PREFACE

With its grounding in the "guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability," the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions flexible curricular structures and creative combinations for studies across disciplines. Accordingly, the UGC has revised the CBCS with a new Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP) to further empower the flexible choice based credit system with a multidisciplinary approach and multiple/ lateral entry-exit options. It is held that this entire exercise shall leverage the potential of higher education in three-fold ways – learner's personal enlightenment; her/his constructive public engagement; productive social contribution. Cumulatively therefore, all academic endeavours taken up under the NEP 2020 framework are aimed at synergising individual attainments towards the enhancement of our national goals.

In this epochal moment of a paradigmatic transformation in the higher education scenario, the role of an Open University is crucial, not just in terms of improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) but also in upholding the qualitative parameters. It is time to acknowledge that the implementation of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) National Credit Framework (NCrF) and its syncing with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) are best optimised in the arena of Open and Distance Learning that is truly seamless in its horizons. As one of the largest Open Universities in Eastern India that has been accredited with 'A' grade by NAAC in 2021, has ranked second among Open Universities in the NIRF in 2024, and attained the much required UGC 12B status, Netaji Subhas Open University is committed to both quantity and quality in its mission to spread higher education. It was therefore imperative upon us to embrace NEP 2020, bring in dynamic revisions to our Undergraduate syllabi, and formulate these Self Learning Materials anew. Our new offering is synchronised with the CCFUP in integrating domain specific knowledge with multidisciplinary fields, honing of skills that are relevant to each domain, enhancement of abilities, and of course deep-diving into Indian Knowledge Systems.

Self Learning Materials (SLM's) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. It is with a futuristic thought that we now offer our learners the choice of print or e-slm's. From our mandate of offering quality higher education in the mother tongue, and from the logistic viewpoint of balancing scholastic needs, we strive to bring out learning materials in Bengali and English. All our faculty members are constantly engaged in this academic exercise that combines subject specific academic research with educational pedagogy.We are privileged in that the expertise of academics across institutions on a national level also comes together to augment our own faculty strength in developing these learning materials. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders whose participatory zeal in the teaching-learning process based on these study materials will enable us to only get better. On the whole it has been a very challenging task, and I congratulate everyone in the preparation of these SLM's.

I wish the venture all success.

Professor Indrajit Lahiri
Vice Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University

Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) &
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Programme Code: NEG
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Module No.	Unit No.	Content Writer	Content Editor
1	1	**Dr Himadri Lahiri** Professor of English Netaji Subhas Open University	**Dr Srideep Mukherjee** Associate Professor of English Netaji Subhas Open University
	2	**Dr Debamitra Kar** Assistant Professor, Dept. of English Women's College, Calcutta	**Professor Himadri Lahiri** Professor of English Netaji Subhas Open University
	3		
	4		
2	5	**Atasi Roy** Assistant Professor, Dept. of English Gangarampur College Dakshin Dinajpur	
	6	**Dr Aparna Das**	
3	7	Assistant Professor Dept. of English Tripura University Suryamaninagar, Tripura (W)	
	8	**Trina Chattopadhyay** SACT-1, Dept. of English Ramananda College Bankura	
	9	**Debjani Roychoudhuri** Assistant Professor, Dept. of English Kanchrapara College North 24 Parganas	
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	11	**Dr Somasree Sarkar** Assistant Professor, Dept. of English Ghoshpukur College Darjeeling	
	12	**Dr Pradipta Shyam Chowdhury** Assistant Professor Dept. of English University of North Bengal Jalpaiguri	

4	13	Dr Chaitali Gorai Assistant Professor, Dept. of English Tripura University Suryamaninagar, Tripura (W)	
	14	Dr Koushik Goswami SACT-1, Dept. of English Malda College Malda	
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	18	Dr Ankur Konar	
	19	Dr Somasree Sarkar	
	20	Dr Debamitra Kar & Dr Himadri Lahiri	Dr Srideep Mukherjee Associate Professor of English Netaji Subhas Open University
	Format Editing, Design and Layout		**Professor Himadri Lahiri**

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Honours in
English

Course Title: Introduction to Literature and Language
Course Code: 5CC-EG-01

Module – 4 British Literature in the Nineteenth Century

Module – 5 British Literature in the Twentieth Century

Module – 1

English Language and Literature: Beginnings and Early Development

Unit – 1 ❑ English or Englishes ? A Global Mapping of English Literature/s and Language/s

Structure

1.1.1. **Objectives**

1.1.2. **Introduction: English or Englishes?**

1.1.3. **Contemporary Approach to the Study of English Language and Literature**

1.1.4. **Whose History?**

1.1.5. **Summing Up**

1.1.6. **Self-Assessment Questions**

1.1.7. **Suggested Readings**

1.1.1. Objectives

Dear learners, this is the opening unit of the course "Introduction to English Literature and Language." It will

- engage with the issue of whether the English language has a single variety or more;

- identify the geo-cultural areas where English is widely spoken;

- try to identify the chief characteristics and trends of both the English language and literature;

- provide a bird's eye view of the history of the birth of the English language and of its growth through the centuries;

- try to trace the genesis of English literature and how it is being read and studied across the world now.

1.1.2. Introduction : English or Englishes?

Before we venture into a discussion of the 'English' language and literature, we need to dwell on the issue of whether there is one 'English' or multiple

'Englishes' and which of these 'Englishes' we are going to accept. Scholars have already discussed the extent of the spread of the English language across the world and identified numerous varieties of the language being practised in different regions of the globe, thereby settling the question once for all. Braj Kachru, a noted linguist, calls these 'World Englishes.' (You may note that the book titled *World Englishes* is co-edited by him, besides having written several other articles on the subject as the one mentioned in the following sentence). In an article titled "World Englishes and Applied Linguistics," Braj Kachru rightly asserts, "It is now well-recognised that in linguistic history no language has touched the lives of so many people, in so many cultures and continents, in so many functional roles, and with so much prestige, as has the English language since the 1930s" (5). This he calls 'pluricentricity' of English, and referring to this phenomenon Kachru in another article titled "World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy" refers to George Steiner who asserted that "the linguistic center of English has shifted" (136). This shift of focus from England as the exclusive site of the practice of English language and literature to multiple regions of the world has affected the way we look at the English language and literature today. Even a few decades ago, England was considered to be the only 'authentic' space of English literature and language, and even American literature and language (not to speak of variants like Indian English language and literature) was thought to be a 'deviant' version. Although England is the origin of English literature, literatures written in English are being produced from other centres such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria, Caribbean islands and so on. Writing in 1987, Tom McArthur rightly observed, "If there are now 'English literatures' (by 1987 a well-established phrase), can the 'English languages' be far behind?" (9). We would only like to revert the sequence in the above quotation by saying that 'English languages' (both spoken and written) preceded 'English literatures' in these countries. Kachru continues his argument about Steiner's observation regarding contemporary pluricentricity of English and the emergence of new centres of energetic and creative practice of the language:

> Steiner argued that "this shift of the linguistic center involves far more than statistics. It does look as if the principal energies of the English language, as if its genius for acquisition, for innovation, for metaphoric response, has also moved away from England." Steiner was not thinking of North America or Australia only, but of East, West, and South Africa, India, Ceylon (now SriLanka), and of the U.S. possessions in the Pacific.

