meeting. He is uttering his rehearsed speech about British Nationalism. A commotion breaks out as hecklers try to disrupt the meeting by loudly shouting and calling the Nation Forward a Nazi Party. The Nation Forward supporters retaliate by calling the hecklers “Reds”. The two groups start fighting and Ivimer watches with growing alarm as two gunshots are heard.

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 7)**

The clash between Nation Forward and Labour Party supporters comes to the forefront through a violent encounter.

### **Scene 8**

Rolfe stands alone, talking to himself. He says that there is a moment in one's life when one realizes that one has more time for one's enemies than one's friends. He claims he realized this on his way to Ireland to collect the body of his son. His son, we learn, was killed by a boy sniper waiting to hit a man during an arms raid in Ireland. Rolfe says that all the people in position did not really care and made blind assurances that everything would be alright. In actuality, the enemies were not as sensational as Russian spies, or robbers or crazy people but normal, ordinary men like everybody else. But just as England had to retreat from India, now it would lose even at home if nothing were done. So Rolfe turns to an iron alternative, rightist nationalism of a ruthless variety. He expresses his commitment as he holds the Union Jack, the British flag.

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 8)**

Rolfe's personal tragedy, i.e. the death of his only son in an Irish raid, pushes him further towards a Fascist agenda. Britain's general apathy towards tackling anarchy and insurgency leads Rolfe further into Fascism as the only viable political alternative.

### **Act 3**

Act 3 too begins, like the other acts, with two quotations, one from **The Collapse of Democracy** (1975) by Robert Moss and the other from a speech of Adolf Hitler. The first one considers modern democratic state to be under threat from two sides-

beaurocracy and socialism, which threaten private enterprise. In the second, Hitler says that private enterprise cannot thrive in democracy, as it undermines authority. Everything that people possess is actually the result of the work of a chosen few. The quotations make it frighteningly obvious that there is a similarity of attitude and conviction as well as strategy between the Nazis and some modern political and economic thinkers. The following scenes will show how aggression and force are used to frighten people to submission. The whole Fascist conspiracy is laid bare in the third act.

### Scene 1

The scene opens in the labour candidate, Clifton's house at night, we hear a baby crying. The Conservative candidate, Peter Crosby, pays a visit to Clifton's house, to request him to save the bad situation at Baron Castings by calling the strike "out of bounds". As both, the Left and the Tory parties, have always steered clear of racial issues. Crosby suggests that in order to avoid having to take a stand, which could antagonize either the non-white voter or the white voter, it would be best to dissociate themselves politically from the strike. Clifton does not agree as he says he has committed himself though at great risk as he has been receiving mail even from party members who say they will not canvass for him on this race issue. So he has taken a stand and will not change it. Crosby leaves. Sandy, Clifton's wife, who was present during the conversation, now tries to persuade him to give up this support for immigrants. She tells him he has no right to be so critical of whites who are against the immigrants. She, as a worker on the field, sees for herself how people are affected by immigration. An old woman is left alone in a locality from which whites have shifted and coloured people have moved in. There are no English newspapers available anymore and the kids play on the streets and break her windowpanes. She feels threatened. An old man lost his job because he would not take a cut in wages and so he was thrown out and a Pakistani took his place at a lower wage. These people feel that the immigrant is responsible for their suffering. But Clifton points out that the immigrants are not responsible for it but property developers and business owners who want more profit and therefore want cheaper labour. At this point there is a crash and Clifton comes back with a note which threatens his child. He adds that the note came in with a brick which was thrown in and had smashed the windowpane. There was also human excreta thrown in. Clifton is also told by Sandy that Paul rang up to say that the Nation Forward would be trying to break the picket of the Asians on strike at Barons the next morning. Sandy tries to persuade Clifton saying that he had

joined a national party because that was the way he could do something meaningful, So he should not get bogged down in small issues like a local strike of Asians and antagonize a lot of people who would vote for him. That way he could never get anywhere and do any real useful work. They go to bed.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 1)**

A very long scene, compared to other scenes in the play, this focuses on the Labour Party candidate's dilemma. He is aware of the lies being generated by Nation forward in trying to put all the blame on the immigrant population as the only cause of Britain's rising unemployment and economic decline. Clifton and his wife, Sandy, are being threatened by racist supporters, and her wife feels, Clifton can gain nothing in interesting himself in local controversies. He may lose his election in trying to support the Asian's strike, as even white workers may withdraw their support for him, under pressure, both political, public and domestic, Clifton buckles.

### **Scene 2**

The scene begins in front of the factory gate of Baron Castings at 7 o'clock in the morning. Khera, Patel and Paul are there with others to form the picket. Platt comes with a Police Inspector, who says that he knows the law and cannot intervene till they break the law. Peaceful persuasion is no offence. Platt points out Patel to the Inspector and identifies him as the man with an interesting past. Cleaver and Liz come in and so do Birner and Tony. The Inspector is suspicious and is told that the Nation Forward party members are there to break the picket. Atwood tries to pass through. The picket moves closer, Atwood, a Nation Forward sympathizer, and White employee of Baron Castings, pulls Khera and Patel steps in, calling Atwood a scab, ie. a traitor. Atwood too calls them names and Patel takes him by the throat. The waiting Nation Forward members rush at the Asians and a fight follows. Kershaw, hit in the face, appears, and explains in an apologetic note that people like the Nation forward members had to be used as the picket had to be broken as he says, "Better embrace the butcher, soil the bed, than perish with clean hands."

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 2)**

The Asians' strike at Baron Castings is broken with Nation forward active assistance. Patel is pointed out as a troubleshooter, an immigrant who might be an illegal one. Thus the police are also being involved in breaking the back of this Asian women's movement.

### **Scene 3**

Scene 3 opens in a police station. Paul sits on a bench reading a newspaper. Tony is brought in by another policeman and comes to sit on the same bench. As both recognize each other. Paul assumes that Tony had also been picked up for picketing. He is astounded to learn that Tony had been part of the Nation Forward group who had tried to break the picket. Tony sniggers at Paul for siding with coloured people to deprive his white fellow British from jobs. As Tony suggests that the immigrants are responsible for whites losing their jobs, Paul protests. When Tony argues that the Asians came and sullied green and undefiled England, Paul points out that during the Second World War, soldiers were egged on to fight and die for England by a poster that carried a picture of England with thatched cottages and village green. He asks Tony how many of these soldiers who died for England had ever seen a country cottage. But Tony cannot be persuaded to think otherwise. He is a diehard Fascist now, claiming that race was the sole determining factor in the history of the world. In fact he is so brainwashed that he believes that the Jewish concentration camps were lies. Paul is stunned. As Paul comes up to the front of the stage, he says that it was as if he stood before a mirror and saw his own image. All that was different was the slogan-class” for Paul, and “race” for Tony. The light shifts to the Inspector with Patel. The Inspector interrogates Patel on when he had entered England. The scene ends with this.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 3)**

At the police station, Paul can see Tony, a friend, totally converted by fascist ideology of putting the blame for all unemployment at the door of immigration. Tony had lost his job when Turner had to shut down his antique-shop. Paul notices that Tony cannot see reason when he offers instances which show how governments exploit people through propaganda. Tony, a worker, has been so brainwashed, that he now fights workers, as they are non-white.

### **Scene 4**

Clifton and Sandy are eating at a Pakistani restaurant. Paul and Khera come in. Paul informs Clifton that he is being charged by the police for assault while Patel has been arrested. Clifton asks why Patel has been held. Paul says that he has been held as an illegal immigrant who is to be deported. He is not covered under amnesty as he is an overstayer who came in as a student and didn't go back. Paul suggests that

Clifton as labour candidate should issue a statement to protest against Patel's detention but Sandy answers instead, saying that Patel had broken the law and so, Bob could not support him. When Paul points out that Clifton had always been against immigration laws calling them unfair, Sandy is to point out that as he is standing for the post of legislator he cannot support someone who breaks the law. He thinks that Paul\* who has been charged for assault, is guilty as the law cannot allow a man to be assaulted because he is a fascist. Paul is bitter at Clifton's backing out. Khera quietly reminds them that the Rule of Law was actually twisted to serve the interests of rulers. He refers to the Jalian walla massacre of innocent unarmed people by General Dyer who was judged by a Court and found guilty. He was merely asked to resign. Sandy reminds Khera that was before British rule ended in India. Khera mentions that he had gone over to England the year before-and found British economic interests stronger than ever with more capital invested there than before Indian independence. Khera leaves. Paul tries to say something but Clifton draws his attention to Crosby's statement in the newspapers that he was totally opposed to any coloured immigration. Paul sarcastically points out that as Patel will be deported there will be one less to bother about. Clifton tells Paul about the threatening note that came in. Paul is surprised that the note was enough to make Clifton turn around but Clifton pleads that his daughter, Ruth, was only a baby. Paul points out that his daughter would doubtless be protected by the law! Clifton gets angry and accuses Paul of being too theoretical and not having to face ugly reality. Paul listens quietly to the outburst and then says that there are moments in your life when you see your real friends.'At the meeting of the Baron strikers he had seen people learning to think, plan, and take decisions. It was painfully slow to watch people as they were giving and learning to make their own future. Paul says it was like watching the sunrise, a very slow process but the sky gets lighter and day breaks. Paul leaves, stating his firm support for the people who were learning to shape their own futures.

Sandy congratulates Clifton for his stand and Clifton says that he wants to win. He is aware that he has sold his ideals.

#### **Significance of the scene (Scene 4)**

Patel, the workers' activist, is an illegal immigrant as he stayed back though his visa expired. Paul comes with Khera to draft in Clifton's help, but Clifton and his wife, Sandy, refuse as they do not want to be involved in supporting illegal activities. Actually, Clifton has been scared by the threats into silence and submission, even before the elections. When Sandy reminds Khera that Britain is no longer exploiting

India, Khera informs him that British economic investment in India has increased over the years, and leaves. Khera has learnt to think for himself and has become politically mature.

Paul too learns to understand people. He is disappointed at Clifton's selfishness, but the courage, the capacity to think and organize, that he has seen among the Asian protesting, encourage him to hope for the future. Though the association of the image of dawn breaking and the workers movement taking shape, has become hackneyed yet this association works in this case to express Paul's feelings, and gives this otherwise grim scene, a silver lining.

### **Scene 5**

The election results are to be declared. Clifton has secured ten thousand and ninety-six votes. Crosby wins with eleven thousand eight hundred and thirty-two votes. An independent candidate gets one thousand and fifty-two votes. Nation Forward candidate. Turner, gets six thousand nine hundred and ninety-three votes. Clifton congratulates Platt for having won the election for his candidate. There is a snap blackout and the lights come on to show Tony. Cleaver and Turner on one side and Paul and Khera on another. Turner and Cleaver leave. Tony deliberately insults Khera, calling him Paul's pet monkey. When Khera refuses to be provoked. Tony jumps on him, while Atwood who has come in, goes for Paul. As Paul hits Atwood hard, Tony knocks Khera down. Tony is about to kick Khera when he hears a click and sees him slide a knife to Paul. Khera himself comes for Tony and slashes his face. Tony's face drips blood and he stands terrified. Khera demands to know of Tony who he is doing all this for.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 5)**

Predictably, the Conservative Party candidate, Peter Crosby, wins the by-election. He had ensured his win earlier by giving up his liberal ideas and issuing a strong statement against immigration. Paul and Khera are attacked by Tony and Atwood. a white worker, but they have learnt to fight back. Khera slashes Tony's face with a knife. Tony's fear at this indicates the possibility of fighting back and defecting fascist press.

### **Scene 6**

The scene opens in a well-lighted hospitality room of a merchant bank where they entertain guests. On the wall there is a large dark painting of the putting down of the

Sepoy Mutiny. Turner and Cleaver are present. Turner walks up to the picture while Cleaver looks at his watch. Turner sort of acknowledges that the people who stoned them in 1945 in Calcutta were justified as the British had been ruthless in putting down the mutiny. Cleaver warns Turner of such weakness as felling guilty about British atrocities and excesses. Kershaw and Rolfe enter. Rolfe calls his secretary and asks for sherry for all. This room is part of his office. Turner recognizes Rolfe as the major of his regiment in India and salutes. Turner is congratulated by Rolfe for having secured 23% of the votes. Now Cleaver asks Kershaw to give reasons for more involvement on their part. Rolfe's explanation makes it clear that they need hard and tough solutions as Britain and its enterprise are under threat of disorder and anarchy. Hence a solution of force is being considered. Rolfe refers indirectly to this by comparing Fascists to surgeons while police and army will be like physicians. They are to incite the passions and rechannel the blood of people towards Fascist ideology. Cleaver asks if there are any conditions. Kershaw says there are none but the Reds have to be fought wherever they are found, in schools and colleges. Then comes the tricky question of international capital. Cleaver asks if that has to be fought but Kershaw says that says need protection. So some amount of international control will have to be tolerated. For the sake of the right of privacy of property the freedom of free enterprise will have to be given up. Cleaver realizes that they will not woo the workers through Marxism. So he asks if moneypower has to be used. Both Kershaw and Rolfe say that would not be the approach just now. Cleaver asks if this approach was just their personal one or would their companies be also involved. Kershaw says that his company, United Vehicles would not be involved and Rolfe says that his company, the Metropolitan Investment Trust also would not come into the picture now. Turner recognizes Rolfe's company to be the one that took away his shop and his livelihood. So far he had believed that it was probably Monty Goodman who ran the Metropolitan Investment Trust. Now he learns that not a Jew but a Christian White man was responsible for taking away his livelihood. Monty was just a front man. an employee perhaps. As the others leave for lunch Turner does not go. Cleaver leaves with the rest and then comes back for Turner. He thinks Turner is upset over the election results. He wants to explain. He says that as things get from bad to worse and people get fed up with the Government they will turn to Fascists or Communists for help. Then nothing could stop them. Turner is confused and shouts at Cleaver to "tell" him. Suddenly the lights change. Turner and Cleaver are in silhouette. Hitler's voice is heard saying that only one thing could have stopped

them. Had their enemies understood their principles and smashed ruthlessly the core group behind their movement. Fascism could not have survived. The play ends.

### **Significance of the scene (Scene 6)**

This scene resolves a mystery by revealing the grim truth behind apparent facts. Turner is invited along with Geaver and Kershaw to Rolfe's office, where he is congratulated for securing so many votes. Turner learns to his shock, that the Metropolitan Instrument trust is Rolfe's company, and thus, Rolfe had been responsible for depriving him of his livelihood and not the Jew, Monty Goodman. They are also told that international capital and hence international control will have to be partially accepted. By the end of the play, it is clear to Turner and the audience that International Fascism and Capitalism have got their fangs into Britain, and is moving in an organised manner to gain complete control. Hitler's words that can be heard, are meant as a warning to Turner and the audience, to pay heed to the problem now.

David Edgar does not provide solutions. He merely, warns people about Fascism by showing up the different guises it assumes and the means it employs to gain its own ends.

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## **4.4 Characterisation**

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“The reason for attempting to make Turner, Rolfe....three-dimensional characters was precisely in order to say, ‘this journey that they have undertaken’-which is a journey that I regret them having made- ‘is an understandable one’. And you draw the dramatic dialectic as precisely as you can.”

David Edgar

“The National Front- and certainly John Tyndall, (Leader of the National Front party during the 1970s, now of the British National Party) on whom the character of Cleaver is closely based- watched the television version and apparently quite liked it. That's because they were presented as fully realised, rather considerable figures, and their counterparts weren't saying anything they'd disagree with...It {the play} was concerned to present a model that would make sense to people who were anti-fascist. The reason for making the fascists recognizable, and treating them seriously as human beings, was precisely in order to say to the anti- fascist movement. ‘You've got to understand how it works- and *this* is how it works’.”

David Edgar

Edgar's play, *Destiny*, has quite a few characters in keeping with the requirements of a play which intends to show three different political parties in political confrontation or negotiation with one-another. There are different groups representing class or racial interests and in order to make their social standing in a society like the modern British one, clearly more than one character was required to represent each group.

Edgar tries to make his characters understandable if not justifiable so that his fascists are not monsters but fallible or prejudiced or selfish human beings. One can see from where their discontent springs.

Peter Crosby, the modern Tory candidate, is upper-class but eager to protect his financial interests. He is fashionable enough to laugh at British Empire and clever enough not to antagonize an immigrant population for what votes he can get from them by keeping up a Liberal image. He even visits Nation Forward office to ask Turner to withdraw their decision to check identity cards of immigrant voters. As he is ready to leave, Cleaver tells him about the plight of an old man who is terrified that someday a temple will be built on his grave. But when things hot up with the Baron's strike, and he realizes that he may lose votes by not opposing immigration he is quick to issue a statement to that effect. Earlier he tries to persuade Clifton to politically boycott the strike in which he fails as Clifton has already pitched in for it and he would have lost face if he did so. Crosby is the arch politician bothered only about narrow self-interest. No wonder he wins the election.

### **Turner**

We meet him in the first scene of the play as a military sergeant in Jullunder in 1947, on the eve of the Indian independence as the whitemen are getting ready to leave. He has to get a very reluctant Khera to work. When we meet him later in a scene, we are told that he has an antique shop and two employees, Paul and Tony. Turner is also a disillusioned man whose hopes of Britain have been betrayed. Turner turns to Fascism as he thinks a Jew, Monty Goodman, has driven him out from his shop and feels bitter about having lost his livelihood.

Having been part of the Empire, Turner was used to considering the Indian natives weak and fit to be servants, however Turner had resented the Asian presence of Asian immigrants and even formed the Patriotic League, a pressure group to look after the interests of the white community in a locality where the immigrant population was increasing day by day. The group had already started a letter campaign against Asian children studying in the same school as they were arguing that the white children were getting infected with parasitic worms from immigrant children using

the same toilets. Turner had supported the Conservative Party at the previous election: As Chairman of the Patriotic League he leads his group to join with the Nation Forward and fight the elections together. Nation Forward nominates Turner as the official candidate of their party. Turner is carefully groomed to face questions at meetings and Press conferences. Though he loses the election at Taddley, his party is not unhappy as they have secured 23% votes. As Turner is taken to meet the Fascist bigwigs like Rolfe and Kershaw to Rolfe's office. He comes to know that the man behind The Metropolitan Investment Trust, which had taken away his shop v/ as Rolfe and not Monty Goodman The Jew. Monty had only been the front man for Roife's Firm. Turner is deeply confused and does not go to lunch with them. But Cleaver comes in and tries *to* explain. Turner still does not see through their lies and asks Cleaver to "tell" him. Cleaver is given an opportunity to convince him. So, Turner is one those people who want to believe even though they may see things which do not go with what they have seen. He is blind.

### **Cleaver**

Cleaver is the Nation Forward man who comes with Maxwell to convince the Patriotic League to join them. We meet him first at a secret meeting of Nazi followers who meet to celebrate the Fuehrer's (Hitler) birthday. Cleaver goes through Turner's speech and finds it failing to reflect the Nazi ideology of racism. So he incorporates it in spite of Maxwell's objections. Cleaver finally has Maxwell thrown out for his soft views on socialism. Cleaver is clever and ruthless. He can spot the weakness in Peter Crosby and unnerve him with a sentimental story. Cleaver takes Turner after the election to meet the Party's big bosses and we find him even at the end trying to convince a deeply disturbed Turner. Cleaver is the full time politician without a political base who represents the interests of the party bosses.

### **Clifton**

Clifton is the Labour Party member who gets the party nomination for the Taddley election with Paul's support. Clifton can beat John Smalley for the candidacy as Smalley had made an anti-immigrant statement in course of a Parliamentary debate on Ugandan refugees. Clifton stands behind the striking Asian factory workers not so much for idealism as to win the election with Asian votes. But as things heat up he realizes that he could lose white votes. When a threatening note comes crashing through the window with excreta he is scared. His wife, Sandy, can easily persuade

him to give up an all-out stand. He is conspicuously absent at the picketing site and when Paul and Khera come to him for help to get Patel and Patel out of Police charges, Clifton does not agree to help them as, if the law is broken, he says, as a future lawmaker he cannot support someone who does it. To Clifton winning the election at any cost is more important than the morally justified struggle of the immigrant workers.

### **Paul**

Paul is the Labour party man who gets Clifton the Labour candidacy. He makes the necessary calculations and tries to ensure victory by a membership recruitment drive from among the immigrant population. Paul pitches in his support with the striking Asian workers and sticks by them during the picket. He faces assault charges after the picket. His faith in Clifton is shattered after Clifton backs out of supporting the Asian picketers. He lets his disappointment show and faces an outburst from Clifton about how he does not have to face “the real fights” which presumably Clifton has to face. It is Paul however, who is in the thick of action and is rewarded with seeing people grow, start thinking for themselves and decide their own collective futures. Paul could truly be considered the hero of the play who assumes the most positive and heartening role in *Destiny*.