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> And during the past two decades this "shift" has become more marked,
> more institutionalized, and is more recognized. ("World Englishes" 136)

Kachru also explains that this expansion took place in three phases. "The first phase began closer to home, with initial expansion toward Wales in 1535. It was then that Wales was united with England. In 1603, the English and Scottish monarchies were united. It was not until 1707 that the state of Great Britain was established. The first phase was thus restricted to the British Islands" (Kachru, "World Englishes" 136). The next phase refers to the spread of English in North America. Australia, and New Zealand and Canada. In the third phase, the language travelled to countries in South Asia and South-West and South-East Africa. "This phase entailed movements of English-speaking populations from one part of the globe to another" ("World Englishes 136). Kachru attaches great importance to the third phase which he calls 'Raj phase' which "altered the earlier socio linguistic profile of the English language and the processes of transplanting it: it brought English to South Asia; to Southeast Asia; to South, West, and East Africa, and to the Philippines" ("World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy" 136). "The pluricentricity of English, thus, is not," he argues, "merely demographic, it entails cultural, linguistic and literary reincarnations of the English language" ("World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy" 136-37).

Kachru has also introduced a model of three concentric circles– the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle–to provide a picture of the spread of the English language and literature discussed above. He calls the first concentric circle 'the inner circle' which includes the 'traditional bases' of the language such as the U.K., the U.S.A, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and anglophone Canada (You are requested to look at Figure 1 which provides a comprehensive picture of the status of different varieties of English in the three concentric circles). English is used as a first language in these 'norm-providing' countries. The 'Outer Circle' includes countries such as India, Nigeria, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Tanzania, Kenya, non-Anglophone South Africa and Canada. These are all 'norm-developing' countries. By the term 'norm-developing' Kachru means that the norms produced in the 'inner circle' is further developed and reproduced in creative ways here. The 'expanding circle' includes countries such as most of Europe, China, Russia, Japan, Korea, Egypt and Indonesia where the language is taught mainly as a 'foreign language.' Kachru calls these countries 'norm-dependent' by which he means that the norms produced in the inner circle is merely recycled here.

The 'Expanding Circle'

China	1,088,200,000
Egypt	50,273,000
Indonesia	175,904,000
Israel	4,512,000
Japan	122,620,000
Korea	42,593,000
Nepal	18,004,000
Saudi Arabia	12,972,000
Taiwan	19,813,000
USSR	285,796,000
Zimbabwe	8,878,000

The 'Outer Circle'

Bangladesh	107,756,000
Ghana	13,754,000
India	810,806,000
Kenya	22,919,000
Malaysia	16,965,000
Nigeria	112,258,000
Pakistan	109,434,000
Philippines	58,723,000
Singapore	2,641,000
Sri Lanka	16,606,000
Tanzania	23,996,000
Zambia	7,384,000

The 'Inner Circle'

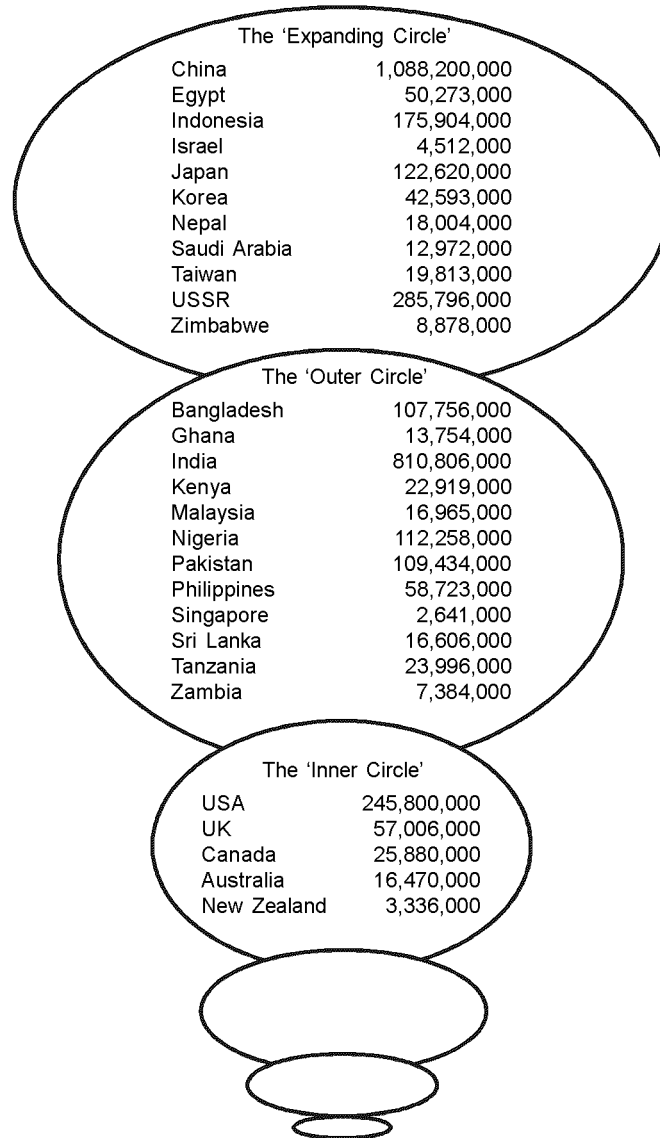| USA	245,800,000
UK	57,006,000
Canada	25,880,000
Australia	16,470,000
New Zealand	3,336,000

Figure 1: Braj Kachru's Circles model of World Englishes (Source: Braj Kachru, "World Englishes and Applied Linguistics," p. 4, in *World Englishes*. Vol. 9. No. I, March 1990, pp. 3-20.)

Kachru further observes,

> These three circles ... bring to the English language (and, of course, to its literature, too) a unique cultural pluralism, and a variety of speech fellowships. These three circles certainly bring to English linguistic diversity; and let us not underestimate – as some scholars tend to do

– the resultant cultural diversity. One is tempted to say, as does Tom McArthur that the three Circles of English have resulted (1987), in several English 'languages.' True, the purist pundits find this position unacceptable, but that actually is now the linguistic reality of the English language." (Kachru, "The World Englishes and Applied Linguistics" 5)

Kachru's model thus establishes the gradual worldwide spread of the language and how it developed its many varieties.

Activities:

1. Click the link given below, listen to the video on the story of English and sum up the main points: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gccBtags U4Y&list=PLh06URz4IJQ4aI0A-xjXOtx2OnApu2S Nn&index=1

2. Watch the episodes of "The Adventure of English" and sum up the main points:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1XQx9pGGd0

3. Collect the book *The Story of English* by Peter McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil from any library, if possible, and read particularly first two chapters – "Introduction" (pp. 11-18) and Chapter 1: "An English-speaking World" (pp. 12-19).

4. Consult relevant books and internet sources and list some well-known literary works written in English from Caribbean Islands, Nigeria, Ghana, Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.

1.1.3. Contemporary Approach to the Study of English Language and Literature

In the context of the pluricentricity of English, how do we study the English language and literature *now* in a post-colonial country like India? From which perspectives should we approach the history of English language and literature? What kind of historiography is involved in the writing of this history? We may dwell on this aspect briefly.

In India we have been studying the English language and literature for a long time, more specifically from the 1820s. The English language, followed by literature, came to India in the trail of British colonialism. English initially emerged as a necessary linguistic medium for business transaction between the English merchants

and Indian *duvasis* (middlemen) and businessmen, and then gradually took strong roots through the endeavours of the English-educated middle-class people in the early half of the nineteenth century. English literature was first introduced through the private and missionary schools and then Hindu College which was established in 1817, even before the formal introduction of English education as recommended by Macaulay's *Minutes* (1835). In *Masks of Conquest* (1989) Gauri Viswanathan informs us that English literature was formally introduced in colonial Indian curriculum much before it was formally introduced in England, and argues that the study of humanities was thought to be an effective tool for moulding the characters and worldview of the Indian readers under colonial domination. English literary writings also began to appear from the 1830s. Our approach to English studies in general has always been influenced by our colonial and post-colonial history and our study of the English literature has been moulded by our postcolonial consciousness. In framing our syllabus and deciding specific contents of our courses now, this consciousness plays an effective role.

Writing history of the English language and literature is thus a crucial issue in which the postcolonial consciousness, as mentioned earlier, manifests itself most prominently. In writing materials for this course, we have been acutely informed by this ideology. Overtly or covertly, postcolonial historiography makes its presence felt in most units of this course. As postcolonial students of the history of the English language and literature, we are sensitive to the interpretation of certain facts and issues that influenced the course of development of this history.

The entire undergraduate syllabus of English literature in Indian universities (as well as other countries in the Global South) reflects the post (-) colonial consciousness. Inclusion of many English literatures (many prefer 'Literatures Written in English') testifies to this fact. However, in this paper our focus is mainly on the history of English literature and language as they originated in England and developed there, and then gradually spread to Great Britain.

We approach this history from the vantage point of our time in the twenty-first century when English is spread across the world, and the corpus of literary works written in the former British colonies such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Caribbean islands or African countries has developed into well-formed traditions. Litterateurs from these countries have also been grabbing global attention for their excellent works. As a result, 'English' literature from Great Britain has ceased to

remain the only specimen of 'English' literature in the world. Secondly, we understand that in England and Great Britain languages and their dialects are the result of centuries of racial and cultural encounters and assimilations of various influences. Hence, hybridity has characterised the cultural interactions over the centuries in the region. Thirdly, we are conscious of the fact that British literature was produced by talented creative writers not only from England which is part of Great Britain/ the United Kingdom but also from Ireland, Wales and Scotland. In fact, 'Englishness' has often been seen as the dominating force in Great Britain, and one can find covert, sometimes even overt, tension between 'English' and other identities such as Irish, Scottish or Welsh identities. These aspects have been critically analysed in many critical works published since the late 1980s – such as *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (Bloomsbury Academic, 1987/2014) edited by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd's, Simon Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (Columbia UP, 1997), and Simon Featherstone's *Englishness: Twentieth-Century Popular Culture and the Forming of English Identity* (Edinburgh UP, 2009).

In writing the history of the 'English' language and literature, our course writers have been conscious of the factors mentioned above. While reading each unit, dear learners, you too should note how the English language developed as a hybrid entity out of multi-linguistic and multi-cultural interactions with races/languages such as Greek, Roman, Scandinavian, French and those from British colonies. You should also note how Irish, Scottish and Welsh literary personalities and their works exhibit unique socio-cultural and political elements and mindsets different from those of the English. Specifically remarkable is the cultural representations of Irish authors such as, among others, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce. Equally notable is the contribution of authors from other parts of the Anglophone world such as T.S. Eliot (USA), Ezra Pound (USA) and Katherine Masefield (New Zealand). In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries we notice yet another phenomenon in English literature – an influx of immigrant writers from former colonies (e.g., V.S. Naipaul, Buchi Emecheta, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Abdulrazak Gurnah). This shows how the late colonial and post-colonial England/ Great Britain has grown into a multicultural and cosmopolitan space over the decades.

1.1.4. Whose History?

It has been mentioned earlier that the English language is being used in countries across the world and that literatures written in English are being published in many parts of the world where English is spoken and written. According to a 2023 estimate, 1,456 million in the world speak English (Source: Statistita.https:/ /www.statista.com/markets/411/society/ ; accessed on 15 September, 2024). [You may be interested in knowing the status of other global languages. Here is a brief picture of the number of speakers of other languages: Chinese (Mandarin): 1,138 million; Hindi: 609.5 million; Spanish: 559.1 million; French: 309.8 million; Arabic (Standard): 274 million; Bengali: 272.8 million; Poruguese: 263.6 million; Russian: 255 million; and Urdu: 231.7 million (Source: Statistita. https://www.statista.com/ markets/411/society/; accessed on 15 September, 2024)].