### **Khera**

We meet Gurjeet Singh Khera, the Sikh, for the first time in the military barracks of Jullunder in 1947. He was a reluctant servant trying to assert his newly acquired independence. In the 70's Khera is an immigrant worker in England at Baron Castings whose dreams about a prosperous life in England have been belied. Though they are independent immigrants are discriminated against a lot. They do not get promoted to moulders who get a piece-rate payment as opposed to the moulders who are white. They are paid less for more work. So Khera and Patel lead the strike. Initially as the white controlled Union had refused to strike for them, they capture the union office and make the strike official. Then Khera along with Patel leads the picket. When Khera realizes Clifton is not going to do anything for the strikers, he leaves with dignity, but not before he has given them a parting shot. He tells them that when he had visited India last year he had seen more British capital invested there than there had been before independence. Thus imperialism had merely changed from a political control to an economic one. Ultimately we also see a Khera able to stand up to racial

bullying with physical retaliation. When Tony starts beating him up without provocation he comes out with two knives, one of which he passes to Paul and with the other he slashes Tony's face. He is the immigrant fighting for his own rights, the rights of his own community, the immigrants of all races and colour and ultimately the oppressed.

### **Rolfe**

Rolfe was a major in the Indian Army in 1947 and we see in him a dominating bully who is unhappy at Britain's weak-kneed political policy under Clement Atlee. He will not even leave behind a stuffed tiger's head as "we shot it". In England Rolfe is a prosperous businessman who is disappointed at not getting the Conservative nomination for the parliamentary seat of Taddley. He points out to his friend, Kershaw, that Peter Crossby, the new Conservative candidate was of the right mix. He was polished, expressed liberal views, and yet sported a stripy tie, the typical image of the modern conservative. Rolfe feels England is going to the dogs with workers and immigrants, Irish and even tenants flouting authority and letting Britain sink. He convinces Kershaw that the disaffected, protesting people of England knew their own interests and were fighting for them and did not care for England. So they would have to stand up to protect Britain. He informs Kershaw that a group of Army men had formed a body and they had plans to save the country to prevent the "English river" from bursting its banks.

Rolfe's bitterness increases when his only son, who had been in the army, was shot dead by a boy waiting for English soldiers with a gun, in Ireland. We are surprised to learn along with Turner that Rolfe is the owner of the company which has driven Turner out of his antique shop. So all the good words he had said about representing the interests of the lower middle class were lies for he was harming lower middle class interests by driving people like Turner away for the sake of his business. Rolfe was one of those megalomaniacs who dreamt of absolute power in Fascist terms. As Edgar points out, the play shows how a fascist is made and how his mind works and does not try at any level to justify fascism.

### **Women characters of *Destiny***

Michelene Wandor, in **Drama Today** points out the lack of political participation and consequently decision making by women in Edgar's plays. In *Destiny*, the women are mainly spectators, passive workers or self-servers. We do not get positive portrayals

of women in the play. Mrs Chandler is loyal to her husband's memory and a Conservative in the old-fashioned way. Liz. joins the Nation Forward because she wants a reason to have children. Her husband, ateacherian a Polytechnic, feels uncomfortable with academics who are mostly left - minded, and he fears that as he often voices his rightist views when there is a reduction in the number of teachers at the polytechnic and he may have to go and a foreigner might replace him. Besides, they cannot buy a house as mortgages are up and even getting a fair price for their house has become difficult with lots of immigrants settling there and bringing down the prices in that locality. Liz therefore hates the immigrants. Her role in the Nation forward is limited to serving tea and attending the door. Mrs Howard is another disgruntled white woman who joins the Patriotic League because she feels that immigrants are somehow responsible for dwindling bank interest rates.

Sandy is the only woman character who asserts her presence in (he play, but in a negative way. She is politically gauche and has to get all answers to questions from Clifton. Later on, in her house she asserts her role as individual and not just Clifton's wife when Crosby calls on Clifton at their house. However her role is regressive when she persuades Clifton, too easily, of course, to give up the brief for the striking immigrants. She says that she had initially admired him when he had said that he joined the Labour party and not some fringe group as he wanted to be in a position from where he could really make a difference. That is enough to convince him. So Sandy does not in any way present a positive point of view. Edgar has no other women characterse except Rolfe's secretary. Whose role is limited fo serving cherry.

It is almost as if politics was a male domain and women had no contribution to make except serve tea or coffee or look up to their male counterparts for political enlightenment.

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## 4.5 Destiny as a political play

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Political piays have been witten in England from even before Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare made the genre quite popular with his series of history plays with their powerful political message. The nearest he came to contemporary history was in **Henry VIII** in modern times, the political voice came to be heard through the private. Shaw with his socially charged plays and Galsworthy with his plays referred to a social conscience which had to recognize the political implications of the problem. Brecht, with his plays brought the directly political into drama in modern times. He was not writing about social problems but a political system at fault. The problems

were merely manifestations of institutionalized greed and exploitation. In the process was revealed the mindset of people engaged in protecting their vested interests on a massive scale. Though the directly political did not catch on immediately, By the end of the sixties Stoppard, and Pinter and Bond were talking politics through their plays. The 68 students' unrest in England, the tradeunion movement, the miners' strikes, workers' movement all brought with them a need to see ideas people were fighting for, on the stage as metaphors for real life. Theatre also became a means of political propaganda along with perhaps other more effective but more ephemeral means. Needless to say there was a wave of socialist optimism which led to a spate of plays being produced and written with a strictly political agenda. The new playwrights of the 70's were not interested in inter personal relationships but political ideas being examined and tried out on the stage. Thus we have Howard Brenton's work. David Hare, David Edgar to Howard Barker's work. Women dramatists and marginalized groups like the gay and ethnic and black writers have been writing their politics into their work too.

As a play written in the 70's, *Destiny* deals directly with a particular political situation. It looks at a racially and ethnically fractured political constituency in which a parliamentary by-election is going to take place. It is a three cornered fight between Conservatives, Labour and a Fascist party. The play handles with great skill the insidious rise of a fascist party under the guise of nationalism. In the midst of the election the Asian workers of a factory are going on a strike to protest against racial discrimination. People get polarized along racial lines frightening the Conservative candidate who, in order to retain his support base, issues an anti-immigrant statement. The left candidate is frightened by the fierceness of the Fascist campaign which he feels will take the wind out of his sails as well if they can manage to spinter the left vote along racial lines. So he virtually backs out from an active involvement in the strike or its fallout. But in the process while the Fascist movement is gaining ground through the all round exercise of lies and false propaganda, a real human development is taking place too. The strikers are learning how to organize a strike, think for themselves and take their own decisions.

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#### **4.6 Significance of the Title**

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We find a reference to 'destiny' in two brits of discourse at the beginning of the play. The first is in an excerpt lifted from the conservative Party Manifestos in the General Election in Britain in 1950. The record is found in Pt. Jawaharfal Nehru's

speech on the eve of Indian independence with which the play begins. Thus, Nehru refers to India's tryet with 'destiny'.

In the first instance, the Manifests declares an undying faith in the destiny of the conservative party, whose integral connection with Empire and power is highlighted.

In the second instance, Nehru feels that India was destined to be free from colonial shackles.

The play goes on to show how British imperialism and racism continue to exist even though colonial empire is at an end.

At the factory, Baron Costings Ltd., blacks and Asian workers do not get overtime, and are less paid, while white workers get preferential treatment. This leads to a protest by non-white workers in the form of a strike.

"A play which estonished me with its intelligence, density, sympathy, and finely controlled anger. For once, too, the compasion was not with held from those deemed beyond the pale. Here was an examination of the extreme right in British politics which caught up all the stands that make it function : the nostalgia, the disappointment, the dumbly aching resentments, as well as the psychotic anti-semitism and other such racism that traditionally disfigures these movements." Dennis Poller, *File on Edgar*.

When all political parties ultimately fall in line, ditecting the cause of exploited and discriminated men, we realize that 'Destiny' has been used as a title ironically. Class and racial prejudice have not been done away with, and immigrants are exploited, and blamed for poverty, unemployment and economic decline in Britain. In that sense, their colonial destiny remains unchanged with liberty and democracy. Britain still economically exploits India.

In another sense, however, 'Destiny' is a play with a positive message. People like Khera do not take it lying down. People like Khera and Patel think for themselves, and organize protests, and learn to fight back the Fascist bully. .So, the exploited can make positive efforts to change their destiny.

The title, thus, is not deterministic, but ironical, and at one level, open to positive interpretation.

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#### **4.7 Significance of the Painting of the Sepoy Mutiny being put down**

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In the first scene of the play. *Destiny*, on the wall of a box-room of a military barack in Julilunder, in Punjab, hangs a painting of the ruthless putting down of the Sepoy Mutiny, it forms a backdrop to the British officers leaving India on the eve of its independence. It seems ironic that the perpetrators of that banality, the British

have to have the country they had forcibly occupied. Khera is left standing in front of the painting at the end of the scene, toasting to “civics Britannicus Sum’, i.e. the ‘highest British citizen’. He is a citizen of free India, and at that point, as part of a commonwealth country, he could be a citizen of Britain too, if he wanted to live in Britain.

“There was a debate in the mid-seventies about whether or not the National Front was a fascist organisation or an anti-immigration pressure group. The conventional liberal wisdom, particularly as expressed by Peter Juline in the guardian, was that to call them fascists was left wing paranoia and left-wing grandiosity. He said that in fact they were very small, very insignificant, and were articulating something quite real; people’s fear and worry about immigration. To call them fascists was to equate Britain in the seventies with Germany in the thirties, and that was atypical grandiose left-wing trick, because if that was true than the left becomes much more important thereby, because the left was much more important in the Thirties.....

The National Front was a Nazi party. Their leaders were fascists. They had fascist parts and pursued a policy of using concern about black immigration to advance a cause indistinguishable from that of the Nazi party in the 30s in Germany. That was true, and the play articulated that, and did so in a way which showed how people were reduced by that set of beliefs—particularly into the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory.”—David Edgar.

But in Britain. Khera is a victim of racist exploitation. The painting is visible on the wall of Major Rolfe’s office-room in the best scene of the play. Turner recognises it as the same one which had hung in the Jullunden baracles. When he leaves that Rolfe had been responsible for depriving him of his livelihood, he faces the painting, and can almost understand the sinister ways in which Capitalist Enterprise works. The word ‘ghastly’ used by Carol to describe the painting, as applied by Turner to the ruthlessness of the housing development companies well. Against this appropriate backdrop, the fascist group talk about depriving workers, attacking and opposing communism and workers movements in the National interest.

The painting thus acts as a symbol of all ruthless suppression of dissent, protest and democracy, in the interests of economic gain of a few who control capital and power. Turner realizes that he is a victim of that ‘greed’ of Capitalist Enterprise which grabs up everything that could stop its onward march. But he is confused. He is willing to listen to Cleaver’s suave explanations. He will have to decide whether he will accept them, or think for himself and oppose what has hurt him.

This colonial emblem, therefore assumes large significance in the play as symbolic

of economic imperialism that Fascism ultimately represents under its different guises of racism. Nationalism and even. Socialism.

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#### 4.8 Model Questions

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##### Essay type

1. Discuss *Destiny* as a political play.
2. Describe the events which lead to Khera slashing Tony's face. What does this pattern tell you about the nature of Fascist politics.
3. Discuss briefly the character of Clifton. What kind of politics does he represent?
4. Assess the character of Khera and show how he comes out with dignity in the play.
5. Give a brief account of Paul's character, and show how he contribute to the action of the play. *Destiny*.
6. Assess the character and contribution of Peter Crossby in the play *Destiny*.
7. Justify the life of the play, *Destiny*.

##### Short Questions

1. With whose words does the play *Destiny* begin? What is the relevance of those lines to the play?
2. Explain, in not more than 120 words, the significance of the first scene of the play.
3. What are the motives in joining Nation Forward Party of any 2 of the following: Tony, Turner, Liz, Mrs. Howard, Kershaw.
4. Who is Rolfe? How does he persuade Kershaw to join the Nation Forward party?
5. What role does Sandy play in Act III Scene I of the play. *Destiny*?
6. What is the significance of the picketing scene in *Destiny* ?
7. What is a purge? Why, do you think. Maxwell was purged from Nation Forward party?

8. What is the significance of the painting of the putting down of the Sepoy Mutiny that we see in the first and last scene of the play?
9. Describe the scene in which Turner is taught to face questions by the press and people during his election campaign. What does it tell you about British Nationalist politics in Britain of the 70s?
10. “One doesn’t, like, the dentist.....but to save the tooth. “...Who says this, and when ? What does he mean?

### **Objective types**

1. Which painting is hanging in Rolfe’s office-room? Where else does it occur in the play, *Destiny* ?
2. Whose voice do we hear at the beginning of the play? When did he make this historic speech ?
3. Which historical incident does Khera refer to, to explain ‘Rule of Law’? What does he prove?
4. Who is made the conservative candidate for the Taddley parliament any seat? Why is the seat vacant?
5. What role does the Metropolitan Investment Trust play in Turner’s life?
6. What is the Patriotic League? What decision is taken in its meeting?
7. What is Patel charged with at the police station? What will be the consequence?
8. “We had a little purge”—Who says this? What does he refer to?
9. “I’m talking to it. It’s sitting there, stuffing its face with chicken biriani.” Who says this, to whom? What is “it” ? Why is it so?
10. Why does Clifton ‘retreat’ ?
11. What is the immigrant workers strike at Baron Castings about?
12. What does Peter Crossby come to propose to Clifton at his house?

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## **Unit -1    Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse**

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### **Structure**

#### **1.0 Objectives**

#### **1.1 Study Guide**

#### **1.2 Introduction to the Background! and Developments with regard to New Changes in the World of Art, vis-a-vis fiction towards the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century.**

##### **1.2.1 Interpretation of New concepts-**

##### **1.2.2 Regarding Mind, Time and space-**

**The sources of inspiration contributed by the new Philosophical and Psychological Theories as propounded by William James, Henri Bergson, S. Freud and C. Jung.**

##### **1.2.3 Simultaneously-the revolutionary changes occurring in the field of painting and sculpture. The Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Exhibitionist Painting in 1910, by Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin.**

#### **1.3 The Emergence of the Psychological novel.**

##### **1.3.1 The launching of the stream of consciousness technique- interpreted and experimented by Marcel Proust (France), James Joyce (Ireland), and Dorothy Richardson (England) in between 1912 - 1915.**

#### **1.4 Introduction to Virginia Woolf; her short biography; her tendencies.**

##### **1.4.1 The beginning of Virginia Woolf's career as a novelist.**

#### **1.5 The Introduction to her novel To the Lighthouse.**

##### **1.5.1 Analysis and summary of the text;**

**Critical discussion of the Novel - its theme, structure, characters and their relation.**

##### **1.5.2 The final achievement and technique of the novel - To the Lighthouse.**

#### **1.6 Concluding Exercises.**

##### **1.6.1 Broad Questions ?**

##### **1.6.2 Short Questions**

#### **1.7 Chronology of Important Dates.**

#### **1.8 Select Bibliography.**

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## 1.0 Objectives :

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In this section the students will be introduced with the aspect of the special development of the literary genre-Fiction with reference to its emergence as something different and revolutionary in the twentieth century.

A very short background will also be provided in order to impart to the students the new changes brought towards the end of the nineteenth century initiating, on the one hand, a critical and revolutionary spirit in the minds of the artists including the fiction writers and on the other an emergence of an entirely new pattern of representation. This new wave of thought ultimately took the form of the stream of consciousness method in the field of writing and technique of three -dimensional pattern in painting and sculpture.

At the end of the study of this unit the student will be able to form a comprehensive idea about the contribution of Virginia Woolf as a modern novelist and her writing technique with special reference to the novel To the Lighthouse. Information about the stream of consciousness technique that Virginia Woolf had employed in her novels as it opened a new vista in the field of fictional writing, will also be provided.

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### 1.1 Study Guide:

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The history of story writing dates far back to the early times, but the covery of the proper and the so-called modern novel had been the great phenomenon of the eighteenth century. It is difficult to say where the novel begins, though there had always been an innate love for a story. But this basic interest in a story mainly rested on imagination which was not enough to satisfy the awakening demand for intellect, as the decades progressed.

Therefore there was a gradual eagerness to combine imagination and intellect in a work of fiction to express life - life stit aimed to show men and women as they are, the motives and influences which govern their actions. Gradually the element of interesting story grew less and less important and there was a demand for the faithful and true representation of life in a work of fiction.

There had been various practitioners, but Daniel Defoe could be regarded as the pioneer among the novelists in the eighteenth century, others being Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne and Goldsmith. Until, however, the publication of Pamela in 1740 by Richardson, no true novel had appeared in English language, as considered by the modern critics. Thus novel as a new literary type, came to flourish in the

eighteenth century and continued to be written in the nineteenth century in the Victorian era. The brilliant practitioners of this period were Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, the Bronte Sisters, W. M. Thackeray, Charles Dickens and many others. But towards the end of the nineteenth century, something surprising happened which shook the foundation of all conventional Leliefs with regard to life and reality.

This is what should be the purpose of this section to present so that the student would know what happened in the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century in the field of art, which gave rise to the psychological novel of which Virginia Woolf had been one of the most remarkable exponents. In connection with this the-launching of entirely a new kind of method i.e. the stream of consciousness technique, should also be discussed.

N.B. : The student should supplement his/her study of Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse with a thorough reading of the text.

**1.2** The late Victorian period marks the beginning of the disintegration of the epoch of fictional writing method. The English novel, from its beginning in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to its great popular flowering in the nineteenth, had been essentially a public instrument, basing its views on the agreed standards of significant human affairs. Characters were created to help development of the plot only, having existence of their own, personifying only some particular aspects of human character. They, so to say, represented type or flat characters, expressing themselves on two dimensions, as did a photograph. So far as plot was concerned the Victorian novelists offered mainly the daily routine of the characters on the superficial level, and not what they thought and felt.

Gradually, however, there were signs of a breakdown of the fixed standard of belief due to some completely new ideas in the realms of psychology and other socio-economic changes. The neo-revolutionary theories about time and space, and psychology contributed by William James, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson and Carl Jung shook the foundation of every belief of artistic pattern cherished so long as absolute.

There were controversies over the problem of perfect way of representation in which the eminent writer and critic Henry James and the novelist H. G. Wells were in the fray. Henry James pointed out that the popular and traditional novelists like Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy were scratching only on the surface to present life. A direct attack was launched against the conventional pattern of novelistic technique so far practised by the Edwardian novelists mentioned above. Henry James, for the first time declared that the duty of the novelists is to 'show'

characters and not to 'describe' them. He was thus in clash with the contemporary writers who also hit back in their own way and the era was thick with arguments and counter-arguments.

### **1.2.1 Interpretation of New Concepts :**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was challenge in the air and all the old standards were being swept away by new currents. The seeds of new ideas were sown by the new interpretations of psychology, time and space contributed by William James, Bergson, Freud and Jung. It generated confusion among the artists with regard to their conception of Life and Reality. The problem of rendering reality in the strictest sense of the term, became the cardinal objective of the creative artists, at once aesthetic and philosophical.

**1.2.2** William James in 1884 propounded that our thought process goes on and on incessantly. It can be compared with the continuous flow of a stream. It can not be described even as a chain which is made up of segments. Hence James chose the name the stream of consciousness. He also said that in order to know a person, one should take into account not only his entity of the present, but also his past which might give an idea of his future, and that could only make up a total picture of him. It should be the business of the creative artist to focus on this 'total' wholeness of the characters.

Side by side with this view there came the astounding theory from Henri Bergson of France with regard to Time and Space. According to his view Time is not a quantity to be measured by small units, as we often do, but it is a quality. We divide time into past, present and future, years, months, weeks, hours and minutes etc. only for the sake of our practical convenience. But it proves only our ignorance of the real and essential nature of time. Like mind time also goes on and on without stop. With the help of our memory, both voluntary and involuntary, we can go back to the past and relive a specific period of time in our life. Thus his theory is based on the idea of constant 'change' and fluidity of experience.

Almost at the same time Freud and Jung experimented with psychology and emphasized on the theory that 'psyche' is the only significant element of human character. These psycho-analytical theories of Freud and Jung created a tremendous upsurge in the world of art, which insisted that the reality of the psyche was no less, perhaps more, than the reality of the physical world.

**1.2.3** The new interpretations of consciousness as a perpetual stream and the initiation of the movement of time as a pervading and durable quality of Life and Reality gave an intensive blow to the so-long accepted axioms of artistic formula. The whole conception of Life and Reality demanded change.

The creative artists, taken those together who had been working on the canvas with colour and brush, those using hammer and chisel and the literary artists working with pen and paper, came to a halt. The conventional method of the artists was called for a challenge. It was felt by the artists of the twentieth century that so long art had not been given the handling it deserved. There was an attempt to a total rejection of the established patterns of art by the new artists, out of which a different method emerged.

In December 1910 something significant took place. There was the first Post - Impressionist painting exhibition held at the Grafton Galleries in London where the works of Van Gogh, Paul Ganguin, Matisse, Cezanne, and Picasso were exhibited. On this occasion Virginia Woolf, made her startling remark that 'on or about December, 1910 human character changed.'

The first step towards this change was the complete rejection of the traditional method of art. An endeavour to create three dimensional pictures was made which demanded that not only length and breadth, but also depth should be shown through the total impression of the paintings. On part of the literary artists an effort was made to capture time in relation to the incessant flow of thought process while creating a character, together with his entire entity in the past, present and future, thus reducing characterisation to stylized gestures.