You may have noted that we have used the word 'English' (meaning, 'belonging to or related to England or to its people, language, and culture') and the phrase 'Great Britain' in the earlier section. Since we are going to read the history of 'English' literature, we need to be aware of the significance of these terms, differences between them, and territorial/ national locations of the 'nation/s' that produced the literatures we study now as 'English literature.' Related to this issue is the question whether this 'literature' is, by definition, still confined to that region or has spread out to other regions to add new dimensions to it. If we scan the titles of some books on history of 'English' literature – for example, Edward Albert's *History of English Literature*, Andrew Sanders' *The Short Oxford History of English Literature, The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* by Ronald Carter and John McRae, and *A Contemporary Encyclopedia of British Literature,* vol. 1 by Kalyani Vallath, Pramod Nayar, G. Balamohan Thampi, Jancy James and V. Rajakrishnan – we will notice that three different nomenclatures (referring to national and/ or linguistic identity of the 'history') have been dished out: first, and most other books stick to this, the word 'English' as national/ geographic and linguistic marker has been used. It pins down the nomenclature to its roots in England and English; secondly, the word 'British' has been used and this refers to the region known as 'Great Britain.' Some authors have preferred this designation. Thirdly, there is a shift from the geo-cultural ('English') focus to the exclusive emphasis on the linguistic medium (the English language) of the

concerned literature ('literature in English') which is evident in the title of Carter and McRae's book cited above. Interestingly, Carter and McRae's book qualifies the phrase 'literature in English' by adding two specific political regions, 'British' and 'Ireland,' suggesting the inclusion of this literature as practised in the two regions in the book. However, literature written in English has prospered in many other countries such as the USA, Australia, New Zealand, African countries, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and many other countries. These do not fall under the purview of Carter and McRae's book. Each of these areas has produced literary works written in English which carry unique geo-cultural traits prompting the question whether there is one single English language and English literature or there are many English languages and literatures.

This makes it imperative for us to discuss country/national designations like 'England' (English), 'Great British' (British),'United Kingdom.' The knowledge of these geo-cultural areas will help us understand the nuances of their usage in literary works. For example, Ireland will figure prominently in W. B. Yeats' poems, Lady Gregory's plays, as will 'Hebrides,' an archipelago near the west coast of Scotland, in one of Keats' poems. So let us briefly discuss these geographical areas so that we can understand how much of literary works produced in these areas constitute 'English' literature.

The term 'England' is often used interchangeably with the United Kingdom and Great Britain. We need to rectify this mistaken perception. *England* is part of the *United Kingdom (UK)*. It constitutes more than half of the islands of Great Britain. Great Britain is a larger sovereign nation constituting Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and England. "The United Kingdom is a state made up of the historic countries of England, Wales and Scotland, as well as Northern Ireland. It is known as the home of both modern parliamentary democracy and the Industrial Revolution" (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18023389). Great Britain is "a geographic term" while United Kingdom is "purely a political term: it's the independent country that encompasses all of Great Britain and the region now called Northern Ireland" (https://www.britannica.com/story/whats-the-difference-between-great-britain-and-the-united-kingdom).

In 1707 kingdoms of England and Scotland were united as the Kingdom of Great Britain. In 1801 Ireland, a British colony, formally joined Great Britain which

came to be known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (or just Great Britain). However, Ireland (except the six northern counties) seceded in 1922.

We also come across the term 'British Isles.' "British Isles, [is a] group of islands off the northwestern coast of Europe. The group consists of two main islands, Great Britain and Ireland, and numerous smaller islands and island groups, including the Hebrides, the Shetland Islands, the Orkney Islands, the Isles of Scilly, and the Isle of Man. The Channel Islands are also sometimes included in this grouping" (https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Isles).

We should also remember that Ireland is divided into Northern Ireland which is part of United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland which is an independent, sovereign nation. Partition of Ireland took place in 1921. When we shall read works of Irish literary figures, we should mentally place them in their contemporary time and geo-cultural locations. In any paper on history of English literature, we read not only literary works from England but also those from Great Britain/ United Kingdom.
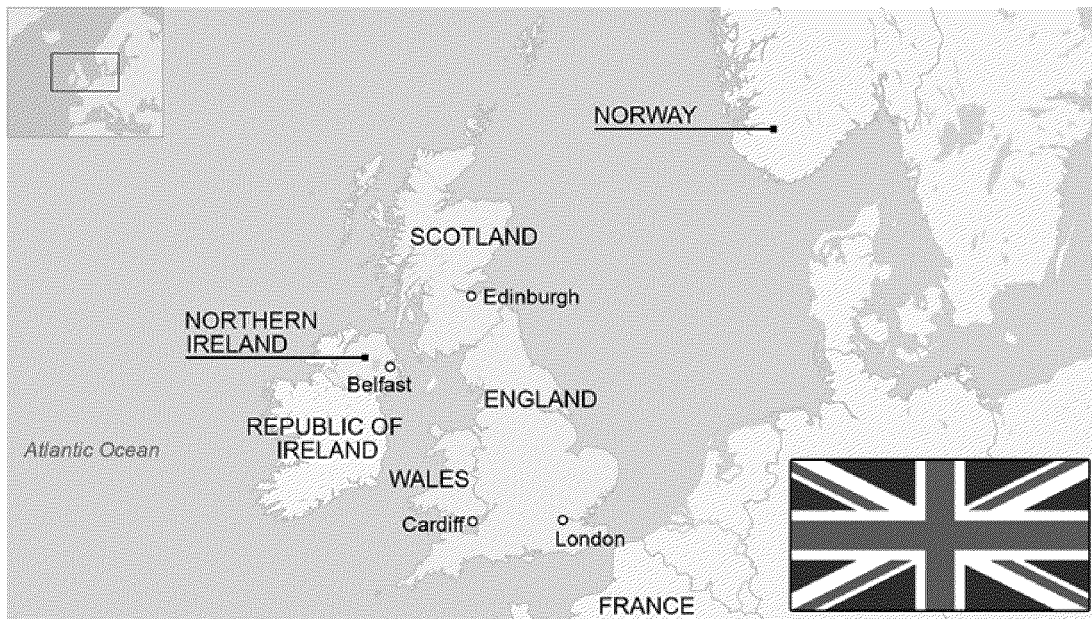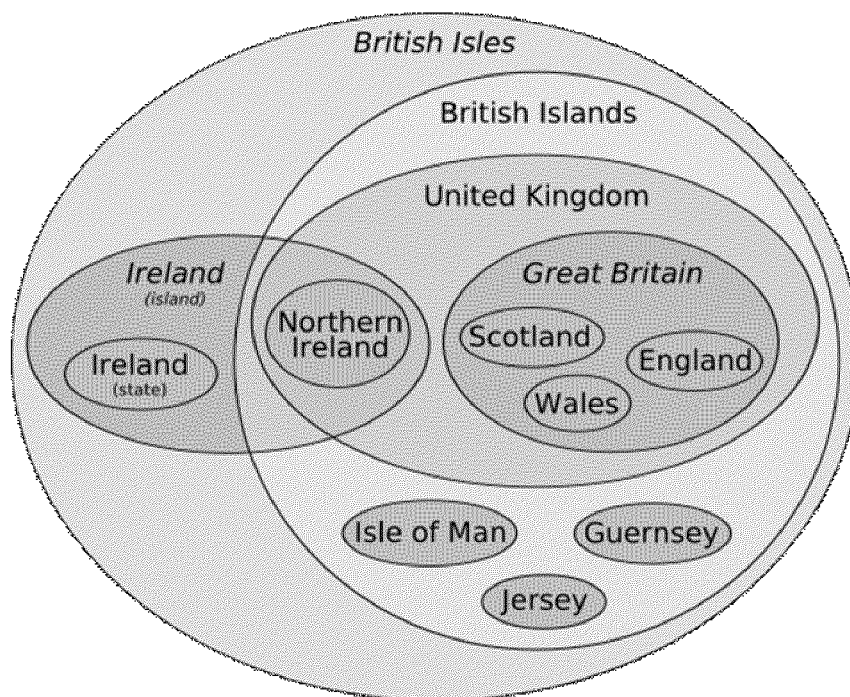