Thus the entire conception of artistic creation received a blow as a result of which a totally different technique was evolved-at once revolutionary and perfectly truthful to the idea of presenting totality of life in the strictest sense of the term. According to the new group of artists, the conventional pattern of telling a 'story' was completely discarded as being artificial and involving a certain amount of conscious or unconscious falsification of man's experience of life and reality. The method of stereotyped narration and static characterization was thus severely revolutionized.

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### **1.3. The Emergence of the Psychological Novel:**

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In modern prose fiction the domineering force is found in the Psychological novel developing towards the *end* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through the analysis of the thought process, new awareness of time and space, the right way of novel writing emerged

which became acceptable to the fiction writers in search of new forms. The expression 'psychology' refers to the atmosphere of the work with its different shades towards inward workings where emphasis is being laid on character and not on plot. It probes into the innermost recesses and thought of a mind and the causes of its germination. The author fixes one 'point of view' and tries to reveal everything from that angle.

Psychological novel, however, is not without a plot. It has a theme through which the inward trend of the mind is revealed which makes up the story. By acquainting the reader directly with the mental experience of different characters, the psychological novel widened the scope of a novelist which added a significant dimension to his art. Thus the novel became an artistic record of the history of a mind with a penetrating study of the thinking and feeling of the characters. The reader on his part experienced the stream of thought process, the genesis and development of a consciousness.

Another remarkable aspect of the Psychological novel is its use of symbolism related to the symbolist movement of the century. In their pursuit of the shadowy, evanescent realm of the mind, the novelists invariably took the help of meaningful suggestiveness to reach the depth of consciousness.

Though the innovation of the psychological novel was a remarkable line of creation in the second decade of the twentieth century, the eighteenth and nineteenth century novelists also dealt with inner workings of the mind of their characters. But the method of their handling represented only a partial view of the characters' mind as to them the incidents had been of more significance than the characters an objective totally different from that of the twentieth century novelists. Thus in the twentieth century the psychological novel was born in the hands of the Vanguards such as James Joyce, Conrad, Marcel Proust and Dorothy Richardson or even D. H. Lawrence who adopted an entirely new technique of their own later on termed as 'the stream of consciousness' method.

These writers have been called "impressionists"- who have been deeply influenced by the method and technique of the French painters. They made their cardinal objective a straightforward projection of the artist's sense perception. They worked for a subtle evocation of atmosphere of the mind and instead of analysis they gave a direct rendering of sensation.

Another important aspect of the psychological novel is perceived in its relation to symbolism. The root of the modern psychological novel is found in the symbolist movement of the century.

The influence of symbolism has added another important aspect to the psychological novel, the element of poetry in the work of prose fiction. In order to catch the subtle

level of the psychological trends, the delicate and flexible shadows of the 'psyche', the novelist has to make use of those words that suggest the colour of the mind. Hence a poetically sublimated language was necessary for the representation of such a reality.

**1.3.1** On the eve of the first world war three significant books which were labelled 'novels' made their appearance. In France, Marcel Proust published in 1913 Du Cote de Chez Swann (the first two volumes of A La Recherche du Temps Perdu-or Remembrance of the Things Past): James Joyce from Ireland began publishing in serial form a novel entitled A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in 1914. In England Dorothy Richardson published in 1915 the first book entitled Pointed Roofs of what was to become a twelve-part novel Pilgrimage. These three writers unknowingly to each other and living in three different countries of the world attempted an entirely new technique of writing which turned fiction away from external to internal reality, from the outer world to the hidden world of fantasy and reverie into which there play constantly the life and perception of feelings and sensations. They recorded the growth of a consciousness, with exploring voyages through consciousness.

Thus between 1913 and 1915 was born the modern psychological novel-later on labelled as the stream of consciousness novel or the novel of the silent or internal monologue. The new technique asserted that the presentation of the immediate consciousness or the flow of thought was the primary job of a novelist. Life, according to the new writers very seldom falls into a pattern and shapes itself into a story. A plot is basically something invented and artificial which tortures reality out of shape. Life is chaotic. Why should it become so well knit and logical in a novel? In order to keep the novel closer to reality the illusory objective pattern of the novel must be annihilated. The story must die in order to enable the novelist to present a truthful picture of life. In its place the thought process of the characters should be presented and the literary artist instead of touching or the superficial level of the mind, plunged into the atmosphere of the mind which became the principal staple of the novel. Also, the traditional language no longer seemed suitable to reveal the feelings and sensations of the characters. Hence a different kind of language pregnant with suggestiveness and meaningfulness, touching upon the inner feelings of consciousness was evolved. It was thought that in order to present subtle experiences of feeling and sensations language should utilize the spirituality of poetic elements, together with the idea of symbolic expression, rather than using mere flat interpretation in prose.

The Various psychological theories regarding mind and consciousness as also of time and space encouraged the twentieth century artists to probe into the deeper

realms of thought. To reveal the consciousness in its natural form and its various shades was what the young artists considered as their ultimate purpose of creation in catching the total picture of a character. Instead of the story they brought stream of consciousness, instead of compiling superficial incidents, they tried to interpret inner feelings and sensations. Another feature that was added as a result of this attempt was the complete disappearance of the author. In the traditional method of novel writing the writer assumed the role of the omnipotent story teller, while in the new technique the mental prattle of the characters are presented as the main staple of the writing revealing all aspects of the characters, and the reader himself becomes the author to form an understanding of the story.

In this connection another aspect of the technique should be mentioned. In order to perfect the unravelling of the thought process the new group of novelists adopted some of the photographic and cinematic devices as a very important part of their method. The montage, flash-backs, fade-ins, fade-outs and close-ups were often used together with the impressionism in painting and the free association of ideas developed in psychoanalysis. Thus the peripheral thoughts on the fringe of consciousness determined the behavioural pattern of the characters which formed the ultimate level of projection for the creative artists.

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#### **1.4 Introduction to Virginia Woolf : Her short biography; her gropings and tendencies.**

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Virginia Woolf is a novelist in whom one might find a recipient of various kinds of stimuli. Hers was a natural synthesis of natural and acquired gifts inherited from vast reading, intellectual social surroundings, and the prolific atmosphere of the age. She belonged to a family in which culture was taken for granted. All these forces worked together to vitalize the positive instincts in her.

Born in London, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1882, she took her life-breath from two different worlds-the one gradually fading away with all its values and the other showing signs of emergence. The fading world was in which she was brought up and out of which she created her own perspective to visualize the coming world. Being weak in health from childhood she missed the opportunity of conventional schooling though there was no gap in her education at home. The custom in her house was essentially Victorian. Her father Sir Leslie Stephen was an eminent critic, historian, biographer, and scholar and editor of many periodicals and magazines of the period. He was very

conservative in domestic outlook and imposed strict regularities over his daughters -Vanessa and Virginia. But on the other hand they were permitted to enjoy freedom in other ways that was quite rare in that age. The permission to use an expurgated library like that of Sir Leslie Stephen developed in Virginia a natural affinity with books. Virginia Stephen inherited both from her parents and refinement and cultural delicacy were inlaid in her.

The Stephens used to spend their summer holidays on the seashore of Cornwall. Therefore, the sounds of the waves, the sounds of London streets, as well as the serene flavour of the library were all mixed up together to nourish the adult imagination of Virginia. This has influenced her to select as the setting of her novels either the sea or the city. This also accounts for the antithetic vision of her mature sensibility that contemplates both solid facts and introspection, reason and intuition. The two settings developed in her a dual tendency of fact and imagination which she sought to reduce to a proportionate balance.

The influence of her father has been most remarkable in shaping the nature of Virginia's personality, - specially her enthusiasm for the literary world as well as the feministic attitude in her nature. Reading has been to her a matter both of entertainment and learning, relaxation and fertility. The casual reader in her gradually became the methodical searcher with a little brown book and a pen in hand "discovering, pouncing, thinking of phrases ....." as she set down in her Diary on 8th December, 1929. This faculty never deceived her and to the end of her life we find the same enthusiastic reader with acute capacity for grasping.

She recalls in her Diary in 1933 that the art of writing had been "absorbing ever since I will a little creature. The habit of writing was continued specially when she was filled with excitement after reading new book and she tried to copy the styles of the books she had read.

The family atmosphere was very congenial in other respects also. The visitors at the house at Hyde Park Gate were eminent and distinguished. James Russell Lowell -minister to the court of St. James stood godfather to Virginia. Thomas Hardy and Henry James were frequent guests when Virginia and the other children of the Stephen family were young. The atmosphere of the whole house thus thrived with intellectual and enlightened discussions. This scene never changed. After her father's death in 1904 Virginia, together with Vanessa, Adrian and Thoby shifted at first to Gordon Square and then to Fitzroy Square. It was here that the famous Bloomsbury Group came into being. The young friends of Thoby from Cambridge used to gather frequently for a free discussion on art and literature. Among these were many who later became

very distinguished critics, scholar, philosopher, economist, painter and litterateur. It was at this period that the discussions of the Bloomsbary members most helped Virginia to be aware of a new world coming into existence. To the Cambridge men who gathered at her house regularly the ideas and preachings of G.E. Moore were received as axiomatic truths which they followed with an absorbing pursuit. It was Moore who, taught them to take art for art's sake.

Besides Moore's ideas which gave an ethical justification for art, the new outlook of aestheticism was formed by Roger Fry. These ideas are derived from the theories of Post-Impressionism which brought a new light in the world of art challenging the naturalistic art by mere imitation.

In the frequent gatherings of the Group these things were the usual topics of discussion. It strengthened Virginia Woolf's capacity for creative emotions with a view to turn away from conventional idealisation. With the help of her Bloomsbury friends she was aware of the tidings of a different world with which she could not have establish contact otherwise. It was also here that she first met Leonard Woolf whom she married in 1912.

Her last novel Between the Acts has a special significance. It was written under the direct shadow of the second World War. The Woolfs had to shift from London to the country. Amidst air raids and shrills of sirens Virginia Woolf carried on, as far as possible, her creative works. Which were, however, not hampered by the shocks of the wars. But it did weaken her nerves for which she felt she might lose her mental balance once more, which she experienced after her mother's death, and bring trouble to those around her-specially to her husband Leonard Woolf. From January to February there were constant references in her Diary to "a battle against depression". Their own house at Tavistock Square was bombed. They had to shift to Mecklenburgh Square. She was shocked to find the place where she had written so may of her books turned to powder But she was determined not to be engulfed by the traps of despair. She intentionally engaged herself to work, - reading, writ ing, planning for new books. In the meantime she has finished **Between the Acts** in November 23, 1940 - though it was not published till after her death. Still in her private leisure she was trying to analyse the cause for this feeling, this mental depression, which was paralysing her being like an inevitable danger. She could no longer visualize the future in any enthusiastic terms.

The strain to keep herself calm and go on living while an ominous luck threatened her, proved too much for her weak nerves to bear, as if "with noses pressed to a closed door" as she described the situation.

This apprehending danger made her to take decision to break that closed door and challenge life. On March 28, 1941, she left home before lunch never to return. She drowned herself in the river Ouse to calm down her agitating nerves. What she left were her hat and walking stick on the bank, two letters for her sister and her husband on her writing desk, and an enigma for the whole world. Whatever interpretations those two letters have received concerning the cause of her suicide, we need not intrude upon, we must leave that personal region of her private self to itself. That is none of our business. We are left to dig deeper and deeper into the depth of what was legated by her of her creative faculty as often her work was a “battle”, but she had to “fight it alone.”

#### **1.4.1 Virginia Woolf’s Literary Career and writings :**

Encouraged by the congenial circumstances Virginia Woolf actually began to write in 1905 starting with critical reviews. She became a reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement and other British and American periodicals and remained a regular contributor for thirty years. Through these exercises of her mind she gradually developed her ideas about art and literature considering both their positive and negative aspects. This sharpening process was continued till 1915 when her first novel The Voyage Out came out. But that was the beginning of a new phase. In the meantime she was becoming conscious of the age that was passing through its transitional epoch - in which all old standards and values were being swept away by new currents. The old problems were put to question. The new interpretation of consciousness as a continuous stream, the initiation of the movement of time as a pervading quality of Reality shook the so-long accepted bases of artistic formula. The whole era throbbled with the impulse of change and rejection. The movement gathered momentum when proust, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson from France, Ireland and England began to produce novels in a completely new form unknowingly of each other. These works resembled each other in their attempt to present the stream of consciousness of the characters and the new technique was called after their entirely revolutionary preoccupation. All these were happening within 1913 and 1915. Virginia Woolf, no less aware of these transitional aspects of the period, was trying to formulate her own perspective of fictional endeavour. From the very beginning she was conscious of doing something new out of the given data of the novel. In this search for a new form she not only tried to find out the best possible mode of expressing characters but also developed the style most suitable for the use of a female novelist. Like Dorothy

Richardson she believed that the woman would have her own manner of say unaffected by the masculine line of thought. She must preserve what her female sensibility would guide her to present.

The author herself was not happy with her first attempt nor also with the second novel Night and Day published in 1919 of which she said she did not anticipate even two editions. Her attempt to produce a different thing out of the novel materialised a little later in 1922 in Jacob's Room. In the meantime the Hogarth Press was started in 1917 by Mr. and Mrs. Woolf with the publication of Two Stories - Virginia Woolf's The mark on the Wall and Leonard Woolf's Three Jews. From 1915 to 1924 they were living at Hogarth House, Richmond, From 1924 till August 1939 their home was at Tavistock Square in Bloomsbury. During these years Virginia Woolf's life was filled, on the one hand, with her critical and experimental writings and on the other hand with travels abroad and in England, frequent illnesses and visits from her relatives and friends.

Her experimental sketches in the form of stream of consciousness method were published one after another. In 1917 the Mark on the Wall, kew Gardens in 1919 and An Unwritten Novel in 1920 came out. These three sketches taken together were published in a book form in 1912 as Monday or Tuesday. This idea to approach a new and different form for a novel, was concretized in Jacob's Room published in 1922. The superfluous events were rejected as much as possible and the whole attention was devoted to characterisation through impressionistic method resembling to some extent the cinematic devices. Underneath all her experiments with the novel she was forming her own theories and ideas about the proper method a novelist should adopt. The main object to take up for the novelist should be life itself. An examination of the ways of the fall of impressions over out consciousness day after day would free the writer from mere conventional presentation of behaviour and action and would result in a perfect rendition of life. Life is not as orderly and coherent as it is assumed to be in the traditional novels, "not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged."

From these issues another brilliant essay came out a little later. In 1923 Virginia Woolf wrote 'Character and Fiction' for Nation and Atheneum which later became 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.' Here she shows the principal basis of real character having derived the essential postulates from the ideas of Post-Impressionism. Post-Impressionism referred to "the mental image expressed in accordance with a subjective outlook....It despised representation and gave the artist an unbridled licence to amplify and destroy the forms of nature, acknowledging no law but the artist's. sense of

fitness in arranging and organizing the contents of his picture so as to express with the greatest possible directness and intensity the material and spiritual significance of his subject - the 'treeness' of the tree as Roger Fry has it, and the 'wallness' of the wall".

Virginia Woolf formed her analysis of character on the basis of this analogy while she tried to signify 'Brownness' of Mrs. Brown. This plays a very important part in the emergence of modern novels with regard to characteristic, which brought about a great change. Virginia Woolf, no less aware of the new vogue Post-Impressionism has brought, said in the same essay "on or about December, 1910, human character changed" (The Captain's Death-bed-p. 91). By this change she meant the acceptance of the significance of intrinsic essence as the "whatness' of a being. According to Virginia Woolf the representation of this essential substance constituted the cardinal purpose of the novelist to forms.

In this way she was forming her own theories and method of writing. The critical writings proceeded as undercurrents of her novelistic activities. Mrs. Dalloway Came out in 1925, To the Lighthouse in 1927, Orlando in 1928, The Waves in 1931. The Years in 1937 and Between the Acts posthumously in 1941. In between these periods several other books - biography (Roger Fry in 1940 and Flush in 1933) political and social pieces (A Room of One's Own in 1929 and Three Guineas in 1938), and several collections of essays were published, Each one of these writings proved the multifarious nature of Virginia Woolf's genius. As she detested every kind of stagnancy so in her opinion of techniques also she believed in a progressive movement of the writer's pre-occupation.

Mrs. Dalloway shows the immediate present with memory as its main vehicle of self-expression.

To The Lighthouse takes the help of the tiny moments to capture the intensified feelings when the dark caverns of the human consciousness are illuminated with the light of truth Orlando proceeds in leaps and bounds through centuries ignoring the tyranny of artificial time and upholding the immense capacity of human consciousness.

The Waves shows the development of the pure being in its fluid process of change and movement on the background of eternal time with its durable capacity.

Between the Acts takes into consideration the part played by history as well as the present moment in which the lives of the human beings are enmeshed, and also the paradox between Jove and individuality.

All these various attempts on new presentations prove the restless searcher, within her that never gave her a moment's peace. In each novel she tried to adjust the correct

angle of vision with more delicacy and refinement. But in each case it was the stream of consciousness that she tried to present through the various possible designs. She showed the immense potentiality of the fictional method by which the stream of human consciousness could be captured. It was she who verified how flexible the novelistic genre is even after Joyce's attempts of direct rendition seemed to have utilised every possibility. All she cared for was writing uninterruptingly. Writing seemed to her as a battle fought with extreme strain of the nerves, "a lunatic's dream".

She used the stream of consciousness method to its utmost flexibility applying the technical devices offered by the method—the devices of internal monologue, the cinematic devices of flash-backs and memory, montage and free association, multiple-view and close-ups, to deal with the various aspects of reality to express more perfectly her ideas about life, death, personality, time and space.

In A Room of One's Own Virginia Woolf said "women and fiction remain, as far as I am concerned, unsolved problem." From the very beginning of her literary career she understood the problem a woman has to face in the world of literature. A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas and Orlando reveal in some way or other her feminist attitudes. A Room of One's Own published in 1929 shows her ideas of the condition of women and the possible advantages and disadvantages open to them. Outside her creative mood she was tortured with a constant belief in the negative opportunities of women in society. Through her essays and the lectures she sometimes delivered before working women she supported the idea of women suffrage. In Three Guineas published in 1938 she strongly upheld, the feminist view point. This was the reason that she, as a writer, never handled materials alien to her own instincts and understanding. Like Dorothy Richardson she also held the opinion that women could analyse female consciousness better as the male consciousness is foreign to their knowledge. In her heart of hearts Virginia Woolf believed also in the androgynous nature of the artistic self. The artist is possessed by the creative instinct whether he is a man or a woman. Virginia Woolf believed that masculinity and femininity reside side by side in a same personality, which stimulate creative act.

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## **1.5 Introduction to the novel To the Lighthouse :**

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To the Lighthouse was published in 1927. This was from the very first patterned to give expression to a particular idea of the author, that time was constantly flowing in the flux of eternity which occupied Virginia Woolf's mind more and more as she

progressed in her literary career. This novel was built up to give expression to this theory in which Virginia Woolf portrayed the profound character of Mrs. Ramsay and the whole procedure rested on an incident captured in a moment.

From the very beginning the novel was concerned with two themes - that a journey to the Lighthouse was expected to be made, and Lily Briscoe wanted to finish a picture with the light of perfect illuminating vision. At the end both these were realised by the same impulse - the capture of the moment. It had already been pointed out that to Virginia Woolf this idea bore a particular significance. This could be compared to Joyce's theory of epiphany and it had been used in every novel in which Virginia Woolf digressed from the conventional method. Upon this symbolic framework the whole structure of the book had been raised against the background of nature. The central characters - Mrs. Ramsay through her intuition in the first section and Lily Briscoe later through her art, attempted to triumph over time and its bearing on personality and death. 'Life' in its most realistic, purest and simplest aspect had been presented in this novel without any external and superfluous event. And for this purpose the world of social relationship and everyday business had been set off. We are introduced to the characters in the island of Skye where streets and buildings could not disturb the mind.

This expressed very clearly what Virginia Woolf once said in one of her essays : ".....literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null, and negligible and non-existent."

**1.5.1** The novel did not possess any plot in the conventional sense. The Whole book was divided into three sections - The Window, Time Passes and The Lighthouse. The basic device was the stream-of-consciousness technique applied in the same rigorous manner as in Mrs. Dalloway. But in Mrs. Dalloway all along patterns had been woven by memory set on the present, and personalities were developed by showing them over past background, while in To the Lighthouse memory worked in the second and third part only.

The first part dealt with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, their relation to themselves and their eight children and guests. Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay represented different and antithetical nature. The sense of values was not the same for them. The very opening of the book imparted this note of difference between husband and wife : "Yes, of

course, if it's fine tomorrow", said Mrs. Ramsay to her little son James - "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added.

This somewhat abrupt beginning referred to an expected visit to the Lighthouse. It meant a lot to six-year-old James Ramsay. But no sooner had he begun to dream about this 'extraordinary joy' than his practical father had said, "But,".... "it won't be fine" - at once shattering little James's dream. On this contrasting emotions had been created the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay appeared as an egocentric intellectual who was at the same time the embodiment of truth and fact. He lived entirely in the world of intellect, but could not achieve success in life to his expectation, and that developed in him a kind of pessimism. Mrs. Ramsay was a striking contrast to her husband with her warm maternal love and sensitiveness to general human being. She respected the strong and moderated truthfulness of her husband yet felt that it should sometimes be sacrificed to give way to leniency and affection towards their children. She devoted her whole existence to her altruistic attitude. She was more sympathetic to her children than her husband was and so more desirable as a companion to every one of her family. But, in spite of her contrary views from her husband, Mrs. Ramsay gave him what was his due, though sometimes he felt somewhere she was remote from him. Mrs. Ramsay was a wonderful creation of Virginia Woolf. Her view of life and experience brought us to the problems of Virginia Woolf herself. Mrs. Ramsay had been used both as a symbol of high philosophical contemplations with regard to time and death, a loving wife, and a perfect hostess, managing with limited means. "She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband." Mrs. Ramsay with her acutely sensitive intuition desired her children and everything surrounding her not to perish away by eternal phenomena of suffering and death. She willed that time should stand still. That was why "she never wanted James to grow a day older or came either. These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were, .... they have all their little treasures .... Why must they grow up and lose it all?".

In the midst of the dinner party, which constituted the climax of the first part, Mrs. Ramsay mused on the transitoriness of human experience and how to make it permanent in reality. Looking round her children and husband and her friends, all sitting round the table she realised "it partook .... of eternity.... there is a coherence in things,, a stability; something she meant, is immune from change, and shines out.... in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby;... of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that remains for ever after. This would remain."

Thus she felt this moment of joy and happiness was getting the seal of permanence which would continue even when she would be no more.

But she did even more. She had within her the capacity and the power to invoke intense moments of revelation that remained secured where she existed and Virginia Woolf employed this quality of hers as the means to unite the diverging threads of the story.

This feeling of Mrs. Ramsay operated immensely in the mind of Lily Briscoe - a painter. Lily took up the business of illuminating others and understanding the character of Mrs. Ramsay after she died. To get at the bottom of a personality like Mrs. Ramsay required a highly sensitive mind. That was why Lily had been created an artist. To her receptive mind Mrs. Ramsay appeared as the symbol of unity, a bright personality uniting the dissociative elements around her. But this effect was not realized so much when she was alive and the influence of her personality was direct. When she died, Lily was able to judge her dispassionately and absorbed the supreme moment of revelation which also enabled her to create her own work of art.

The first part *The Window*, introduced us only to this personality of Mrs. Ramsay, and not much with the realisation of its full significance. The projected journey to the lighthouse remained unachieved though the thought of it lingered all the time in Mrs. Ramsay's mind.

The second part *Time* showed the passage of years - in which many events took place in the Ramsay family including the death of Mrs. Ramsay and two of her children, all the while leaving the house at Skye to decay. This decay was both natural and symbolic. In the third section *The Lighthouse* again we would find Mr. Ramsay with James and Cam in the same house at Skye, and Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe would also be there. Mrs. Ramsay being dead, the proper importance of her presence was now felt more intensely. The two projects, so far incomplete, now took final shape.

The third and the concluding section of the novel in which the fulfilment of purpose took place had been treated in a very subtle manner. *The Lighthouse* stood at a distance symbolising reality in its complete exhaustiveness, and to reach it was to get at the full meaning of life and reality. Mr. Ramsay's journey to the lighthouse and the completion of Lily's picture were both "journeys to the lighthouse" in a symbolic sense. Mr. Ramsay after ten years was successful in coming out, at least for a short time from his proud ego. When he gave compliments to James on his steering of the boat and gave some presents to the lighthouse men, he partly fulfilled Mr.

Ramsay's objective. At that very moment he was freed from his egotism and was impersonalised. Then only he was able to reach the lighthouse and not previously. The lighthouse invoked in him the reality that true happiness consisted in giving and not in demanding. He could now see the lighthouse very clearly which so long had appeared "across the bay all these years". Now it appeared as a "stark tower on a bare rock. It satisfied him. It confirmed some obscure feeling of his about his own character."

Mrs. Ramsay attained her perfection in Lily Briscoe's vision. Lily now realized the meaning of life because she felt her vision of the dead Mrs. Ramsay occurred as "little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark;...". Mrs. Ramsay had made something static out of the flowing time. But the operation of the final moment took shape a little later, as the influence of Mrs. Ramsay over Mr. Ramsay has not yet worked. When Mr. Ramsay reaches the lighthouse, it occurs to Lily's mind that he has done away with his egotism and "whatever she had wanted to give him, when he felt her that morning, she had given him at last." "He has landed," she said aloud. "It is finished." And then only comes the moment of her final vision :

"Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was - her picture. Yes, with all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? She asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision."

In this way the Lighthouse ... established Mr. Ramsay's rational reality, and Mrs. Ramsay's intuitive reality in relationship which admits the validity of both and implies the necessity of both the elements of human life, and of science by which it is understood - signified by the stark tower on its bare rock above the chaos of the sea. But Mrs. Ramsay represents the spirit of life itself, the inward light which shines out the essential energy creating and sustaining a distinctively human order. She stands for a kind of Platonic idea behind the world of appearances.

**1-5.2 To the Lighthouse** was an attempt to establish a unity between two divergent principles of life. "As an artist Virginia Woolf's concern was to comprehend the reality as well as the convention - to remember .... that objects we agree for ordinary

purpose to regard as solid are in fact composed of shifting particles.” This could be compared to the form of the book which attempted to establish a similar unity between prose and poetry.

The first part *The Window* deals with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, their children and their guests on a holiday on an island one mid-September day. The second part, *Time Passes*, gives us an impressionistic portrayal of the change and decay of the house of the Ramsays. During the ten years it is not visited by any one. During these ten years Mrs. Ramsay dies, Andrew Ramsay is killed in war and Prue Ramsay dies in childbirth. All this information is given casually while describing the decay of the house itself. In the third part, *The Lighthouse* - the Ramsay family, made smaller by death, visits the house with some of the former guests. Lily Briscoe completes the picture she had started ten years before, under the direct impact of the vision of Mrs. Ramsay that illuminates her inner mind. At about the same time Mr. Ramsay with two of the children (now adolescents) reaches “*The Lighthouse*.” Their arrival and Lily Briscoe’s final vision occur at the same time and this coincidence enhances the symbolic significance of the novel. In the opening of the novel Mrs. Ramsay refers to an expected journey to the Lighthouse. It means so much to young James Ramsay, aged six. Virginia Woolf weaves into these lines the consciousness of James’s character, her own comments as an author and reflection of one character on another. And ten years after some of them do take a boat and reach the Lighthouse. All this is so natural and simple; and yet so charged with deep symbolical meaning. In this novel, Virginia Woolf tries to give her own version of experience and its dependence on time and personality. This is the significant essence of this novel.

In what sense can one personality ever “know” another? What relation do our various memories of a single object bear to the “real” object? What remains when a personality has been “split on air” and exists only as a unit of contradictory impressions in others, who are also moving towards death? In what way does time condition human experience and its value?

Virginia Woolf tries her best to answer these and some other fundamental questions regarding life and human experience.

In fact, Lily Briscoe asks some questions which are really speaking Virginia Woolf’s own:

She imagined “how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, there stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was

there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? Could the body achieve it, or the mind subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? Or the heart? Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? For it was not knowledge but unity she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her hand on Mrs. Ramsay's knee."

This is in the first part : The Window. Lily Briscoe has not yet attained a vision of life. Her painting is still incomplete. In part three, Lily Briscoe has matured a good deal. She has understood the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay's personality. She has also realised , however incomplete and fragmentary her knowledge may be at the moment, the implication of the indelible stamp can be left on time by a personality. This is what she says :

".....But what a power was in the human soul! she thought. That woman sitting there, writing under the rock resolved everything into simplicity; "What is the meaning of life? That was ail - a simple question; one that intended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking waves; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs. Ramsay saying "Life stand still here"; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) - this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; the eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said "Mrs. Ram.say! Mrs. Ramsay!" she repeated. She owed this revelation to her." Lily Briscoe does not stop at and remain in this particular moment. Gradually she moves nearer to reality :

"Little words that broke up the thought and dismembered it said nothing. What does it mean? How do you explain it all?" she wanted to say. For the whole world seemed to have dissolved in this early morning hour into a pool of thought, a deep? basin of reality."

"He must have reached it", said Lily Briscoe aloud, feeling suddenly completely tired out....

Mrs. Ramsay is the central character. She is one of Virginia Woolf's most successful

creations. She is both a symbol and an individual, Nobody ever calls her by the first name. She wears grey clothes during day and black at night. She is indefinite, yet individualised. She is a wife, a mother of eight children, a beautiful woman who finds great pleasure in match-making, a practical nurse and an able hostess. She is a likeable human being and what is more, she is almost a normal person. But she is something even more. She can create moments of unity that remain intact in the memory, affecting one as Lily Briscoe realised "like a work of art". Mr. Ramsay is altogether a different person. He is intellectual - precisely factual and pessimistic. But it would be wrong to take him as a figure of fun. It might be said with a certain amount of appropriateness that if To the Lighthouse is a story of contrast between two different kinds of truth, then Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay surely represent two oppsing kinds. Mr. Ramsay's truth is precise and factual, Mrs. Ramsay's truth lies in the movement of a human being towards it. For her, truth is an attainable ideal, which is never fully apprehended. Like a beacon-light it draws man on and on. The struggle for truth, man's constant endeavour to attain it, is the truth. Mr. Ramsay withhis scientific, factual mind spatializes knowledge and truth.

But Mrs. Ramsay is so different. She has little faith in logic or analysis. She is intuitive. She is more interested in time than in space. She believes more in qualitative aspects of a phenomenon than in its quantitative diversity. The whole of the Window is a statement and a counter-statement to this truth.

The second part: *Time Passes* is apparently impressionistic; but it is something more than that. It is vital to the novel as a whole. It cannot just be withdrawn. In this section Virginia Woolf puts Mrs. Ramsay's vision to test. She tries to test her vision by Mrs. Ramsay's facts. Indeed, time passes, life decays, and of course there is death. Virginia Woolf, however, does not stop at this point. The ultimate truth, she seems to suggest, rises superior to "these facts of life" and transcends both time and space. Time passes and yet true "Time" stands captured for ever by our moments of vision.

The third part is of course devoted entirely to this ultimate realisation of truth that transecnds time and space. Lily Briscoe composes a picture. Time intrudes. Ten years later Lily attempts once more to give expression to her vision by formalising it. She remembers Mrs. Ramsay and recalls certain sparkling moments of the past. Mr. Ramsay and the two children leave on a boat for the Lighthouse. Lily begins her painting again. Mrs. Ramsay's memory occupies her mind, overwhelms her and Lily completely loses her own identity in the memoried personality of Mrs. Ramsay. It seems Lily owes everything to her. Mrs. Ramsay was the mistress of the living moment illuminated by the intensity of her intuitive experience of life. "Mrs. Ramsay !

Mrs. Ramsay !” she cries over and over again. Lily wants Mrs. Ramsay to come back and enable her to complete her picture. Mrs. Ramsay does not return. Only her memory bathed in the intensive rays of retrospection returns :

“Suddenly the window at which she was looking was whitened by some light stuff behind it. At last then somebody had come into the drawing-room; somebody was sitting in the chair. For Heaven’s sake, she prayed, let them sit still there and not come floundering out to talk to her. Mercifully, whoever it was stayed still inside; an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step. It altered the composition of the picture a little. It was interesting. It might be useful. Her mood was coming back to her. One must keep on looking without for a second relaxing the intensity of emotion, the determination not to be put off, not to be bamboozled. One must hold the scene-so-in a vice and let nothing come in and spoil it. One wanted, she thought, to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that’s a chair, that’s a table, and yet at the same time, it’s a miracle, it’s an ecstasy. The problem might be solved after all.”

All last Lily is able to finish her picture. She has her vision. She too symbolically makes her final journey to “the Lighthouse.”

From the point of view of novelistic technique, To the Lighthouse is the most natural of all Virginia Woolf’s novels. It has none of the technical complexities of Mrs. Dalloway. It moves on normal constructional lines from scene to scene and from the mind of one person to that of another. There is very little violence or complication in these shifts from one consciousness to another. These movements are made further resilient by allowing every incident to take place in a close-knit homogeneous pattern. To the Lighthouse unlike Mrs. Dalloway (Which is written as one piece without any chapters or sections) has three main sections and these sections are subdivided into smaller parts for the sake of convenience. In this respect Virginia Woolf accepts the normal novelistic convention. As we have seen before, the division of the novel into three main chapters or sections, each with a definite title has also added to the naturalness of the novel. And then in this novel Virginia Woolf follows the technique of the stream of consciousness and brings to bear on this method the full force of her imaginative genius. Yet, she maintains throughout great clarity. She wants to make a statement of fact or a vision. In this novel the statement is invariably made in an explicit manner. The author succeeds on the whole in striking a balance in her method so that she is able to carry on her personal investigation, through the stream of consciousness of a set of created characters. In fact, the narrator or the central intelligence in this novel has gained more importance but has become less discernible.

Lastly, in the concluding subsections of Part Three : The Lighthouse, (Sixth to fourteenth) Virginia Woolf has given us illustrations of the art of structural building-up and mutual irradiation and illumination of the highest order of excellence. She has given us a structural building-up of the story and a mutual illumination of such diverse characters as Lily Briscoe, Mr Ramsay, James, who are all alive and in action; and persons like Mrs. Ramsay, Charles Tansley, Mr. Carmichael, William Bankes and Minta, who are physically absent yet so very active in the minds of others.

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## 1.6 Concluding Exercises :

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### 1.6.1 Broad Questions/Essay type :

- (a) Account for the growth of the stream of consciousness technique in the 20th century novelistic method.
- (b) Write a note on the Psychological Novel.
- (c) Briefly discuss the characteristic basic principles of Virginia Woolf's novelistic technique with special reference to her novel To the Lighthouse.

### 1.6.2 Questions on theme or Character:

- (a) Give a brief analysis of the structure of the text To the Lighthouse.
- (b) Point out the symbolic theme of the novel and its relation to the structural construction.
- (c) Compare and contrast between the characters of Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay.
- (d) Comment on the significance of the role of Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse.
- (e) To what extent does the novel To the Lighthouse exemplify the success of the stream of consciousness method employed by the author?

### 1.6.3 Short Questions :

- (a) Describe briefly the setting of the novel To the Lighthouse.
- (b) What do Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay represent through their opposing nature ?
- (c) What was missing in the picture Lily Briscoe trying to paint ?
- (d) How did the arrival of Mr. Ramsay with his two children to the lighthouse coincide with the completion of Lily's picture ?

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## 1.7 Chronology of Important Dates.

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- 1878 Leslie- Stephen and Julia Jackson Duckworth marry;
- 1882 Born Adeline Virginia Stephen on January 25; James Russell Lowell her godfather.
- 1895 Death of Julia Stephen; Virginia undergoes the second of the four severe breakdowns of her life; suicide attempt Educated at home.
- 1903 Publication of G. E. Moore's Principia Ethica and Bertrand Russell's Principles of Mathematics.
- 1904 Death of Leslie Stephen. The Stephen children, Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, Adrian, move to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury.
- 1907 Vanessa marries Clive Bell.
- 1910 First Post-Impressionist Exhibition in London.
- 1912 Virginia Marries Leonard Woolf, in a civil ceremony, August 10.
- 1913 The Voyage Out, completed in February; publication delayed due to breakdown.
- 1915 The Voyage Out published by her half-brother, Gerald Duckworth. Begins diary on a regular basis.
- 1917 The Hogarth Press begins operation in the basement of the Woolf's home in Richmond.
- 1919 "The Mark on the Wall" and "Kew Gardens," experimental sketches published by the Hogarth Press. Night and Day, published by Duckworth.
- 1920 "Monday or Tuesday", experimental sketches. Roger Fry's Vision and Design,
- 1922 Jacob's Room, first novel published by the Hogarth Press, henceforth her regular publisher; also accepted by Harcourt, Brace.
- 1925 The Common Reader First Series and Mrs. Dalloway. The Hogarth Press moves to London.
- 1927 To the Lighthouse.
- 1928 Orlando;
- 1929 A Room of One's Own.
- 1931 The Waves.

- 1932 The Common Reader : Second Series.
- 1933 Flush : A Biography.
- 1936 Completion of The Years: near breakdown.
- 1937 The Years. Death of her nephew, Julian Bell, in the Spanish Civil War.
- 1938 Three Guineas.
- 1940 Roger Fry : A Biography. The first draft of Between the Acts completed, February 26.
- 1941 Death by drowning, March 28, in the River Ouse.
- 1969 Death of Leonard Woolf.
- Posthumously Published Works.
- 1941 Between the Acts.
- 1942 Death of the Moth and Other Essays.
- 1943 A Haunted House and Other Short Stories.
- 1947 The Moment and Other Essays.
- 1950 The Captain's Death-Bed and Other Essays.
- 1953 A Writer's Diary.
- 1956 Letters : Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey.
- 1958 Granite and Rainbow : Essays.
- 1965 Contemporary Writers.

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## Unit 2 Graham Greene's A Gun for Sale

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### Structure

- 2.1 Introduction and Biography
- 2.2 A Gun for Sale - Greene's Label; Entertainment
- 2.3 Comparison with the Thriller Form
- 2.4 Greenland
- 2.5 Catholicism
- 2.6 Language, Style, Technique
- 2.7 Conclusion
- 2.8 Select Readings
- 2.9 Sample questions

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### 2.1 Introduction and Biography

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Though by the end of the twentieth century, Graham Greene is being acknowledged as one of the most important writers in English, even in 1959, it was quite usual to categorise Greene as a “minor writer”. The *Pelican Guide to English Literature*, first published in 1959 and reprinted several times in the sixties, seventies and eighties includes an essay with the title “Novelists of Three Decades : Evelyn Waugh, Graham Green, C.P. Snow” and discusses the three as “minor writers”. In more recent evaluations, Greene is being recognised as “almost certainly the most distinguished English novelist writing today [this was written in 1984], A book on his fiction needs no excuse.” William Golding predicts, “He will be read and remembered as the ultimate twentieth-century chronicler of consciousness and anxiety.” Evelyn Waugh calls Greene “a story-teller of genius.”

Graham Greene's life holds a certain fascination for readers of his novels, partly because he himself has stressed the crucial importance of childhood experiences in the life of an adult individual. In an essay, “The Young Dickens”, Greene writes that the creative writer “perceives his world once and for all in childhood and adolescence.” In his autobiography, *A Sort of Life*, Greene says that his formative years consisted of “flight, rebellion and misery during those first sixteen years when the novelist is

formed.” This idea is echoed in various ways throughout Greene’s writings. Writing about the author H.H. Munroe in *The Lost Childhood*, Greene says,

There are certain writers, as different as Dicknes from Kipling, who never shake off the burden of childhood ... All later experience seems to have been related to those months or years of un-happiness. Life which turns its cruel side to most of us at an age when we have begun to learn the arts of self-protection took these two writers by surprise during the defencelessness of early childhood.

In the novel *The Comedians*, one of the characters reflects :

For writers it is always said that the first twenty years of life contain the whole experience-the rest is observation, but I think it is equally true of all of us.

Given Greene’s emphasis on the influence of childhood on the writer, it is perhaps only fitting to know something about his life, and especially his early life.

Greene was born on 2nd October, 1904 into a fairly successful middle class family. His father was the Headmaster of an Anglican public school, Berkhamsted in Southern England. He was the fourth child in a family of six. It is perhaps a measure of the Greene’s family position that Graham’s brothers and sisters too were quite successful in their chosen fields of work, with the possible exception of an elder brother, Herbert. Raymond, Graham’s eldest brother, became a distinguished doctor and a serious mountaineer who was part of many thrilling expeditions. His younger brother Hugh became the Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation while Elisabeth, Graham’s younger sister, joined the Secret Intelligence Service and later married a colleague who held several important positions in the Service. This gives an impression of a solid, secure professional middleclass background for Graham Greene. Descriptions in his autobiography also seem to suggest a childhood filled with a cheerful family, children’s parties, teas on the lawn and holidays in his uncle’s large mysterious house and garden. For most children, this life could have been quite happy and undisturbed, but Graham, with the sensitivity of an artist, was deeply influenced by several of the circumstances of his early life. Of these the most important, perhaps, has been the experience of being a student in his father’s school, Being the Headmaster’s son in a boarding school for 500 boys cannot have been an easy experience for any one. On the one hand, the boys would instantly distrust such a boy, while the father too would expect his son to report any knowledge about the

boys. Caught between these two sets of expectations, Graham was miserable throughout his school days where he was often bullied and tortured in various ways by his school mates. This torture was made to feel even more intense as he knew that his family and shelter lay just on the other side of green door-the door that separated the living quarters of the *family* from the school premises. The green baize door crops up again and again in Greene's fiction as a significant dividing line between two worlds. In the novel *The Ministry of Fear* there appears

. . .the green baize door he had never seen opened, and beyond that door lay the sick bay. He was back in his own childhood, breaking out of the dormitory, daring more than he really wanted to dare, proving himself. He hoped the door would be bolted on the other side; then there would be nothing he could do but creep back to bed, honour satisfied...