Figure 2 : Map of Great Britain;
(Source: BBC (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18023389)

Figure 3: British Isles, British Islands, United Kingdom, and Great Britain
(Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File : British_Isles_Euler_ diagram_15.svg)
(Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

1.1.5. Summing Up

This introductory unit of the course on the history of the English language and literature has established that English originated in England as a result of the immigration of several Germanic tribes, including the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Their interactions with the local populations, as well as their languages and cultures, shaped the early stages of English. The language subsequently spread to other parts of Great Britain and later to various regions around the world, primarily through business transactions with different nations and the expansion of British colonialism. Braj Kachru has elucidated the trajectory of the English language's spread through his well-known model of three circles. Kachru has also discussed the various varieties of World Englishes. With the global proliferation of English, numerous literatures written in English have emerged, each possessing its own unique characteristics. In short, we are now convinced of the existence of multiple Englishes and diverse English literatures.

1.1.6. Self-assessment Questions

Broad Questions:

1. Write a critical essay on whether there is only one English or many Englishes.

2. Evaluate Braj Kachru's model of three concentric circles of World Englishes.

3. How should we approach English literatures and languages from postcolonial perspectives.

Mid-length Question:

1. What do you mean by 'English literature'? Which geo-cultural space does the term cover? Explain.

2. How is Kachru's 'Outer Circle' different from his 'Expanding Circle'?

3. Explain the term 'World Englishes.'

Short Questions:

1. What does the term 'Macaulay's Minutes' denote?

2. What do you mean by 'Englishness'?

3. Can you use the word 'England' interchangeably with 'Great Britain'?

4. What do you mean by 'pluricentricity of English'?

1.1.7. Suggested Readings

Colls, Robert and Philip Dodd. *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*. 1987. Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.

Featherstone, Simon. *Englishness: Twentieth-Century Popular Culture and the Forming of English Identity*. Edinburgh UP,

Gikandi, Simon. *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. Columbia UP, 1997.

Kachru, Braj, Yamuna Kachru, and Cecil L. Nelson, editors. *The Handbook of World Englishes*. Blackwell, 2006.

Kachru, Braj. "World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 30, no. 2, Summer, 1996, pp. 135-155. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3333196

-- -- --. "World Englishes and Applied Linguistics." *World Englishes*, vol. 9, no,1, 1990, pp. 3-20.

McArthur, Tom. "The English languages?" *English Today*, No. 11, July 1987, pp. 9-11.

Unit – 2 ❑ Beginnings of the English Language

Structure

1.2.1. Objectives

In this chapter you shall learn about :

- The linguistic and historical background of the English language
- The hegemony of dialects
- Influence of foreign loans of Latin and Scandinavian origin
- Old English orthography

1.2.2. Introduction

It has been argued that man, like other animals, learnt to make some sounds, but due to some specific evolutionary changes he was able to systematise these sounds into a spoken language that could gradually be so developed and adept

as to communicate simple daily requirements to complex scientific and philosophical ideas. The evolution of language from a simple oral expression to a written medium is a long journey. The origins of human language, which can be traced back to forty thousand years, has been left to many conjectures. Most complex perhaps is the idea as to how human beings learnt so many languages depending on their varied geographical locations and cultural roots. Even the same language can be spoken or written in different ways in different places and over a certain time.

Languages are just like human beings—they are born, they grow and under unfortunate circumstances, they may die as well. They are born into a certain family, and during their lifetime, they form alliances with other languages, imbibe words, change spellings, alter grammatical pattern, and may look very different from their parent language. Linguists, after much research found out that there are many such parent language families or proto-languages which have given rise to modern day languages of the world: for instance, in Asia, Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Austronesian, Dravidian, Altaic, and Austroasiatic; in Africa, Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, and Nilo-Saharan; and in the Americas, Uto-Aztecan, Maya, Otomanguean, and Tupian. Indo-European, a language which is responsible for the birth of many languages that you know of, is one such member of this original group.

Now, how in the real world can one language give birth to so many other languages? Historians will tell you that it all happened when many years ago, much before the birth of Christ, the people living in one place and sharing a common language started to migrate to the other parts of the world. The reason of this migration can be many: it can be climate change, food scarcity, adventurous nature of man, or in later times, political dissension, religious conversion, or social crises. The lives of the immigrants and natives overlapped: the newcomers would sometimes engage in war, or just mingle with the latter, leading to a cultural and linguistic exchange. Sometimes, when two languages mix, one is enriched and the other is killed, or sometimes both the languages change and a new third kind evolves. It is not the arbitrary choice of fate that decides which language is going to stay and which one is going to disappear. Such decisions are taken by the historical and economic forces operating at that moment in that place. So, if you are wondering as to why the study of language is important in the study of literature, remember, the history of the growth and development of a language will show you the growth and development of that culture and would result into the growth and development of their literature.