The atmosphere of the hostel itself with "noisy, smelly dormitories, shared lavatories, and the total lack of privacy" was a profoundly unhappy experience for the young boy. In the opinion of many critics, the sense of divided allegiances, the bullying that he faced, the remoteness of his parents and the lack of a sense of belonging during his school days gave Graham Greene one of the recurrent themes of his later works. In the words of Roger Sharrock, before this period

He had not known before that there existed in the same house rooms so grim as those he now had to live in [as a student]. A green baize door led across the frontier to worn stairs, ink-stained desks, and rooms insufficiently warmed; the dormitory was divided by pitch-pine partitions that gave inadequate privacy, and his account dwells on the violation of quiet in the nights interrupted by coughing, snoring and farting. . . The recurring theme of his writing is the narrowness of the barrier separating the ordinary from the dramatically significant, and therefore, the world being what it is, the ordinary from the sinister, the skull beneath the skin.

This deep sense of unease led to the period in the young adolescent's life when he entertained thoughts of suicide and even, according to his autobiography, played Russian Roulette, in which he would turn the chambers of a gun containing one bullet and put the gun to his head and pull the trigger. Fate and chance would determine whether he should live or die.

Eventually, his parents sent him to stay with a practising psychologist, Smith Richmond, when he was fifteen and that seems to have helped him regain some balance in life. During this period he also met through Richmond, a wide literary circle. Later he went to Oxford University to study modern history and while there met Vivienne, whom he later married. In 1925, Greene joined the *Nottingham Journal* as an unpaid assistant. While working hard to gain practical experience working on a newspaper, he was drawn to Father George Trollope at Nottingham Cathedral and converted to Roman Catholicism in 1926. He was soon offered a job as a sub-editor in *The Times* in London and married Vivienne.

Meanwhile he had written two novels which were rejected by publishers. His third manuscript was published by Heinemann in 1932, and inspired by the success of this novel, he resigned from his job and became a full-time writer. Unfortunately, his next two novels were unsuccessful, both in commercial terms and critical terms. The next novel he wrote was his first major success *Stamboul Train* which was written with the intention of pleasing the public. This is the first novel in which some of the themes which were to become the major preoccupations of the writer are explored.

Because of his conversion and his preoccupation with religious and ethical issues in several of his later novels, there has always been a tendency to read Graham Greene's as a "Catholic writer". Greene himself has, however, consistently resisted any attempts to pigeon-hole him as a "Catholic writer". In an essay "Why Do I Write?" Greene defends the fact that a novelist's integrity depended on his loyalty to his trade as a writer. In political terms, this meant that it was a writer's duty to be "a piece of grit in the machinery of state"; in moral terms, it meant being "Allowed to write from the point of view of the black/square as well as the white" and as a Catholic, he was saved as an artist by his "disloyalty". By this he meant that in his novels, he refused to accept the easy theological solutions to moral and ethical dilemmas offered by orthodox religious teachings. Towards the end of his career, Greene was calling himself a "Catholic agnostic" and even a "Catholic atheist". It is however true that most of his novels deal with moral and ethical crises of individual characters and contemporary society.

One of the reasons that Graham Greene is now increasingly being recognised as one of the major literary figures in English literature is that in his writings, he captures many of the myths that have come to dominate the post-World War II period in much of the West and especially in England. One example of these contributions to contemporary myth-making includes the choice of the hero as a middle-aged person is itself a shift in focus from the young men (and sometimes women) of Joyce

or D.H. Lawrence who are searching for ideals in life. In Greene the reader is more likely to find a middle-aged person already caught in a tedious life with very little escape from a routine; meaningless pattern who is suddenly and melodramatically forced into a situation where he has to face his true identity and real moral values in a new set of realities. Greene seems to capture in his novels the mood of England and English society in the post War period. In this world, the sense of despair and the inevitability of betrayal dominates. Characters move in a seedy world where alienation and boredom are the overwhelming impulses left to most individuals. Yet his many novels set in places outside England-in such apparently exotic locations as Mexico, Liberia, Vietnam, Cuba and other places in world-suggest that this sense of despair and hopelessness and confused moral worlds is not confined to the Western world. On the contrary, the implication of his body of work seems to suggest that the so-called barbarism of Africa or Latin America can be easily paralleled in the suburbs of England.

Graham Greene died in 1991 leaving behind a vast variety of writings which include the novels, travelogues, film criticism, film scripts, plays, collections of short stories and his autobiography (incomplete). He received several prizes for his novels and world wide acclaim from all over the world.

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## 2.2 A Gun for Sale-Greene's Label : Entertainment

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A Gun for Sale was first published in 1936, during the years of the economic depression in the capitalist countries of the world. It was originally categorised by Greene as an "entertainment" as opposed to the novels that he wrote. Greene has said.

The strain of writing a novel, which keeps the author confined for a period of years with his depressive self, is extreme, and I have always sought relief in "entertainments"-for melodrama as much as farce is an expression of a manic mood.

However, he himself later abandoned these categories by the end of his career. Greene's term, "entertainment" is itself misleading. The novels which were originally published as "entertainments" are *Stamboul Train* (1932), *A Gun for Sale* (1936), *The Confidential Agent* (1939), *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol* (1950) *Loser Takes All* (1955) and *Our Man in Havana* (1958). While it is true that all these novels are written on the structure of a thriller with the emphasis on crime, murder, intrigue, espionage, pursuit, escape, war and other such

melodramatic devices, the style and tone are distinctly different from that of the typical thriller.

When writing about the literary influences on his own career, Greene mentions a rather strange set of writers. It is important to note Greene's own admission that while he read all the usual classics, the books which "really influenced" him were novels of adventure and this list includes adventure story writers Rider Haggard, R. L. Stevenson, thriller writer John Buchan, the adventure stories of Joseph Conrad and many others whose names are omitted in literary histories. The one book that he has singled out amongst these is an obscure melodrama called *The Viper of Melon*. In an often quoted passage, Greene says that when he read this at the age of fourteen, he realised that he wanted to write —"All the other possible futures slid away: the potential civil servant, the don, the clerk had to look for other incarnations;" The reason this book had such a great influence on him was that, unlike the other adventure books that he had read, in this one characters not portrayed in conventional black and white terms, but as black and grey, "and I looked around and saw it was so."

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### 2.3 Comparison with the Thriller Form

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The plot of *A Gun for Sale* is superficially similar to that of a typical thriller, coincidence and melodrama help to hold together a plot which combines assassination, pursuit of the criminal, betrayal, revenge and the helpless heroine with a golden heart. As in many typical thrillers, here too a single incident can trigger a war on an international scale. However, what prevents his novel from becoming merely entertainment is the way in which Greene twists and plays with the stereotypes and stereotypical elements to unsettle the typical moral simplicity of the thriller form.

The character of Ravan is itself drastically different from the glamorous heroes who usually inhabit the pages of thrillers such as James Bond. Here Raven is presented as more of a victim than a criminal. His harelip has left him with a deep sense of rejection and he has come to expect revulsion from any one who sees him. This physical scar seems to be, however, merely a physical manifestation of a deeper psychological scar that has its roots in his family background and his childhood. He remembers quite often that his father was hanged and the scene of his mother's suicide returns to haunt him as the most horrible scene in his life. He reassures himself that the killings and criminal activities that he has been involved in are never as cruel or thoughtless or gruesome as the scene his mother created for him when he was a child. He thinks to himself:

He'd done some ugly things in his life, he told himself, but he'd never been able to equal that ugliness. Someday he would. His idea of home is of a place of suffering, not of love or happiness. He was brought up in 'one of His Majesty's own homes.'

More than sorrow at his mother's death, Raven feels completely rejected by the fact that she did not even bother to close the door and protect her son from the sight of her cut throat.

In the character of Raven, Greene uses some of his basic assumptions about human character that have been mentioned above; that the childhood experiences of a person determine the kind of adult that the child will grow up to be. Several critics have mentioned that the childhoods of Greene's protagonists are fundamentally different from the typical wordsworthian notion of childhood as a blissful, innocent phase in one's life. Raven tries to explain this to Anne :

It was like you carry a load around with you; you were born with some of it because of what your father and mother were and their fathers—seems as if it goes right back, like it says in the Bible about the sins being visited. Then when you're a kid the load gets bigger: all the things you need to do and can't, and then all the things you do. They get you either way.

It seems that a life of cruelty and crime was the inevitable end for one with a family childhood such as Raven's.

Once an orphan, Raven is brought up in a series of government establishments and foster homes. Yet, his physical deformity marks him out as unacceptable and despite his intelligence, he never has a chance to become a normal human being. Alienated, bitter and full of resentment, Raven inevitably turns to a life of crime as an adult.

While the opening paragraphs depict Raven as a ruthless murderer who kills only for money, gradually Greene begins to disturb our easy characterisation of Raven as an evil man. In Chapter 3 when Raven meets the so-called choimondeley, the reader is made to realise that the fat, jovial man with a passion for eating sweet things is more evil than Raven can ever be. His inability and refusal to even face the facts of murder make him false. Even Raven realises the hypocrisy of calling the people ordered the murder "clients." 'Choimondeley' refuses to let Raven describe the death of the old woman. He says, "I take no responsibility" and this abdication of responsibility itself is a grave sin in the world of Graham Greene.

Even more alienation is yet to come Raven's way. He is used to people responding to him with revulsion, as Raven has "been fed the poison from boyhood drop by drop: he hardly noticed its bitterness now." However, he is still surprised when he

overhears the landlord and others describe him to the police. "He told himself with surprise: they hate me." He is even more astonished when he learns that he has been paid for the murder in stolen notes and now the police are looking for him because they suspect him of robbery, not murder. Raven's sense of justice is violated, as he feels betrayed by his employers. Yet even at this moment, Greene does not allow the reader a simple equation regarding justice. Immediately Alice, like Raven a physically deformed person, poor and unloved, lashes out at him: " 'You don't need to talk about justice,' she said. 'Driving me like I was in prison. Hitting me when you feel like it. Spilling ash all over the floor. I've got enough to do with your slops. Milk in the soap dish. Don't talk about justice.' " It is only then that Raven even notices her as a human being with feelings and emotions. Caught up in his own world of misery and hatred, he has failed to empathise with another person as miserable and benighted as himself. At her outburst, "Pressed against him in the tiny dark box she suddenly came alive to him." Even the one creature for whom Raven shows any sympathy, the kitten in his room, tries to bite his finger as Raven tries to help it.

Thus, the conventional notions of the "good" and "bad" in a typical thriller are destabilised. Gradually, Greene makes the reader sympathise with Raven as he is continually betrayed, by even the "lawless" like Dr. Yogel. This sympathy is largely created through Greene's description of Raven's encounter with the goodhearted and innocent young girl Anne Crowder. She is the first person Raven has ever met who is not repelled by Raven's physical ugliness, and she seems to respond to him with a simple, uncomplicated kindness. The experience of goodness touches the ice in Raven's heart and he confesses his criminal actions to Anne. Anne is horrified by Raven's confession to the murder of the Minister that is likely to trigger a war, but she promises not to betray him. She cannot, however, keep her word, and as Raven dies, he knows that even the one person he had trusted had betrayed him. As he faces his death Raven has lost his ultimate illusion:

With despair and deliberation he shot his last chance of escape, plugged two bullets in where one could do, as if he were shooting the whole world in the person of stout moaning bleeding Mr. Davis. And so he was. For a man's world is his life and he was shooting that: his mother's suicide, the long years in the home, the race course gangs, Kite's death and the old man's and the old woman's. There was no other way: he had tried the way of confession, and it had failed him for the usual reason. There was no one outside your own brain whom you could trust: not a doctor, not a priest, not a woman.

And he asks himself: "How could he have expected to have escaped the commonest betrayal of all: to go soft on a skirt?" Thus, by the end of the novel, Greene arouses sympathy for this character who seems at the beginning to be so unsympathetic.

In contrast, Mather, the policeman who is on the trail of Raven, is a confident man who finds in the police force the sense of order and security that he needs for himself and, he believes for society. He is content that:

...he was part of an organisation. He did not want to be a leader, he did not even wish to give himself up to some God-sent fanatic of a leader, he killed to feel that he was one of thousand more or less equal working for a concrete end—not equality of opportunity, not government by the people or by the richest or by the best, but simply to do away with crime which meant uncertainty. He like to be certain, to feel that one day quite inevitably he would marry Anne Crowder.

He is an unimaginative man, drawn to action and not to ideals or ideology. Therefore, when later he realises that Anne is somehow mixed up in this affair, he finds it difficult to understand and sympathise with her. His rather native and mechanical goodness which is devoid of ideology is also in sharp contrast to the typical hero of the thriller who takes risks of the gravest kind in order to uphold patriotism or ideology.

Other stock or stereotyped notions that are found in the thriller include the notion of betrayal and justice. In this novel, there are various levels of justice and betrayal. Raven, though a criminal, has a code of decency which is violated again and again. Everyone around him betrays him- the landlord, Davis, Acky and eventually Anne. But this is the pattern of his life. This leads to a pervasive sense of injustice in the novel. Justice involves adherence to a set of values, but repeatedly in this novel, the characters act to deny the existence of any values. In this bleak novels, values do not exist in the abstract or in the concrete. Even minor characters like Acky, the demented priest, suffers from a sense of injustice as he feels he has been wrongly accused of sin when he was serving in the Church. The chorus girl Ruby who makes a date with Davis in the hope of a good steak and onions dinner at the Metropole feels betrayed when he does not show up. Even when the novel ends with the death of the villains— Marcus, Davis and Raven— there remains a sense of unfairness and despair which is very different from the "sweetness and light" ending of traditional thrillers. In typical thrillers, the evil characters are laid to rest with a cheer and the good emerge as unequivocal heroes. Here there are no real heroes : Anne and Mather are good,

but in a very limited way and seem insignificant when compared to the international forces of war, capitalism and terrorism. Ewei Mather's capture of Raven is accidental and coincidental. Thus there is no clear triumph of good over evil as exists in the thriller.

The real villain of the action is found to be Sir Marcus Stein, the steel factory owner who is trying to instigate the war for his own business gains. In this twist to the tale, Greene also twists the structure of the novel from that of a conventional thriller. While the chase or pursuit structure where the police are pursuing Raven—though for the wrong reasons—and Raven is pursuing the real criminals. Greene creates a situation in which the reader wishes that Raven can complete his pursuit of Sir Marcus and Davis before he is apprehended by the police. The focus of the novel is not the way in which the police is hunting down the criminal, Raven, but the way in which Raven is hunting down Davis and discovering the identity of Stein.

One of the reasons for the great popularity of Greene's novels is this blending of a popular genre of literature—the thriller—with the morbid sensibility of the late twentieth century.

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## 2.4 Greeneland

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One of characteristics of the world of Graham Greene is that the crucial drama of sinning, redemption, the possibilities and failures of such redemption of the characters are played out against a bleak, decaying and sordid background. A thriller or melodrama or travelogue is normally set in exotic locations where the pleasures of the surroundings account for part of the reading pleasure. Greene consistently rejects this world of glamour for the seediness and blight of civilisation—whether that of modern Europe or colonial Africa or revolution torn Latin America. This world is the world of *A Gun for Sale* too.

In *Ways of Escape*, Greene recalls that:

Nottwich, of course, is Nottingham where... I lived for three winter months with a mongrel terrier, working in the evenings as a trainee on the Nottingham Journal. I don't know why a certain wry love of Nottingham lodged in my imagination rather as a love of Freetown was to do later. It was the furthest north I had ever been, the first strange city in which I had made a home, alone, without friends.

Perhaps the fact that he was an outsider allowed Greene to describe the sordid town with the seedy areas as well as the more affluent localities with the poetic language of the novel. Evelyn Waugh summarises this landscape well : Greene's "technical mastery has never been better manifested than in his statement of the scene-the sweat and infection, the ill-built town which is beautiful for a few minutes at sundown, the brothel where all men are equal, the vultures, the snobbery of the second-class public schools, the law which all can evade, the ever-present haunting underworld of gossip, spying, bribery, violence and betrayal." Because this is the locale against which Greene's characters live out their lives regardless of the geographical location, these locales have been given the name "Greeneland". This term implies that the backgrounds of the novels really project, not an objective reality, but a mythical landscape, distorted by Greene's view of life.

Certainly in this novel, the background serves to heighten the effects of the novel. Though the plot would suggest a glamorous locale for assassination, intrigue and pursuit, Greene creates a world exactly the opposite. In addition, the novel is set in the end of December when the towns are wearing a festive look in preparation for Christmas. Yet instead of injecting a note of gaiety, the tinsel decorations and plaster representations of the birth of Christ only seem cheap and tawdry.

The scene of the murder itself is bare, solitary, sad. . . .his [Raven's] eyes again photographed the scene, the single bed, the wooden chair, the dusty chest of drawers, a photograph of a young Jew with a small scar on his chin as if he had been struck there with a club, a pair of brown wooden hairbrushes initialled J.K., everywhere cigarette ash : the home of an old lonely untidy -man; the home of the Minister for War.

Similarly the introduction of Anne and Mather is equally seedy. The bus is described as a "Bright small smoky cage above the streets", the snow fall is compared to falling like paper scraps into the dark Thames." When Raven leaves Dr Yogel's chamber his "dark loneliness of spirit" has already been reflected in the "dingy" room, with its single naked bulb which is almost bare of furniture and is stained and dirty. Women in the background seem to be either "big breasted women" whose children are busy playing in the gutter, or the girl who "might have been any age from twenty to forty, a parody of a woman, dirty and depraved, crouched under the most lovely figure, the most beautiful vacant faces the smut photographers could hire" or the "tart who ambles by". Yet it is not poverty that creates this desolated landscape. It is", as Greene says later in the novel, "something worse than the meanness of poverty, the

meanness of spirit.” That is why even one of the most expensive hotels in Nottwich seems equally repulsive with its red and yellow stone and clock tower, the sculpted figures in the windows-“all the historic worthies of Nottwich stood in stiff neo-Gothic attitudes, from Robin Hood up to the Mayor of Nottwich in 1864”, the blue ceiling with stars painted on it, supported by pillars painted in green and gold. This represents not poverty, but an inability to conceive of beauty, a failure of imagination. This landscape really portrays Greene’s vision of contemporary reality. There are detailed descriptions of the waste and ugly byproducts of civilisation, like the smell of decaying fish emitted by the glue factory, or the dirty blackness of the railway shed where Raven holds Anne hostage.

In this world, the sun never shines : it is always dim, gloomy with fog or dust or the action takes place at night. This also adds to the overall atmosphere of dreary hopelessness that looms over all the characters. Chapter 3 begins : “There was no dawn that day in Nottwich. Fog lay over the city like a night sky with no stars.”

In *A Gun for Sale*, the sense of doom is heightened by the threat of war. The scene that Anne sees as she is walking into the theatre makes her pause. She see the streets full of people watching the bulbs spelling out the news. The “silent crowd” was afraid. “The white faces were turned towards the sky with a kind of secular entreaty; they weren’t praying to any God; they were just willing that the electric bulbs would tell a different story. They were caught there, on the way back from work, with tools and attache case, by the rows of bulbs, spelling out complications they simply did not understand.” There are other descriptions of the helplessness that the people on the street felt when the reality of a war they did not want, did not wish for, did not understand was being thrust upon them by the machinations of big businessmen and political events.

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## 2.5 Catholicism

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No discussion of Graham Greene is complete without some mention of Greene’s religious beliefs. Though religion does not play an important role in this novel, Greene’s more mature work deals with moral choices that characters make under stress and the pressure of strange, unanticipated events. Greene himself sees Raven as a rough sketch for Pinkie, the protagonist of *Brighton Rock*, his first overth Catholic novel. However, Greene says, in 1938, shortly after the publication of *A Gun for Sale*, taht “murder, if you are going to treat it seriously at all is a religious subject” and a fellow Catholic writer Praises Greene for detecting “the hidden presence

of God in an atheistic world” Greene himself asserts that “creative art seems to remain a function of the religious mind.”

A *Gun for Sale* has been read in allegorical terms. Raven like all allegorical characters, is devoid of family or class. He is an alien. The criminal world which he inhabits has been seen as a metaphor for the fallen world in which violence, treachery, brutality and anarchy reign. Opposed to this is the system of organised justice. In this world, Raven is initially merely an instrument of violence, unthinking, cruel and with a splinter of ice in his breast. In the course of seeking out justice, he begins to act independently and for the first time in his life, trusts another person-Anne. At the beginning, he is totally lacking in imagination, but suffering injustice and pain himself, he reaches a kind of redemption. The ice in his heart has melted somewhat. The bitterness and sourness has left him to be replaced by a sense of weariness. The repeated references to religion such as the Christmas carols played by the Church bells and the image of the baby Jesus lying in his mother’s arms make religion a palpable presence in the novel. The phrase Ah, Christ! that it were possible is almost like a dying prayer and seems to be deliberately introduced by Greene just as Raven takes his revenge and prepares himself for death. By associating Raven with a Christ-like figure, the narrative leaves us with a sense of unfulfillment at the end of the novel though there is an establishment of poetic justice. The religious overtones colour the conclusion by including a complex moral framework where a neat, unambiguous sense of right and wrong is undermined.

Instead of rituals and the observation of ceremony as religious feeling, Greene stresses the need for empathy. He says, “The great abstractions of the Faith rattle emptily in my mind. I Cannot grasp them until they have been given tangible human form, because we must see the marks of the nails and put our hands into the wounds before we can understand” In this novel, Greene definitely succeeds in creating a sense of sympathy for the twisted killer who hires out his gun, and this is in itself an act of faith. Pico Iyer writes :

It is, in fact, the ultimate strength of Greene’s books that he shows us the hazards of compassion. We all know, from works like *Hamlet*, how analysis is paralysis and the ability to see every side of every issue prevents us from taking any side at all. The tragic import of Greene’s work is that understanding can do the same : he could so easily see the pain of the people he was supposed to punish that he could not bear to come down hard on them.

Greene’s Catholicism does not follow conventional patterns of morality.

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## 2.6 Language, Style, Technique

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Though an important twentieth century writer, Greene has little connection with the modernist movement of James Joyce or Virginia Woolf. Kenneth Allott stresses the metaphorical nature of Greene's language and images. Colours, descriptions and details are not used by the writer as a self-indulgence; rather they add to the building of the moral landscape of the novel.

Graham Greene's technique is often cinematic in nature. He remained a film critic through much of his life and even several wrote film scripts. The influence of cinema can be seen in several of his narrative techniques. The importance of detail in building up a mood using a sequence of impressionistic scenes is one lesson that Greene seems to have mastered. The most dramatic use of these techniques can be seen in the scene when Raven hides with Anne in the railway shed. The dark outlines of the sheds, the drama of the lit match held close to Raven's disfigured lip, sounds of the engines, the swirling of the yellow fog, the whispered confidences shared—all these features exploit techniques that Greene seems to have learnt from watching the Hollywood and European films of the time.

Greene also often uses the film technique of montage as he juxtaposes fragments of various conversations and actions to create a mood. The fragments of life that Greene describes as Raven is watching for Davis outside the newsagent's shop is a typical example of this technique. Fragments of conversations are pre-sented in a way that is deliberately confusing, yet add to the overall theme of the novel. One conversation is about the humaneness of the assassinated War Minister, while significantly the other is about Galsworthy's play, *Loyalties*. This is woven in with the visual scenes of the paper eater, the girl and boy who looked happy, etc. The audio-visual scenes of the paper eater, the girl and boy who looked happy, etc. The audio-visual nature of representing the time that Raven has spent waiting for Davis is an example of the influence of cinematic techniques on Greene's writing style.

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## 2.7 Conclusion

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This novel is one of Greene's earlier novels. Yet it remains a readable and relevant novel even today. Part of the strength lies in the plot that Greene handles with great craftsmanship. By using the structure of the thriller, Greene retains the suspense of a tightly-woven, dramatic set of actions. Yet, Greene's own bleak vision of twentieth

century society colours the novel to make it much more than a mere action novel. This novel is one of Greene's earlier successes, but the themes that have remained central to Greene's work are articulated with great success in *A Gun for Sale*.

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## 2.8 Select Readings

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[A cheap edition of *A Gun for Sale* is available in Penguins.]

Allot, Kenneth & Farris, Miriam *The Art of Graham Greene* : 1951

Hynes, Samuel (ed) *Graham Greene : A Collection of Critical Essays* : 1973

Lodge, David *Graham Greene* : 1966

Sharrock, Roger *Saints, Sinners and Comedians* 1984

O'Prey, Paul *A Reader's Guide to Graham Greene* 1988

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## 2.9 Sample Questions

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### Long answers

1. Discuss with reference to *A Gun for Sale*, the methods used by Greene to make this novel more than a thriller.
2. Examine the use of the thriller structure and other features of the thriller in *A Gun for Sale*.
3. Do you agree with the view that Raven is more sinned against than sinner himself in *A Gun for Sale*?

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## **Unit-3 Ernest Hemingway : “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”**

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### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Unit Introduction**

#### **3.1 Study Guide**

##### **3.2.0 The Author**

##### **3.2.1 Other Works of the Author**

##### **3.2.2 Questions**

##### **3.2.3 Hemingway on the art of the short story**

##### **3.2.4 The Green Hills of Africa - materials for the stories**

##### **3.2.5 Questions**

#### **3.3.0 Introduction to the text (The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber)**

##### **3.3.1 Summary of the Story**

##### **3.3.2 The Plot**

##### **3.3.3 Critical Analysis**

##### **3.4.1 The motif of the Story**

##### **3.4.2 Narrative Technique**

##### **3.4.3 The Ambiguous Ending**

##### **3.4.4 Questions**

#### **3.5.0 Characterization**

##### **3.5.1 Margot Macomber - Prototype for Hemingway’s American “bitch”**

##### **3.5.2 Wilson, the yardstick figure**

##### **3.5.3 Francis and Margot Macomber : Character delineation**

##### **3.5.4 Conclusion**

#### **3.6.0 Glossary**

##### **3.6.1 Comprehension Exercises**

##### **Suggestions for Further Reading**

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### 3.0 Unit Introduction

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The main objective of this unit is to introduce you to the rich tradition of American Literature which grew out of the impact of European civilisation upon its developing American frontier may back in the seventeenth century. The 1920s in many ways may be regarded as the richest decade in American Literature. During this period, the New England Renaissance produced Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. Herman Melville's Moby Dicu. Henay David thoroue's walden and wait whitman's Leaves of Grass, all followed close upon the heels of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essays. During this time fiction sevged to a new importance. Before the decade was over Sinclair Lewis got the Nobel Prize for Literature, the first American ever to receive that Worldwide recognition. This was hailed as a recognition of American Literature in the World scene. Though Ernest Hemingway did not receive the Nobel Prize until 1954, the 20's also gave Hemingway an increasingly important stature as a writer with individuality and power. It is from that time that Hemingway captured the imagination of a generation of readers and writers in America and around the World more completely than has any other literary figure of the 20<sup>th</sup>c. Hemingway as a represectative American writer expresses all that is truely American in his writings. He is an author who speaks for his nation, the one in whose works his nation and culture write themselves and are embodied and recreated. In this particular unit we are going to study one of Hemingway's numerous short stories and trace how America re-lives itself in Hemingway's works, even though the setting of the story is in the green hills of Africa.

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### 3.1 Study Guide

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You Should read the background and introductory notes at first. Also, you should read the original text first and then get back to the notes for textual analysis. At the end do work out the comprehension exercises. If necessary, you can also go through the reading list for supplementary analytical material on the text.

#### 3.2.0 The Author

Ernest Millce Hemingway was born on July 21,1898, the son of a doctor, at Oak Park Illinois, an upper class suburb of Chicago. His boyhood and youth were active, athletic, involved in vacalious of hunting and fishing in the Michigan north woods.

Graduating from Oak Park High School he went to join the Army, but was rejected because of an eye injury he had received in boxing. He eventually went to work as a journalist instead of attending college. After this brief journalistic sojourn he finally went into military service during World War I and saw intensive combat in Italy, got severely wounded on the Italian front and was decorated for valour. He again entered newspaper work, reporting on the Greco-Turkish war in 1920, and working as Paris Correspondent.

In Paris Hemingway became a part of the artistic circle around Gertrude Stein and the friend of the many American Writers who had, as if were, exiled themselves in Southern Europe. In 1923, he published his first volume of works -Three Stories and Ten Poems. Two volumes of his short stories, In Our Time (1924) and Men Without Women (1927) and his first important novel The Sun Also Rises (1926) marked him as an outstanding writer. He reached one successful peak after another of critical and popular acclaim with two war novels, A Farewell to Arms (1929) and For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940).

Hemingway made himself a legend and his publication of a new novel was an event. "Papa Hemingway" became a cult figure. He was proud of his manhood, his literary and athletic skills, his recuperative powers, his self-reliance, his wit, his poetry and all that made the myth of Papa Hemingway. A fierce individualist, he loved to drink, hunt and gamble. He loved beautiful women, the company of trusted friends, bullfights, boxing, rivalry and rebellion. When he won the Nobel Prize in 1954 (generally applauded as long his due), Time Magazine reported the news under Heroes rather than Books and went on to describe the author as "a globe-trotting expert on bullfights, booze, women, wars, big game hunting, deep sea-fishing and courage". Yet he was a temperamental manic-depressive, an inveterate hypochondriac who spoke seriously of suicide at intervals throughout his life. His personality, with all its splendour and mystery lovers over the literature of the world even after his suicide by use of one of his own favourite guns on 2nd July 1961.

### **3.2.1 Other Works of Hemingway**

1923 First Publication Three Stories and Ten Poems

1924 In Our Time, thirty-two pages of miniatures Published in Paris.

- 1925 In Our Time. U.S. Edition, contains fourteen short stories plus miniatures of the Paris Edition.
- 1926 Torrents of Spring, The Sun Also Rises
- 1927 Men Without Women (Collection of fourteen short stories)
- 1929 A Farewell to Arms, the first commercially successful novel. It is a love story, against the background of the First World War.
- 1932 Death in the Afternoon, a non-fiction on bullfights.
- 1933 Winner Take Nothing a collection of fourteen stories.
- 1935 Green Hills of Africa
- 1937 To Have and Have Not.
- 1938 The Fifth Column and First Forty-Nine Stories,
- 1940 For Whom the Bell Tolls
- 1942 Men at War, a collection of war stories and accounts edited with an introduction by Hemingway himself.
- 1950 Across the River and Into the Trees September
- 1952 The Old Man and the Sea This novel brought him the Nobel Prize in October next year, cited-for a forceful and style-making mastery of the art of modern narration.

Posthumous Publications :

- 1964 A Moveable Feast
- 1969 The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War.
- 1985 The Dangerous Summer
- 1986 The Garden of Eden
- 1987 The Complete Stories of Ernest Hemingway. The Finca Vigia Edition.
- 1999 Publication of True at First Light. A Fictional Memoir ed. by Patrick Hemingway as a centennial tribute.

### 3.2.2 Questions

1. What-ideas do you get about Hemingway's varied experiences of life from notes on the author?
2. Which book got him the Nobel Prize? What was his contribution to 20th century fiction?

### 3.2.3 Hemingway on the art of the short story

In March 1959, Ernest Hemingway's publisher, Charles Scribner, Jr., suggested putting together a student's edition of the author's short stories and also suggested that Hemingway write a Preface for classroom use. Hemingway liked the idea and composed an essay on "The Art of the short story" during his stay in Spain in May & June while following a bullfight competition. In this essay Hemingway makes a few very important statements about the technique of writing a short story- "The test of any story is how very good the stuff is that you, not your editors, omit, "But you have to know where to stop. That is what makes a short story. Makes it short at least".

As far as the subject matter is concerned - the idea for the story always came from the experiences of his own life and the people whom he knew. Hemingway's fiction begins with the actual, but his goal was not merely to reproduce actuality. His mind was a receptacle for storing feeling, phrases, images. And he believed that circumstances had to be right for the new combinations to occur in the form, of a story.

### 3.2.4 The Green Hills of Africa - materials for the stories

In December 1933 Hemingway went for a safari (see class) in Africa which lasted for four months. Although Hemingway's African adventure did not produce a novel, it did produce a book-Green Hills of Africa (1935). The narrative was not hailed as a success. It was frankly experimental. "The writer" says the forward, "has attempted to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a man's action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of imagination". But, the book written in the first person narrative immediately after the safari failed to capture & recreate the essence of his African experience. By 1936, however he had achieved the necessary objectivity, irony and self-scrutiny to transmute his hunting expedition into two undisputed masterpieces : "The Short Happy Life of

Francis Macomber” and “The snows of Kilimanjaro”. These two African short stories erased the doubts that had crept into the mind of many observers about Hemingway’s career after the publication of Green Hills of Africa.

### 3.2.5 Questions

1. In which book did Hemingway record his African experience. What was his opinion about the book ?
2. Did the African Safari produce any major literary work ?

### 3.3.0 Introduction to the Text

The two African stories appeared almost as companion pieces. “The snows of Kilimanjaro” first appeared in the August 1936 issue of Esquire. The next month “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” appeared in Cosmopolitan. They were later published in the collection -The first Forty-nine stories in 1938. In both stories the protagonist dies at the end ; both are studies of living and especially of the act of dying as the quintessence of living. The subjects are as old as Western thought & these two stories exemplify many of the traditional motifs in Western art.

Hemingway based “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” on a scandalous case of adultery and suicide that had been suppressed in the newspapers and white washed by the British Government. Like everyone else in Kenya, he was fascinated by the story, of a beautiful wife who had a love-affair with a hunter and was involved in the death of her husband. Hemingway heard this story and believing that fiction must be based on actual experience, he began with reality but produced something much more significant than the original facts.

### 3.3.1 Summary of the Story

Francis Macomber is a wealthy American businessman and sportsman, who comes to Africa for hunting in the Tanganyika plains with his wife. During the Safari he wrestles with problems relating to women, money and moral man-hood. The most outrageous of Hemingway’s fictional females, Margot Macomber seduces her husband’s money but values even more her power over him. Wilson is the Macombers’ paid white hunter, who is drawn very reluctantly into the emotional mess of a wrecked marriage. To Wilson, Margot exemplifies most of the American wives he has met in the course of his professional life. These women, he reflects, are “the hardest in the

world; the hardest, the crudest, the most predatory and the most attractive, and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened. The lion and the buffalo are vanquishable in a way that Margot is not.

The happy life of Francis Macomber begins on the plains of East Africa and lasts about thirty minutes. The tall handsome Macomber has previously disgraced himself before his wife, his British white hunter, and his gun-bearers, by ignominious flight from a wounded and charging lion. Besides the loss of his own self-respect, such as it was, his extreme mental torture includes the barbed and vicious scorn of his wife, the lifted eyebrows and unspoken insults of the white hunter Wilson, and the visible disapproval of the native boys in his entourage. After a night of torment, during which he is obliged to watch his wife sleepily returning from the Englishman's tent, the party goes after buffalo. Since the wife knows her husband for a coward, she seems to have him where she wants him, which is under her thumb.

Suddenly, in the midst of the second day's shooting and with the white hunter as an aid, Macomber loses his fear. His wife at once senses and hates this change because it undermines her power. But Wilson silently welcomes Macomber into manhood, and together they enter the tall grass after one of the wounded buffalo, leaving the wife behind them in the open car. Almost immediately the buffalo charges. Fearless and happy in its path stands Macomber, a coward no longer, reveling in his new-found self-trust, firing repeatedly until the buffalo is practically upon him. Then a bullet from the Mannlicher (gun), fired by his wife, flows through his skull from back to front and his short happy life is over.

### **3.3.2 The Plot**

The story, like most of Hemingway's short fiction, has few characters and episodes. It has three focal incidents, two of them major, and one minor: i) the lion hunt; ii) the buffalo hunt and iii) the quarrel in the intervening night between Macomber and his wife over her infidelity. Macomber disgraces himself during the lion hunt; he finds his manhood on the occasion of the buffalo hunt, for the first time in his life. In between comes the quarrel, which is a consequence of the first event, and hinting at the inherent power equation in the Maccombers' marriage, prepares the ground for the ending.

The details of the lion hunt are given in flashback, through the intense recollection of Macomber, as, lying in his cot, he relives the entire misery of the day, from the buildup of fear in him from the previous night, to the moment when, ignoring him

completely, his wife had leant forward, to kiss Wilson, who had just killed the lion. The episode, shown in flashback, but narrated extensively through dialogue and vivid details juxtaposing the consciousnesses of Wilson. Macomber and the lion, conveys the strength with which it is imprinted on Macomber's mind. The event of his running away with a loaded rifle in hand, was not merely a matter of momentary panic. It confronted him with a naked truth about himself—with all his wealth, all his success in sports like fishing, duck shooting, court games etc., he was a hollow man at the core of his existence.

The self-respect, the essential manhood which Macomber had never had in life, despite his worldly advantages, is almost miraculously born in him during the buffalo hunt. It manifests itself in the form of physical courage. All the three human characters in the story know what he achieves is not merely physical bravery. He tells his wife, "If you don't know what we are talking about why not keep out of it?" And she is afraid.

The strength he achieves challenges her power over him, threatening to end the way she had dominated their relationship. The previous night, after she had come back from Wilson's tent, her humiliated husband had said, "You think That I'll take anything." She had insouciantly replied, "I know you will, sweet." As she feels her power challenged, she decides to take desperate action (See 3.4.6 about the conclusion of the story).

The plot is tight-knit, economical, and highlights the characters through subdued but dramatic contrast. Psychological analysis of emotions and dramatic external action against the exotic background of an African safari coalesce seamlessly, leading on to the climactic death scene.

### **3.3.3 Critical Analysis**

"The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" easily qualifies as a study of a fortunate death. Hemingway's title makes clear, however, that he wishes to celebrate the life of Macomber. Macomber's death is, to be sure, a major part of the story. But he dies confident in his manhood. His death is clean and neat. The last words Macomber speaks in the story emphasize the triumph of his life. After Margot Macomber says, "You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly", her husband replies with "a very hearty laugh". "You know I have .... I really have." Although his wife suggests that the bravery is "sort of late", Macomber declares, "Not for me". Macomber is "cheerful" about going into the brush after the wounded bull. He has discovered

the feeling of happiness about action to come, one of the important motifs we find in *Green Hills of Africa*.

The great technical virtue of this story-and it was one of Hemingway's favourites possibly for this reason - is the development of an emotional intensity to a degree seldom approached in modern literature. The ragged feelings generated by the lion-incident and verbalised in the dining-tent, are just short of unendurable to any who have entered into the spirit of the situation. Yet the tension actually mounts when, during the next day's shooting, we watch the Maccombers in their contest for the possession of a soul.

Hemingway silently builds up this contest by the varying positions of the central trio in their box like open car. On the way to the lion, Macomber sits in front with Margot and Wilson in the back. After that day's debacle, Macomber slumps in the back seat beside his frozen wife, Wilson sits, staring straight ahead, in the front. When Macomber has proved himself with the three buffalo, it is Margot who retreats into the far corner of the back seat, while the two men happily converse about the hunt. And finally, as Macomber kneels in the path of the buffalo, it is his wife from her commanding position in the back seat of the car who closes the contest.

Of equal interest is the skill with which Hemingway balances the two days of hunting against each other. Part of the balance is achieved by repetition of the first effect: the buffalo, like the lion of the preceding day, is wounded, takes cover, and charges without warning. This time, however, the charge moves into a reversed moral situation. Between times, by various devices, the reader has been fully awakened to the degree of physical courage needed in facing wounded and dangerous animals.

### **Short Answers**

1. Describe Mather's character.
2. Discuss the use of Christian images in *A Gun for Sale*.
3. Analyse the character of Chief Constable Calkin.
4. Describe in your own words, the sequence of the "rag" of the medical students. Explain briefly the function of this sequence in the story.
5. How is the possibility of war created by Raven's actions?

### **Objective**

1. What is the crime for which Raven is wanted by the police ?
2. What physical handicap does Mather's partner suffer from and what is his name ?
3. What is the name of the play Anne is rehearsing ?
4. What clue leads Raven to Anne in time to save her ?
5. How many people has Raven killed in his life ?

But where the lion was an instrument for the establishment and build-up of emotional tension, the oncoming horns of the buffalo are the prolonged forceps for Macomber's moral birth. Two different world fill the two adjacent days.

#### **3.4.1 The motif of the Story : Physical courage vis-a-vis moral courage.**

(External action vis-a-vis internal action)

Those who object that true manhood is not necessarily proved by one's ability to face a charging beast may be doing Hemingway an injustice. Dramatically speaking, physical courage is often a convenient and economical way of symbolising moral courage. In this African story Hemingway is obviously dealing with both kinds of courage, though, as the situation naturally requires, it is the aspect of physical courage which is stressed more.

Usually Hemingway's stories do not deal with the process of decisive change so much as with the fact of that change, which is another way of saying that "The Short Happy Life" is not a typical Hemingway story. Its concern with manhood may be familiar to his readers, but his stories usually present much quieter moments, partraying internal action more them external action. In "The Short Happy Life", in contrast, physical action is of the essence. The story falls into several discrete episodes, and the very words on the page appear to rush the reader on to the next. Appropriate to the title of the story, speed characterises the narrative method. Hemingway has given us other protagonists who like to hunt, but this story is his only story in which the action of hunting is also the action of the story.

#### **3.4.2 Narrative Technique**

"The Short Happy Life" is fascinating not only in its fast-paced action (its action is contained in a twenty-four hour period), but as a revelation of Hemingway working

towards a new thing. His handling of point-of-view in this story is different from that in any of his other stories. Typically, his narrator is very effaced, scarcely allowing himself a judgement. But in “The Short Happy Life” he (the narrator) is but one of several consciousnesses that the reader enters. Since one of those consciousnesses is that of the wounded lion, we may be quite sure that Hemingway the artist has given careful attention to his handling of point-of-view. An important part of the challenge of the story consists in the narrator taking the reader into Macomber’s consciousness and also into Wilson’s, but never into Margot’s. As narrator he is not as debauched as the usual Hemingway narrator; he is capable of irony, of sarcasm. He says that the Macomber’s “had a sound basis of union. Margot was too beautiful for Macomber to divorce her and Macomber had too much money for Margot ever to leave him”. It is a cynical view that counts this a “sound” foundation for a marriage. The narrator knows that truth is a complex matter. He knows that the truth about Margot is complicated, and he does extend sympathy towards her, telling us “she had done the best she could for many years back and the way they were together how was no one person’s fault”. Margot has her side, as the narrator understands, even if he does not take us into her consciousness.