1.2.3. History of the English Language: Beginnings

Now, let us come to the curious history of the English language. English, as you know it today, did not look, or spelt, or sounded like as it does today. It has undergone almost two thousand years of evolution and it has succeeded to emerge as an important global language. In the course of our study, we shall see why and how English could emerge as one of the most spoken languages of the world. For the time being a brief sketch of the beginnings could be worth discussing.

Look at the chart in **Plate 1**. It is a simplified family-tree of all the Indo-European languages. English comes at the end of the West Germanic or Teutonic Languages, which come from the Western set of Indo-European language. The Indo-European family probably originated around 3000-2000 BCE, in the general region
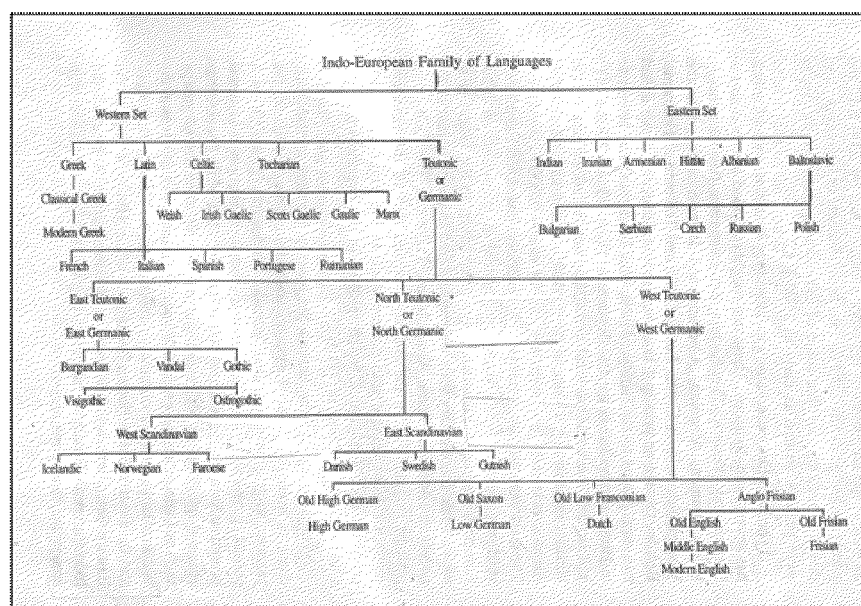
Figure 1 : Chart of Indo-European Family of Languages
Source : Muktinath Chatterjee, *English Philology,* 4

of the Caspian Sea. Over the centuries the speakers of the primitive Indo-European language or proto-Indo-European language spread as far east as India, as far west as the Americas, as far north as Northern Russia and as far south as the southern tip of Africa. During their travel their languages changed continuously and independently, but regularly enough so that by means of reconstruction techniques the linguists can show the relatedness of these languages (See **Plate 2**).

Figure 2 : Geographical / Locational Details of Indo-European Languages
Source : www.britannica.com

Germanic or proto-Germanic is a member of the north-western Indo-European group of languages. From their early homeland in the southern parts of Scandinavia, the speakers of the Proto-Germanic groups migrated in various directions (See **Plate 3**). The linguists have divided this speech community into three parts depending on the routes of their migration that led to the rise of the different languages. The people of the East Germanic group are believed to have moved eastwards and southwards during the first three or four centuries CE. The most well-known people of this group were the Goths. People from the North Germanic groups moved to the areas now known as Denmark, Sweden and Norway and later to Iceland. These people later came to England as Scandinavians and left an indelible mark on the formation of the English language. Before the Germanic peoples began their different migrations, the West Germanic group seemed to have been located in what is now Denmark and in the northern and North Sea coastal territories of modern Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. These people were divided into three major tribal groups of which the Invaeones group's dialects, spoken along the North Sea gave rise to English language.

Figure 3: Routes of migration of the Germanic people
Source : Hermann Kinder and Weiner Hilgemann, *Atlas of World History: From
Prehistory to the Eve of French Revolution,* vol. 1

However, when these West Germanic tribes migrated to Britain, the isles certainly did not have the modern-day geographic features, for there was no English Channel and the North Sea was not much more than an enlarged river basin. The earliest inhabitants were the Paleolithic Man, who lived in the open, or under rock shelter and later in caves. Around 5000 BCE, Neolithic Man came from the southern lands bordering on the Mediterranean. He was a bit more advanced than the Paleolithic Man for he knew how to domesticate animals, developed elementary agricultural techniques, and so on. Traces of these people are still found in the population of British Isles, but their language has not survived. Around 300 BCE, the Neolithic men were driven out of the British Isles by the Celtic invaders. This was also the time of introduction of bronze in the islands and Celtic was the first Indo-European tongue to be spoken in this area. We have documents about this language. Around 43 CE Emperor Claudius colonised the British Isles and Latin was introduced in the island. Though the relation between the Romans and the Celts was not particularly cordial, Latin was spoken, particularly among the educated people for the first four centuries. Celtic was first spoken only by the rural people, but later after the Romans soldiers left the island around 410 CE to protect their homeland against the Goths, the position of Latin also declined. The repealing of the Roman army also had other political consequences in England. The Picts and Scots, who were so long kept out by constant Roman vigilance now began to raid the island. According to legends, since the Romans refused to help, the help was sought from the Jutes, and in 449 CE certain Germanic tribes responded to the invitation of King Vortigern of the Britons and settled in England. The tribes who settled in were Angles, Saxons and Jutes—who dwelt on the North Sea coast from Denmark to Holland.

The modern historians have raised question regarding the veracity of this fact of the arrival of the Germanic warriors at the invitation of the Briton King. The Anglo-Saxon monk Bede, in his eight century Latin history of the English nation titled, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* also wrote about this event. Nicholas Howe, in his book *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (1989) identified it as a 'myth' which had become canonical in Anglo-Saxon history writing. Whatever the reason of this migration be, be it political condition in England

Celtic, once widely diffused over Europe, can be divided into three groups: Gaulish, Britannic and Gaelic. Gaulish was spoken in France and northern Italy in the time of Roman Republic, and was spread abroad by Celtic military expeditions to Central Europe as far as Asia Minor. It died out during early centuries of Christian era. Britannic was the branch of

or Germany, or climatic change, or the adventurous nature of the Germanic tribes, our objective is definitely not to find out why the Anglo-Saxons came but to register the facts that

> Celtic spoken in most of Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasions. It survived into modern times in three languages: Cornish, which is known in texts from fifteenth century and died out in eighteenth century; Welsh, which has literary texts going back to eleventh century; and Breton, which has literary texts from the fourteenth century. Breton was taken across to Brittany by refugees from Britain during the time of Anglos-Saxons.

(1) this migration was the beginning of the recorded history of England;

(2) the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain was not an invasion of a unified army but rather the arrival and penetration of various uncoordinated bands of adventurers in different parts of the country, beginning in the middle of the fifth century and continuing all through the sixth century;

(3) this had a deep impact on the making of the English language, for the Celtic language almost disappeared and the language of the Anglo-Saxons formed the basis of the Old English.

The political struggle between the Roman-Celtic and Anglo-Saxon population was a long one and the latter's supremacy was established at the end of the sixth century. There is no reason to think that the Celts were all killed or driven out by the Anglo-Saxons. But they were the defeated ones, and hence their language lost its prestige—you will come across a similar incident while reading about the French invasion of England. However, a few Celtic words still remain, particularly in place names like, *London, Leeds* and names of rivers, for instance, *Avon, Ouse* (meaning water or stream), *Thames* (dark river), etc; county names like *Devon* and *Kent.* You may compare the Celtic place names with the Scandinavian place names that you shall read in the following section.

By 700 CE, the Anglo-Saxons had occupied most of England (except Cornwell and areas in the North-West) and a considerable part of southern Scotland. Wales remained British stronghold.

Activities:

● Who are the Celts?

● What would be a better word to describe the literature of this period: Old English or Anglo Saxon ? Why ?

1.2.4. Growth and Development of English in the Old English Period

The brief historical background provided in the earlier section attests to the fact that from the very beginning the English language in its growth has heterogenous sources, like the Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Roman-Britonic and Latin. The last source would be an important one for the next 1000 years of the development of the language; Latin would enter the language at various levels in various capacities. The tongue that was spoken in the British Isles from roughly 550 CE to 1066 CE is known as Old English or Anglo-Saxon. The basis of its form was the Germanic dialects that were spoken along the coasts of Frisia, Lower Saxony, Jutland and Southern Sweden by Germanic tribes.

The Anglo-Saxon people were tribal by nature—they settled their own community and socio-political custom. The concept of one king and one nation was quite foreign. War was an important socio-economic arbiter, but there was no standing army as such. At the event of an attack, the able-bodied men would gather arms and fight. At certain times, when one overlord or warlord of one community rose to fame, these fighters would immigrate to his kingdom and join his army. Thus, though they fought for political supremacy there was a sense of cultural sharing and mutual respect which was reflected in their linguistic behaviour.

1.2.5. General Features : Dialects and Linguistic Hegemony

It is of immense value to understand the importance of dialects in the development of English. The language spoken would be different in different geographical locales, though their basic features would remain the same. Old English shows four such important dialects: Anglian dialects, comprising Mercian and Northumbrian, and Saxon dialects that included Kentish and West Saxon. As the names reflect, the fortune of the dialects depended on the fates of the rulers of these tribes, and consequently, at various historical junctures, one dialect would exercise a linguistic hegemony over the others. In this context it is important to engage a little with the Mercian and West Saxon hegemony.

Whenever a particular kingdom rose to power it tried to impress its political supremacy over the others. The rulers would also encourage learning and writing of texts which were chiefly used for the dissemination of religious teaching. The

Mercians rose to power after the Northumbrians (625—675 CE) from the second half of the seventh century and reached their apex under King Offa (757—796) and continued their process of power consolidation till the early half of the ninth century. Though their dialect did not survive, two cardinal events attest to the fact that the Mercians were engaged in literary activity. The first text is the *Tribal Hidage* in the early seventh century, which is a list of 35 tribes south of the River Humber, many of them known only from this source, together with the number of hides assigned to each territory. The term 'hides' refers to the land needed to support a nuclear family (which was 120 acres in the later medieval period). Though the point of origin of the document has been left to scrutiny, its focus on Mercian hegemony can hardly be doubted. If nothing, the text is a testimony of Mercian literacy. It also speaks about the economic base of the Mercian kingdom and the generation of the revenue through the construction of dykes. The Mercian kings also showed great fondness for the religious activity. You must understand that the advent of Christianity in 597 CE was a watershed mark in the English history and though primarily religious activities were conducted in Latin, translation of Latin into English for the benefit of the common people was a regular practice. For example, in Synod of Clovesho in 747 CE decided that the priests must know the mass, the rites of baptism, and the Lord's Prayer in English. This motivated the Anglo-Saxons to compile Latin-Old English Glossaries and to make glosses for the religious texts. Most of these glosses and glossaries, which provide the bulk of the second textual evidence, record the Mercian dialect, proving that the royal patronage and the establishment of the Mercian Scriptorium during King Offa's time and orthographic practices were crucial in the development of the Old English.

The other important linguistic hegemony was that of the West Saxons who rose to power from 800—1050 and King Alfred can be seen as a king in the modern sense of the term. Their language is treated as synonymous with the Old English. The reason for this hegemony is perhaps twofold: firstly, the political stability triggered an environment of learning and enthused cultural activity. Secondly, as time grew, the orthographic models became more systematised, writing became a regular activity. The shift from the oral to the written led to the creation of various political, religious and cultural documents that you read as Anglo-Saxon prose and poetry and hence the variety of this dialect could be better recorded and preserved. A person like Venerable Bede and a prose writer like King Alfred would further the growth of a particular dialect. Increase in the instances of writing in the

vernacular was a political act that once again contributed to the rise of the national identity of the Isles.