### **3.4.3 The Ambiguous Ending**

Teffrey Meyers in his biography of Hemingway pronounced the ending of the story “ambiguous”. But after this pronouncement he also says that Hemingway “conclusively” resolved the ambiguity. In a 1953 interview Hemingway said, “Francis’s wife hates him because he’s a coward. But when he gets his guts back, she fears him so much she has to kill him- shoots him in the back of the head.” But this was not Hemingway’s last word on the matter. In the 1959 essay “The Art of the Short Story” he takes a different stance: “No, I don’t know whether she shot him on purpose any more than you do. I could find out if I asked myself because I invented it and I could go right on inventing. But you have to know where to stop.....”. The reader will be better advised to trust the tale than the teller, who after all, liked to tease, even mislead, his readers. Kenneth Lynn in his analysis of the story in his book Hemingway, also cautious against an easy acceptance of Hemingway’s pronouncement on Margot. The ending of “The Short Happy Life” is a typical example of the open-ended type of story which welcomes the reader to construe his/ her own meaning out of the ambiguity.

#### **3.4.4 Questions:**

1. Comment on the marital relationship between Francis and Margot Macomber.
2. Analyse the ending, to give your own views on it.
3. Compare and contrast the two day's safari - the lion hunt and the buffalo hunt.

#### **3.5.0 Characterization**

As in his plot development, so too in his character delineation, Hemingway is dramatic and economic. You should notice while reading the story, the way in which Hemingway shows each character through another character's eye view. Wilson's description is given by Margot, Margot's through Wilson's. But the narrator also plays a role, describing and commenting.

Notice the way each character is given a distinct way of speaking. None of the characters is one dimensional. Within brief scope of the story, in course of a time span of only two days, they change and develop.

#### **3.5.1 Margot Macomber - the prototype for Hemingway's American "bitch"**

Comley and Scholes in Hemingway's *Genders* write that in the 1930s Hemingway was occupied creatively with the Spanish Civil War, with Africa and the wealthy who hunted there, and with key West and the wealthy who frequented it. Many of the women who populated the Hemingway Text during that era were drawn from a social formula for the "rich bitch", with Margot Macomber, who is a bitch married to a rich man, as the central exemplar of the type. As the label suggests, this is a group of women defined by a special combination of sex and money. The women in this phase of Hemingway's writing are for the most part more sexually aggressive than the men. They seem to exist solely for sex and the power that goes with it and to have few other interests. Many readers have condemned Margot Macomber unfairly, though over the years Virgil Hutton and a few other critics have come to Margot's defense. Among the foremost attackers is Hemingway's biographer Teffrey Meyers. Meyers calls Margot "the real villain" of Hemingway's story. For him she is both betrayer and murderer. Quite predictably, much criticism has often laid the blame for the bloody ending of the story squarely on the shoulders of Margot Macomber. H. H. Bell. Tr. for eg. perpetuates the anti-woman position of the tale by viewing Margot as "something (not someone) akin to a lioness". Bell notes that the narrator describes Margot as "hard", "cruel", and "predatory". Therefore Wilson's treatment of Margot

at the story's conclusion is what one would expect from a professional hunter dealing with a dangerous beast i.e Margot Macomber. Despite or because of the animal imagery, Bell brands Margot a murderer, and she is in turn, destroyed by Wilson who "kills" her by "killing her spirit" and making her beg for his help in avoiding a scandal.

Joseph M. Flora looks at the problem from the narrator's point of view, Wilson rejects about Margot the morning after he has cuckolded Francis, "What's in her heart God knows". This makes the situation ambiguous, and precludes a clear cut idea about Margot's intentions and the death of Macomber. But if we read the lives carefully we find the narrator does let us know Margot's intention when she shoots at the end of the story : "Mrs. Macomber, in the car, had shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Manuicher as it seemed about to gore Macomber and had hit her husband about two inches up and a little to one side of the base of his skull". Flora asks, can the narrator be clearer? Mrs. Macomber shot "at the buffalo". If she wants Francis dead, she need do nothing; the buffalo will do her work for her. But at Jeast a large part of Margot wants Francis alive. The narrator is even careful to identify her in the shooting scene as "Mrs. Macomber" and to call Francis "her husband".

In numerous ways, the story invites the reader to ponder Margot's viewpoint even though the narrative does not give as a glimpse of her consciousness. After the incident of the lion, the narrator reports that Macomber "did not know how his wife felt". Macomber thinks that she is through with him after his disgrace, and her excursion to Wilson's tent that night seems to be an act of punishment. Margot probably did not ponder much the results of that excursion, but her action has important consequences. Macomber becomes angry with both Margot and Wilson. The hatred proves an important ingredient in Macomber's transformation.

Like Macomber, she was a victim of the expectations of her class, victim of her own beauty, trapped in a marriage of convenience. Because she is intelligent, she wishes for more. At some ievel, her adultery is not just a punishment but a prod lo make Macomber bo something else.

Nina Baym uses Margot's statement "Actually I felt sorry for the lion", to make one of the finest attempts to portray Margot as neither American "bitch" nor murderer. By analysing the section of the text with the lion as focaliser, and creating a bond between the beast and Margot, Baym argues, in effect, that Margot is innocent because she herself is as much a victim of macho cruelty as is the lion. Both have been hunted down by the great white hunters : one, Francis, her husband, is a master gamestar of

the western capitalist world, while the other, Wilson, sees himself as and perhaps is, master of the “heart of darkness”, in the last analysis, Baym claims, Margot did not “shoot to kill” but rather “to save her husband”. Thus we see that Baym breaks new grounds in analysing Margot, shifting away from the earlier strategy of either / or solution used by earlier critics - Margot either fired her rifle to save her husband’s life from the charging buffalo or she took advantage of the opportunity to become a “respectable” widow and murdered him.

Baym suggests convincingly that the standard view of Hemingway’s work, in its treatment of women, has much to do with the way critics have read this story: “Hemingway’s fiction casts all but the most passive, submissive, and silent women as corrupting or destructive.” And whatever may be said about Margot, we know that she is far removed from being silent and submissive. Thus Margot becomes the prototype of Hemingway’s American “bitch”.

### **3.5.2 Wilson, the yardstick figure**

The yardstick figure, Wilson, a fine characterisation, is the man free of woman and of fear. He is the standard of manhood, towards which Macomber rises, the cynical referee in the nasty war of man and wife, and the judge who presides, after the murder, over the fortunes of Margot Macomber. His dominance over the lady is apparent from the moment she sees him blast the lion from which Macomber ran. But he accepts that dominance only because it is thrust upon him. The kind of dominance he really believes in, and would gladly transfer to the suffering husband, is well summarized in a passage from Shakespeare’s Henry IV Part I which he quotes as a kind of tribute to Macomber’s own loss of fear on the second day : “By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once, he that dies this year is quit for the next...”. Though the fact that the cowardly Falstaff speaks these lines in Shakespeare’s play may be an indication of irony. Moreover Wilson’s character too has its limitations. He is also an incomplete man- unable to merge his life successfully with that of another person. Through the story the narrator reminds us not only of the redness of his face, but also of his “flat, blue eyes”. Macomber associates him with a surine. If the story provides abundant evidence of Margot’s skill in using cutting words, Wilson’s barrage that ends the story shows him equally adept in the art of “bitchery”. Furthermore, Wilson can be very wrong. Before the bull charges in the climactic scene, Wilson had just pronounced the bull dead. The reader should thus, be wary of accepting his verdict about Margot.

### 3.5.3 Francis and Margot Macomber - Character delineation

It would be possible to argue that Francis and Margot Macomber are more nearly caricatures than people. The probability is that the line - drawing in their portraits is the natural consequence of an approach to material chosen for its intrinsic emotional intensity rather than to provide opportunity for depth of characterization. One rightly concludes that they are as fully developed as they need to be for the purposes of the narrative. Further development might well impede the quick march of “The Short, Happy Life”.

### 3.5.4 Conclusion

There is a memorable ambiguity at the end of “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”. But there is no doubt that Francis died in the moment of his triumph, happiness at last his; furthermore, he is never to be tested further. There is a balance of interest between external action and the characters in the story. The story is as violent in its packed events as any sensational adventure tale, but every particular of the action and dialogue is contrived to test reveal, with a surprising set of reversals, the moral quality of all the three protagonists. If the story of the Macombers is judged, in terms of an experiment in the development of emotional intensity, it is hard to match. As an instance of tragic irony, exemplified in overt action, it has its faults. But dullness is not one of them, and formally speaking the story is very nearly perfect.

### 3.6.0 Glossary

- manic - depressive           :- relating to mental disorder with alternating periods of elation and depression.
- inveterate hypochondriac :- habitually having abnormal anxiety about one's health.
- entourage                     :- people attending important persons.
- point of view                :- signifies the way a story gets told - the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction.

- narrative :- a narrative is a story, whether in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do.
- plot :- The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects.
- dabecle :- utter defeat or failure.

### 3.6.1 Comprehension Exercises

long questions :-

- (1) Discuss whether “The Short Happy Life” is a typical Hemingway short story.
- (2) Discuss how far is the title suitable for the short story.
- (3) How is Margot Macomber the prototype of Hemingway’s American bitch.
- (4) Write a note on the plot construction of the story.
- (5) The Ambiguous Ending - Is it a failure of Hemingway’s narrative technique? Discuss.
- (6) Discuss the role of the white hunter in the story.

Short questions :-

- (1) Describe what the white hunter Wilson looked like.
- (2) How did Francis Macomber look like?
- (3) What did she do before getting married to Macomber?
- (4) What does the narrator say about the relationship between Mr and Mrs. Macomber?

- (5) Describe the lion as Macomber saw in the gray morning light.
- (6) Describe the lion- episode and comment on its significance.
- (7) What was Margot's reaction after the flight of her husband?
- (8) Analyse the relationship the develops between Wilson and Mrs Macomber.
- (9) Give a description of the buffalo hunt.
- (10) How did Macomber finally "come of age"?

Objective type :-

- (1) How much lime did it take for the story to unfold?
- (2) What time of the day does the story begin?
- (3) For how many years had Margot and Francis Macomber been married?
- (4) In what language did the native Africans speak?
- (5) Why did Macomber ask Wilson not to tell about the lion episode to anybody else?
- (6) What did Wilson think about Margot Macomber?
- (7) What did Macomber and Wilson go for shooting in the late afternoon?
- (8) What had happened the night before?
- (9) What did Wilson remind of Macomber while shooting the lion from the car?
- (10) Why was it dangerous to leave the wounded lion?
- (11) How did the lion lie in the grass?
- (12) What is the name of the old gun-bearer? What did he do?
- (13) When did Macomber wake-up in the morning? and what did he find?
- (14) Why did Macomber think Wilson to be a 'bastard'?
- (15) "By my troth, I care not...." From where did Wilson quote these lines?

### Suggestions for Further Reading

- (1) The Complete short stories of Ernest Hemingway  
The Finca Vigia Edition New York : Charles Scribuer's Sons, 1987.
- (2) Burgess, Anthony. Ernest Hemingway and his world. New York : Charles Scribuer's Sons, 1978.
- (3) Meyers, Jeffrey. Hemingway - A Biography. New York : Harper and Row Publishers, 1985.
- (4) Baker, Carlos. Hemingway : The Writer as Artist. New Jersey : Princeton, 1967.
- (5) Comley, Nancy R. and Robert Scholes.  
Hemingways Genders- Rereading the Hemingway Text. New Haven and London : Yale Univ. Press, 1944,
- (6) Flora, Joseph M. Ernest Hemingway : A study of the short Fiction.  
Boston : Twayne Publishers, 1989.

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## **Unit-4 Malgudi Days**

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### **Structure**

- 4.0 Objectives**
- 4.1 Study Guide**
- 4.2 A brief history of Indian Writers, Writing In English**
- 4.3 The form of the short story**
- 4.4 Summary of ‘An Astrologer’s Day’ with Explanations**
- 4.5 Glossary**
- 4.6 Summary of ‘Selvi’ with Explanations**
- 4.7 Glossary**
- 4.8 The Importance of Malgudi As An Imaginary Locale**
- 4.9 The Style of R. K. Narayan**
- 4.10 The Idea of Social Reform**
- 4.11 Comprehension Exercises**
- 4.12 Bibliography**

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### **4.0 Objectives**

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This unit introduces you to the genre of Indian writing in English by critically analysing two stories from R. K. Narayan’s Malgudi Days. Along with some of his great contemporaries like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya-Narayan gave Indian writing In English a head start. The aim of this unit is to introduce you to the background and history of Indian English. Then we shall endeavour to present to you the peculiar flavour of Narayan’s locale with its myriad representations of people & events. We shall also lay stress on Narayan’s subtle use of irony to bring home the point to the readers Narayan’s distinctive style and use of Indian words to impart a local ingredient are most relevant in this context. The two stories we shall discuss in this unit are “An Astrologer’s Day” and “Selvi”. Both the stories are distinctive manifestations of Narayan’s style of writing with his ironic vision and satirical device. Narayan’s gentle irony and mild satire is nothing but an honest recording of facts,

without any colouring of conventional bias. Both the stories fit into the mould of the short story as is defined by Narayan in his introductory note to the *Malgudi Days* - “A Short Story must be short on that point there is universal agreement, but the definition of a story is understood differently at different levels, ranging from the news reporter’s use of the term to the literary pundet’s profundities on the subject of plot, clima, structure and texture, with does and don’ts for the writer. Speaking for myself, I discover a story when a personality passes through a crisis of spirit or circumstances. In the following thirty-odd tales, almost invariably the central character faces some kind of crisis and either resolves it or lives with it. By reading this unit you will be able to :-

- (a) Comprehent the importance and relevance of R. K. Narayan as an Indian writer in English.
- (b) Understand the Skill of Narayan in handling his characters and situation.
- (c) Understand the critical aspects of Narayan’s writing tike—his distinctive style, use of irony and satire, importance of using Malgudi as an imaginary locale and his idea of social reform.

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#### **4.1 Study Guide**

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The aim of this unit is to help you to have a clear understanding of R. K. Narayan’s short stories - “An Astrologer’s Day” and “Selui”. It briefly examines the background of Indian writing in English. Then a brief summary of the stories is given. Next we have discussed the style of Narayan, the backdrop of Malgudi as a locale, Narayan’s use of irony and satire and his subtle call for social reform. The unit is divided into units and each unit is given a topic. Each unit is then divided into sections, according to the relevant discussion. At the end of the unit, you will find comprehension questions. The answers are covered in the discussion within the units/sections. The choice of topics is necessarily selective. Critical terms or unfamiliar phrases have been explained.

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#### **4.2 A brief history of Indian writings In English.**

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In the year 1830, the announcement of Lord Macaulay’s Minute on education advocated the introduction of the Study of English in India. It proved beneficial and enlightened Indians in the early nineteenth century came to comprehend the need of

linking India with the progressive cultural forces of the outside world. It was the study of English language and literature that introduced them to western culture and progressive ideals the ideals that prevailed in Europe at that time. It led to the upsurge of nationalism and the Indian Renaissance of the 19th century. Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Surendranath Banerjee, Sri Aurobindo spoke and wrote English with fluency and felicity. It was not India alone that come in contact with the British. Hundred different subject races and nationalities, all over the world came in close contact with the Anglo-Saxons for hundreds of years. Yet there has not been a single race which could, react swiftly to a foreign culture and show such wonderful power of assimilation.

In the sphere of poetry, the earliest efforts were made by Taru Dutt, Kashiprosad Ghose and Henry Lewis vivian Derozio. Monmohan Ghose, brother of Sri Arobindo wrote love Songs and Elegies and 'Songs of Love and Death' Arobindo's poems 'Urnasic', 'Love Death' and 'Sautri' are Hindu in setting, sentiments and expression Sarojini Naidu intepreted the soul of India to the West and created an authentic Indian atmosphere. After the post-indepence era, the poetry of Dom Merges, P. Lai, N Ezekicl and A. K. Ramnajan, descnve mentor. Ezekiet's 'A Tune to Change', 'Sixty Poems,'<sup>1</sup> 'The Third' and Ramanjan's 'The Striders' have brought in a direct and after conversational style of English which has quite charged the old traditional way of writing.

After touching on the sphere of poetry very briefly, let us discuss the Indo-Anglian fiction in some detail because the stories that we are discussing, also happen to fall under this category. The marvellous Toru Dutt besides her poems and her French novel, also wrote an English novel 'Binaca or the Young Spanish Maiden' which was unpublished due to her death. Ramesh Chunder Dutt wrote many historical and social novels like "The Slave Girl of Agra An Indian Historical Romance" and "The Lake of Palmsi. A Story of Indian Domestic Life."

Among South Indian writers the names of T. Ramkrishna, A Madhuivian, Shankar Ram, K. S. Venkataraman deserve special mention. The name of Raja Roo and his well-known novel 'Kanthapura' is unique in all its aspects. The narrative technique used in this novel has been compared to Conrad and Joyce but it also traces its origin to the age old traditions of the Ramayana and The Mahabharata.

Dr. Mulkraj Anand and R. K. Narayan have made an impression on the Western readers for their considerable achievements in the field of fiction Anand's important publications are, 'Across The Black Waters', 'The Coolie', 'Two leaves and a Bud',

The Untouchable', 'The Village' and 'The Big Heart.' His realistic novels, angry at injustice, satirical yet warm reveal his great sympathy and identification with the unfortunate and the down-trodden.

R. K. Narayan's deceptively simple English and ironic outlook make him particularly accessible to Western readers. Malgudi, Narayan's fictional South-Indian town provides a solid realistic setting for his tragi-comedy of human aberrations and attainments. Narayan's famous novels are 'Swami and Friends', 'The Bachelor of Arts', 'The Printer of Malgudi in U. S. A.', 'The Financial Expert,' 'The Man-eater of Malgudi', 'The Dark Room', etc. In Narayan's works the touches are few but they are carefully executed and the picture that emerges is a little triumph of life-likeness and also a work of art.

Among the other contemporaries of Narayan-the name of Bhabani Bhattacharya deserves especial merit. His novels 'Music for Mohini', and 'So Many Hungers have proved greatly successful with the result they have been translated into various European languages. The other writers and their novels which credit mention are- Rusken Bond (The Room on the Roof), Khushwant Singh (Train to Pakistan), Venu Chitale (In Transit), Rama Sharma (The Stream), K. A. Abbas (Inquilab and Tomorrow is ours), Ruth Praver Jhabuala (To Whom She Will), and Kamala Markandaya (Nectar is a Sique and Some Inner Fury).

The younger novelists display an increasing inwardness in their themes-the themes of loneliness of rootlessness and the exploration of the psyche. Other fiction writers of this era are Anita Desai (By the Peacock and Voices in the City), Salman Rushdie (Midnight's Children), Vikram Seth (The Golden Gate), Rohinton Mistry (Fine Balance), Amitava Ghosh (The Shadow Lines), Arundhati Roy (The God of Small Things), Upamanyu Chatterjee (English August) and Jhumpa Lahiri (Interpreter of Maladies).

The importance of Indo-Anglian writing has been recognised. Many good novels and short stories have demonstrated the feasibility of Indians writing fiction. At first there was a great hurdle because the unique intricacies of social life and untranslatable nuances of conversational speech are better rendered through the medium of one's own mother-tongue. But the creative Indian fiction writers have overcome this insurmountable hurdle and as a consequence much creative work in fiction has been done in English. A Short background and history of Indian writing in English has been attempted to give a better understanding of the two stories of Narayan which we shall subsequently discuss.

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### 4.3 The form of the Short Story

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We will appreciate the two short stories by R. K. Narayan- 'An Astrologer's Day' and 'Selui,' if we discuss the form of the short story. The short story is a distinct form of literary art which deals with one single theme. All the dialogues, characters and incidents must be organically related to this one single theme. Each and every one of them must be a link in a single chain. There is no scope for long dialogues, elaborate descriptions or a great number of characters. Unity and brevity are essential the success of a short story. Its plot is generally simple and its style must be succeed to the theme. It describes one single incident, or one aspect of a character or a moral problem. Short stories are of various kinds - stories of plot, of character, of atmosphere, according to the main centre of interest around which they are woven. A short story is not a condensed novel but it is complete in itself with a beginning, a middle and an end. The two short stories that we are going to discuss classically fit into the mould of the short story. In both the stories the plot is handed in such a way that the reader is not able to know how the story will end. The element of surprise and subtle irony which is a distinct feature of the short story are prominent in both the stories. Both the stories are dramatic in their structures with the opening, development, climax and denouement. We will henceforth see that in the range of subject matter, perfection of technique and imaginative vigour -Narayan's works can rival the works of the masters of this genre.

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### 4.4 Summary of 'An Astrologer's Day' with Explanations.

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Everyday at noon the astrologer prepared his equipments and sat down to earn his daily livelihood. His professional equipment consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth which had strange and mystical charts inscribed on it, a notebook and a bundle of palm-leaf writing. He donned the makeup which was suitable for the role of an astrologer which he was supposed to play. Now Narayan with one of his clever touches brings alive the character of the astrologer as if he was in front of us. The astrologer's main attraction lay in his appearance of seeming mystical and obscure. Thus his forehead was shining with sacred ash and vermilion and his hungry glance which was really hunting for probable customers was mistaken to be that of a prophet. His face was almost hidden by the paint on the forehead and the profusion of his black whiskers. To all plausible reasons his makeup which almost hid his countenance served his profession well but he kept his face half-hidden for another specific

purpose which we shall later discover in the story. The saffron turban around his head too served as a device for attracting people.

Narayan then gives some description of the other vendors plying their trade near him. This immediately provides a background to the tale we are about to narrate. By providing a locale, Narayan follows the naturalistic method of narrative. By the naturalistic method we mean that every detail of life is presented in the writing as if it was a photograph. Everything is described as it happens in real life without any artistic intervention. Emile Zola of France was the Pioneer of the naturalistic method of writing which was later cultivated by many short story writers like Guy de Maupassant, O. Henry, W. Somerset Maugham etc. Thus in the story, 'An Astrologer's Day', the other vendors like the medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and Junk, magicians and the auctioneer of cheap cloth provide the necessary colour and the background music for the progress of the story, we get an example of the humour of R. K. Narayan when we are acquainted with a vendor of fried groundnuts who gave his nuts an attractive name each day like Bombay Ice-cream, Delhi Almond, Raja's Delicacy etc.

Next we get an almost cinematic description of the play of light and darkness in the astrologer's life. The place from which the astrologer conducted his business did not have the advantage of municipal lighting, nor did the astrologer carry his own light. The whole place was lit by shop-lights which were namely gaslights, some naked flares struck on poles and old cycle lamps. The light and shades inter-twined with each other which seemed to serve the purpose of the astrologer well. The astrologer had never really intended to be one in his life; it was by a sudden stroke of misfortune that he had to lead the life of one. Thus in the lighting scheme of interwoven light and shadows, Narayan seems to cast some light on the dark recesses of the human mind. Narayan says that the astrologer was as ignorant of the fates just as any common man. He merely managed to continue his trade through long practice and study. He was thus not a true astrologer but merely an actor acting the part of an astrologer in real life. Narayan's superb skill in drawing his characters becomes evident and one is reminded of a line by William Shakespeare from his play 'As you like It' :-

'All the world's a stage

And all the men and women merely players'

We also get a glimpse of Narayan's handling of ironic situations. Narayan says that the astrologer was ignorant of the fate of his clients but the fact remained that

he was also ignorant of his own unpending fate and little knew of what was going to happen to him in the course of the story.

Narayan slowly arouses our interest in the astrologer's character when he States that the astrologer had really been a villager who would have been content in being a farmer and who was compelled to leave his home and hearth and for a villager that was akin to deserting his past life. We can now see that Narayan follows the classic pattern of story-telling with the opening, development, climax and denouement which was followed by the masters of this genre like Maupassant and O' Henry.

The astrologer managed to answer his client's questions by some simple methods of analysis. He let his clients speak for at least ten minutes before venturing to say anything and then too he spoke vaguely and never mentioned any specific details. He had reasoned to himself that the major problems of human beings revolved around marriage, money and the complex ties of human relationships and he offered his solutions based on these factors.

On that specific day the nuts vendor had gone home and the astrologer too was preparing to leave for the departure of the vendor left him in almost total darkness except for a stroy beam of green light. It was in this arena of semi-darkness that the queerest drama of his own fate was about to be enacted. Narayan, the master craftsman that he was, had created the perfect semister atmosphere for the ironic drama about to be enacted.

The astrologer suddenly chanced upon a man whom he thought do be a prospective client. He pressed his invitation as was his custom when suddenly the stranger challenged his profession. Thus challenged the astrologed started judging the man's plam in his usual manner. The man unpatiently interrupted him and demanded to know something worthwhile. The astrologer replied that since he only charged three pies per question, he gave his clients their money's worth. The man flung an anna to the astrologer and said that he had some questions to ask and if he was not satisfied with the answers then he wanted the anna bace with interest. The astrologer at first demanded five rupees if his answers were satisfactory but later settled down to eight annas. The Stranger agreed but also demanded twice the amount if the astiologer's answers proved false.

This pact was ultimately settled upon and amidst the din of the city noises the astrologer send up a silent prayer, invoking the mercy of the heavens to tide over his ignorance. The stranger lit a cheroot and the astrologer caught a clear glimpse of his face for the first time by the matchlight. Narayan keeps the sense of the mystery alive; we are not told the reason but we can now see the astrologer being distinctly

uncomfortable to predict the stranger's fate. He at first refused to continue any further and his agitation is manifested in his shiucsing as the stranger held the astrologer's wrist. The stranger refused to let him go and finding himself in a strange predicament the astrologer was about to go on in his usual way when the stranger interrupted him and asked the astrologer whether he would succeed in his present search or not. The stranger demanded all the astrologer's corns if the astrologer refused or failed to answer this question. Finding himself in a dilemma the asirologer agreed to answer the question but in lieu of a rupee. After a lot of disagreement the stranger ultimately accepted the pact.

For the first time in his life, the astrologer made the correct predictions and astounded the stranger. He said that the stranger had been stabbed by a knife and had been pushed into a well in the fields. The stranger said that only the grace of some passer-by had saved him. Then the stranger demanded to know as to where would he find his attacker. The astrologer replied that the attacker had died four months ago in a far-off town.

Then stranger seemed taken a-back when for the first time the astrologer called him by his name Guru Nayak and claimed to know all about the stranger. The astrologer after having gained the man's complete faith warned him that a great danger would be fall him if he even strayed away from home which was two day's journey due north of the that down. The stranger agreed and asked reflectively that whether his attacker had died a miserable death and Seemed elated to hear from the astrologer that his attacker had been crushed under a lorry. The astrologer finally quit the place when it was totally dark and deserted, after having received a handful of coins from the stranger.

It was almost midnight when the astrologer returned home to his anxious and questioning wife. He gave her the coins and asked her to count them. She was overjoyed to find twelve and half annas and talked of preparing sweet for their child the following day. The astrologer seemed gloomy and said that the man had given him less money and he had promised the astrologer a rupee. The wife sensed his uneasiness but could not get any explanation.

It was only after dinner that We finally got the astrologer's explanation and light illuminated the previously dark mystery. Narayan brought home the ironic element and the sheer surprise to the readers. The Character of the astrologer stated that he had met the very man whom he had once quarrelled very badly with after drinking and gambling. He had stabbed and pushed the man into a well when he was youngster. That was why he had to leave his home and hearth and come to the city where he

eventually married and became a so-called astrologer. Now that the burden of sin was lifted off his soul, he could sleep with a relaxed mind.

The piece of the puzzle now filled in the scheme of things. We now know that from the beginning of the tale that the astrologer was hiding something. That was why he had donned an elaborate costume and had half hidden his face. We can also perceive the reason for his uneasiness when he saw the stranger's face and shivered at his touch. He was thus able to predict the stranger's fate correctly and was thus anxious to stage the story of his own death and send the stranger home. The character of the astrologer is superbly drawn with all his human strengths and weakness. Thus on one hand he is burdened with a sense of guilt and fear at the sight of the stranger yet his greed gets better of him and he bargains for more money. At the end of the day he admits to his wife that he was freed from his sense of guilt at the sight of the man whom he thought he had murdered yet he doesn't hesitate to call the stranger 'Swine' for giving him less money than he had bargained. So inspite of his external changes the inner characteristics of the young star who had stabbed a man after during and gambling had not changed after all.

The swift and the surprising end, enhances the beauty and grace of this lyrically narrated short story. It makes us compare this story with Saki's 'Dusk' or Maupassant's 'Necklace'. This story proves without doubt that Narayan is a skilled craftsman of the genre of the short story. We are reminded of Shakespeare's king Lear and the famous statement that as flies are playthings of wanton boys, scnilasly we humans are the play things of the gods. Thus the fates which are likened to the three sisters of classical mythology. Who spin the destinies of people are forever mystical and unknown. The astrologer who dealt in the realms of the unknown was equally helpless when his own fate was concerned.

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#### **4.5 Glossary**

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Jaggery - Product similar to brown sugar, made by boiling sugarcane juice.

Pyol - Platform built along the house wall that faces the street.

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#### **4.6 Summary of 'Selui' with Explanations.**

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The story that we are about to discuss 'Selui' brings into prominence another aspect of R. K. Narayan as a writer- that of a social reforms. He exposes the ills of society and probes them too, but never for sadistic pleasure or for scatling disgust in

readers. His chief aim is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambition and pride and not to guide the society in any particular direction but simply to make us realize.

The following qualities of R. K. Narayan are manifested in 'Selui'. Just like his novel 'The Dark Room' the predicament of women is discussed in all its details. While the heroine of 'The Dark Room' Savitri typifies all suffering housewives, similarly Selui stands for all women whose identities are taken away and who are exploited in every possible way by their husbands under the guise of protection. Though Narayan cannot be termed feminist in anyway yet he takes a pro-woman or rather a pro-humanist stance in this story. The hypocrisy of ideals, the modern desire for wealth in any possible way, the degradation of art and the falling apart of human relationships are some of the other issues dealt with in 'Selui'.

In the story we are presented with the character of Selui a very talented and widely acclaimed musician-yet who lives life as an automaton under the shadow of her husband, Mohan. At the end of every concert, Selui would be mobbed by autograph hunters. Just as she would be obliging them, Mohan would come and tell her to hurry up in order to catch the train though in reality there was plenty of time. Actually it was a ploy employed by Mohan to manifest in public the hold he had over his wife. However talented she may have been, yet to him she was nothing more than a prized possession that he had himself shaped. When he jestingly told Selui's admirers that she had no sense of tune, he demonstrated his own usefulness and authority over his wife.

Though the public knew her as a radiant beauty-yet to Mohan she was nothing more than "not bad looking...but needs touching up". We are given an example of Mohan's hypocrisy when he supervised the cosmetic changes necessary in his wife in a clandestine way. He was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and did not like to proclaim that he advocated the use of cosmetics to enhance Selui's beauty. Narayan ironically adds that a fan from Singapore came to Mohan's and in supplying Selui the correct skin cream and taicum which gave her a complexion that defied definition.

Though the real Selui was nothing short of an automaton yet to her countless admirers she was the subject of extreme adulation. Just as Varma, the proprietor of the Boardless thought of her as Saraswati, the goddess of learning and craved for the day when he would be personally able to offer her coffee or sweets. Yet when he ventured to her house with a gift-he was received and dismissed by Mohan from the porch with a formal work of thanks.

Narayan's subtle hint is made towards the celebrities who are purposefully kept

separate from the masses by their close people with their own vested interests. All day long visitors would throng to visit Selui but they would only be met with Mohan's Secretary or the secretary's secretary. Though some important personalities would be seated on sofas in the main hall most would be scattered here and there to stay or go as they pleased.

Their home was once the abode of Sir Frederick Lawley and this again showed the disparity between the ideal and the reality. Mohan was a follower of Gandhiji who was well known for advocating a spanton lifestyle - yet Mohan was now extremely keen on the accumulation and display of wealth. The extreme irony of the situation is cleverly manifested by Narayan when Mohan uses the name and method of the Mahatma for all the wrong means when it was said that Sir Frederick's spirit haunted the abode, Mohan said he would dispet it by using the methods of non-violence.

Selui had earned the money to buy the house as a result of play-back sungun. However Mohan made her quit in favour of her own concerts which was much more lucrative. Though a lot of assiduous publicity, she became a celebrity in her own right which made her extremely busy. It also enabled Mohan to earn enormous Sums of money. Narayan makes another jule at Mohan's hypocrisy when after declaring that he would give the benefits of some show to charity he would ask for expenses in cash, which would approximate his normal fee. Mohan would be busy and anxious all the time to make his money grow.

However at the Bondless there would be constant speculation and gossip as to how she had been brought up in a poor condition by her mother in a back row of Vungak Mudali street and 'had learnt music from her, practising with her brother and sister.'

Mohan had chanced upon her when she was brought to be photographed after having won the first prize in a music competition. Thereafter Mohan became a well-wisher of the family Narayan makes another ironical comment on the changed behaviour of Mohan. Once he used to leave his chair and sit on the floor when Selui sang yet now he had become her lord and master.

Selui was by then become an automation. She did not care for her sur roundings and only lived to perform at the appointed hours. She had become the subject of adulation and yet she would be oblivious of her surroundings. She had surrendered her whole personality to him so much so that even what items she would perform on stage would be decided by him. If she would speat a few rehearsed lines like a parrot after which Mohan would draw the attention to himself. In order to isolate her

from the 'typical' Vinayak Mudali Street products -as Mohan put it; he would draw her away from her mother and siblings. If Selui would timidly remonstrate, Mohan forced her attention to other things. We are again given an example of the destruction of human relationships when Mohan chides Selui and says, " only a baby would bother about its mother." Selui nursed her secret anguish and went through life as if herself did not even exist.

However, when the news of Selui's mother's death reached her in Calcutta- her first signs of extreme anger and remorse manifested itself. Throughout the return journey which lasted thirty-six hours she remained totally silent as if in retrospection. When she reached Vinayak Mudali Street both the big car and Mohan's whitest homespun clothes seemed incongruous. We get the first manifestation of Selui's personality when she refused to go back to her palatial home and said, "My mother was my guru; here she taught me music, lived and died... I'll also live and die here; what was good for her is good for me...."

She went beyond the script prepared by Mohan as she listened to the detailed description of her mother's funeral. She even refused to take any object from her luxurious home as if to manifest that the money she had earned from selling music was not a part of her.

She relinked herself back to the common people and totally reformed from going to any engagements or concerts as per Mohan's instruction. Art is not an object to be sold but a delight to be enjoyed and given freely. Thus Selui continued giving free lessons in her little hall with the audience overflowing into the Street. Yet in the midst of devoted adulation she remained in pensive silence as if pondering over her lost years.

The last time Mohan came to visit her was at eleven O'clock in the night, in the hope of finding her alone. Yet she unceremoniously sent him away opening only a crack of the window shutter. She had re-disciplined herself and she who was unable to contradict any word of Mohan was freely able to dismiss him. The element of surprise and dramatic irony towards the end makes 'Selui' a fine specimen of a short story.

The story of 'Selui' is a tale of self discovery of a woman who is finally able to come out of the shadows of her husband's exploitation. It also relentlessly exposes the hypocrisy and avarice of our present society where neither art nor relationships remain sacred and everything is sacrificed on the altar of money.

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## 4.7 Glossary

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Bhajan - a collective prayer, song.

Darshan - grace conferred on the beholder of a godly person.

Javali - a musical composition.

Pallavi - special item in a musical concert.

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## 4.8 The Importance of Malgudi As An Imaginary Locale

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In his introductory note to the 'Malgudi Days' R. K. Narayan refers to a humorous incident on the locale of real Malgudi.

"Malgudi has been only a concept but has proved good enough for my purposes. I can't make it more concrete however much I might be interrogated. When an enthusiastic television producer in London asked me recently if I would cooperate by showing him around Malgudi and introducing him to the characters in my novels .... I felt shakes....and Said....."I am going to be busy working on a new novel....."

"Another Malgudi novel?" he asked

"Yes" I said

"What will it be about?"

"About a tiger possessing a human soul..."

"Oh, that sounds interesting ! I think I will want.

It will be marvellous to include the tiger in my documentary."

Narayan has again said that.... "If I explain that Malgudi is a small town in South India I shall be expressing a half-truth for the characteristics of Malgudi seem to me universal. I can detect Malgudi characteristics in New York.

In the context of the two stories, Narayan's realistic description of Malgudi produces immense dramatic effects. In 'An Astrologer's Day' he has a very positive approach about the characters and places which make the scenes of Malgudi alive to our perception. In 'Selui' Narayan is seen interested in social problems and repercussions of violated morals. The contrast between the dwelling abode of Sir Frederic Lawley and Selui's mother's house in Vinayak Mudali Street is convincing in all its aptness.

Malgudi typifies the typical Indian lives, scenes and situations. The old and new

Indian society are found interwoven in the stories Narayan's characters symbolise wisdom, courage, loyalty and treachery and deal with the weal and woe of individuals in their private life.

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#### **4.9 The Style of R. K. Narayan.**

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For an Indian, it could really be a feat to write about the native customs and manners in an alien language. Narayan's success in using the English language as a medium for the expression of the creative urge lies in his device of using irony, satire and humour. It is a major weapon to expose the share, the fallacies and the hypocrisy of society. It is humour that makes his writing interesting and readable and his language is objective, convincing and simple.

Irony is defined as a contrast between appearance and reality or what is actually narrated and its real implications, R. K. Narayan, Ruth Praver Jhabuala and Bhabani Bhattachary are the prominent authors who have used irony as a literary device to present human predicament. As both the stories that we have discussed will manifest that Narayan's ironical device shows the gap between that promise and the fulfilment, the intended and the committed and then ultimately the incongruity of society. Thus the astrologer and Mohan are not what they seem to be nor act as they should be acting.

Narayan is an artist of language and its supreme art lies in his fine psychological study of human characters he sketches lively scenes, the absurdities, the pretensions, the inner and outer excitements and the traditional make up of the situations touched with his gentle irony. The entire authentic description is marked with intense realism.

Narayan is fond of the English language from his early age. He said :

My whole education has been in English from the primary school and most of my reading has been in English language. I am particularly fond of the language, I was never aware that I was using a different medium, a foreign language, when I wrote in English, because it came to me very easily. I cannot explain how.

Narayan's language is gentle and smooth. His vocabulary is limited but adequate enough to deal with the range of subject matter. He avoids to use lengthy and obscure phrases. The use of single and easy English language makes him successful in drawing alive philosophical and ironical sketches of men and events. It is therefore, obvious that the simplicity of language, sincerity of art and gentle touch of humour is the secret of his artistic performance.

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#### 4.10 The Idea of Social Reform.

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In the discussion of 'Selui' we had briefly touched on the aspects of R. K. Narayan as a social reformer. As M. K. Naik has stated in his book, 'The Ironic Vision' - "R. K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual man, just as Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of the social man and Raja Rao that of the metaphysical man." R. K. Narayan is neither 'angry' like Mulk Raj Anand nor 'Philosophical' like Raja Rao. He accepts the reality as it presents before him. He sees the society and its developments with an ironic detachment and accepts reality ungrudgingly. He sees no point in attempting to criticise or correct things because as he remarks in 'Mr. Sampath', it seems to him "a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyse, criticise and attempt to set things right anywhere."

The trilogy of 'The Village', 'Across the Black Water' and 'The Sword and the Sickle' is his sharp reaction against the traditional values of village society. 'The Bachelor of Arts' is a reaction against the old traditional norms of society. 'The English Teacher' finds the fault in the existing educational system. 'Mr. Sampath' is a story of a rogue who wants to earn enormous wealth in a short time. The whole crux of Narayan's concept of social reform can be summed in one sentence from 'The Bachelor of Arts' - "If India was to attain salvation these watertight divisions must go - community, caste, sects, sub-sects and still further divisions..."

We thus arrive at the conclusion that Narayan was a social reformer who was keenly aware of the various absurdities and eccentricities of society and suggested ironically the ways for their removal. Narayan may be called the artist with the milk of human kindness flowing from his heart. His fiction in its totality is an extensive metaphor on man at the centre of society.

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#### 4.11 Comprehension Exercises.

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A : Essay Type

- (1) Attempt a brief essay on the historical background of Indian writing in English with special emphasis on Narayan and other writers of fiction.
- (2) How is the use of irony an important literary tool for Narayan? Show how Narayan has used the device of irony in the stories - 'An Astrologer's Day' and 'Selui' with close reference to the texts.

- (3) Is the element of surprise important in the genre of the Short Story ? How has the element of Surprise enhanced the Stories - “An Astrologer’s Day” and “Selui”? Discuss with close reference to the text ?
- (4) Narayan has created a dramatic impact in “An Astrologer’s Day” with the subtle use of light and shade. Illustrate with textual examples how Narayan has built up the dramatic moments in the story ?
- (5) The locale of Malgudi was quintessential for the stories of Narayan. Show how in ‘An Astrologer’s Day’ the colour and sound of the surroundings help in the development of the story ?
- (6) Trace the character of the astrologer with its cont’raodictions.
- (7) Trace the character of Mohan and bring out the man behind the mask.
- (8) How important was the concept of Social reform to Narayan? Discuss Narayan as a social reformer with close reference to ‘selui’.
- (9) How was Narayan Sympathetic towards women ? Trace the development of Selui’s personality with close reference to the text ?
- (10) Discuss the Narrative style and technique of R. K. Narayan ? How has his style helped in the appreciation of ‘An Astrologer’s Day’ and ‘Selui’?

B : Short Answer Type.

- (1) Describe the attire of the astrologer and how did it help him to attract attention?
- (2) In what ways was the ground-nut vendor beneficial to the astrologer ?
- (3) What information did the astrologer give the stranger and what did he advice him ?
- (4) Why was the astrologer annoyed with the stranger ?
- (5) How did Mohan manifest his power over Selui at concerts ?
- (6) How was selui’s complexion enhanced ?
- (7) What was the secret desire of the proprietor of the Boardless? Why was it unfulfilled for a long time ?
- (8) Discuss the methods by which Mohan earned money ?
- (9) How did Mohan separate Selui from her family ?

- (10) How was Selui instructed by Mohan during concerts ?
- (11) How did she react on hearing her mother's death ?
- (12) How did Selui treat Mohan on reacting her mother's house ?
- (13) How did Selui spend her days in her mother's house ?
- (14) Why did Mohan go to meet Selui at night and what was the ultimate reaction of Seui ?

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