Line	Original	IPA	Translation
[1]	Fæder ūre þū þe eart on heofonum,	/'fæ.der 'uː.re θuː θe æart on 'heo.vo.num/	Father of ours, thou who art in heavens,
[2]	Sī þīn nama ġehālgod.	/si: θi:n 'na.ma je.'hɑɫ.god/	Be thy name hallowed.
[3]	Tōbecume þīn rīċe,	/to:.be.'ku.me θi:n 'ri:tʃe/	Come thy riche (kingdom),
[4]	ġewurþe þīn willa, on eorðan swā swā on heofonum.	/je.'wur.ðe θi:n 'wi.ɫɑ on 'eor.ðan swɑ: swɑ: on 'heo.vo.num/	Worth (manifest) thy will, on earth as also in heaven.
[5]	Ūre ġedæghwāmlīcan hlāf syle ūs tō dæġ,	/'uː.re je.'dæj.mɑːm.ˌliː.kɑn ɫɑːf 'sy.le 'uːs toːˌ'dæj/	Our daily loaf do sell (give) to us today,
[6]	and forġyf ūs ūre gyltas, swā swā wē forġyfað ūrum gyltendum.	/ɑnd for.'jyf uːs 'uː.re gyl.'tɑs swɑ: swɑ: weː for.'jy.fɑθ uːˌrum gyl.'ten.dum/	And forgive us our guilts as also we forgive our guilters[32]
[7]	And ne ġelǣd þū ūs on costnunge, ac ālȳs ūs of yfele.	/ɑnd ne je.ɫæː.d θuː uːs on kost.'nuŋ.ge ak aːˌ'ɫyːs uːs of y.'ve.le/	And do not lead thou us into temptation, but alese (release/deliver) us of (from) evil.
[8]	Sōþlīċe.	/'so:ð.liːˌtʃe/	Soothly (Truly).

Figure 4 (Source : Internet Open Source)

1.2.6. Foreign Loanwords

The Old English was by no means an insular culture. You have already read about their early interaction with the Celts. The extent of this interaction was not that great, since the Celtic people were mostly displaced. Only a few loan words and a little influence on the syntax was the result of the interaction between the two races.

Contrary to the Celtic loans, the influence of Latin was more vigorous. This is because of two reasons: first, Latin first came to the Isles as a result of the Roman invasion, hence it was the language of the victors who would definitely have a better control of the administrative affairs. This episode was however short lived (43 CE to 449 CE) and the Roman colonisation was never as systematic or overwhelming as the nineteenth century British colonisation of India. The main influence of Latin was exerted through the advent of Christianity and for a long time in Europe the King and the Church worked in close relation consolidating each other's power. Remember when King Alfred lost the battle with the Danish Chief Guthrun, and gave up much of his land, he asked Guthrun to convert to Christianity. The other reason why religion plays an important role is because Church was the seat of learning. In fact the Irish Christian missionaries introduced the Latin alphabet to England which continues till date. Though Latin borrowing

would continue for many centuries, we shall here briefly look at two episodes of Latin borrowings in the Old English language.

1.2.6.1. Latin Influence:

● Latin of the First period or Latin Through Celtic Transmission

It is probable that Latin as a spoken language must not have survived after the Romans left but the Celts had already learnt a few Latin words and that remained in their language. Thus when the Angles, Saxons and Jutes—the Germanic tribes — came they must have learnt these words from the Celts. A.C. Baugh speaks of 600 such entries. We may learn a few as examples: *chester* (it comes from the Celtic word *ceaster*, which in turn comes from the Latin word castra that means camp or Old English town or enclosed community; this word proved useful in making place names, some of which still survive like, *Dorchester, Manchester, Gloucester, Winchester, Worcester, Lancaster,* etc), and other words like *port* (harbour, gate or town; L. *portus*), *munt* (mountain; L. *mons*), *torr* (tower, L. *torris*), Celtic *wic* (village; L. *vicus*), etc.

● Latin of the Second Period or the Christianization of Britain

As discussed above, the greatest influence of Latin on Old English was occasioned by the advent of Christianity into Britain in 597. Latin was seen as the language of the religion and later of a higher culture. Till the end of the Old English period, i.e., 1066, this phase of borrowing continued leading not only to the introduction of new words but also the introduction of the new concepts. Linguists have divided these borrowings into two groups depending on their chronology and also characteristics. The words that were borrowed before the Benedictine reform (the incident which is seen as the watershed mark in English religious history) are mostly related to the Church and its services, its physical fabric and its ministers. For example: *abbot, alms, altar, anthem, ark, chalice, disciple, epistle, hymn, litany, martyr, manna, psalm, priest, shrine, relic, rule, temple, tunic,* and so on.

The influence of Latin upon the English language rose and fell with the fortunes of the church and the state of learning so intimately connected with it. As a result of the Benedictine reform and renewed literary activity a new series of Latin words found its way in the language. These words were different from the early loans as they were less popular and had a more philosophical and learned nature. For instance, the list includes words like: *apostle, cell, cloister, collect, creed, dirge,*

font, idol, nocturn, prime, prophet, Sabbath, synagogue, etc. A great number of plant names are also recorded in this period, such as: *coriander, cucumber, ginger, cedar, cypress, fig, laurel,* etc.

Activity:

● You shall read about the Latin influence in the middle and modern ages. Note the change in the nature of the loan over the ages and find out the significance of the variety of loanwords borrowed from the same language.

1.2.6.2. Scandinavian Influence on the English Language

The most important instance of borrowing that took place in the Old English period is the borrowing from the Old Norse or Scandinavian language. We shall take a detailed look at this episode in the following section.

In the Old English period the Anglo-Saxons and Danes were two peaceful nations. The English were quite taken by surprise when in 790 CE the Danes suddenly started to come in small troops (much in the same fashion the Anglo-Saxons themselves came 400 years ago to the island). They looted what they could lay their hands on and left. But by the ninth century the intermittent attacks changed into systematic campaigns of armies who aimed to settle in the land they had conquered. Battles were fought with various degree of success but on the whole the Scandinavians seemed to be a stronger race; and by the treaty of Wedmore, in 878, King Alfred was forced to leave to Guthrun, the Danish chief, more than half of what we now call England—all Northumbria, all East Anglia, and one half of Central England — to make out the district called the Danelaw. (See **Plate 4**) Thus the political change initiated a social change which paved the way to a wider linguistic change that restructured the English language.
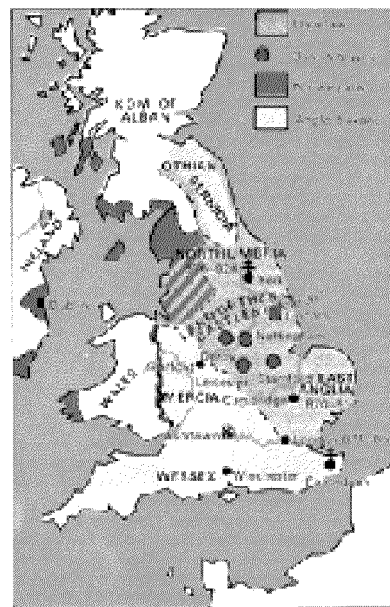
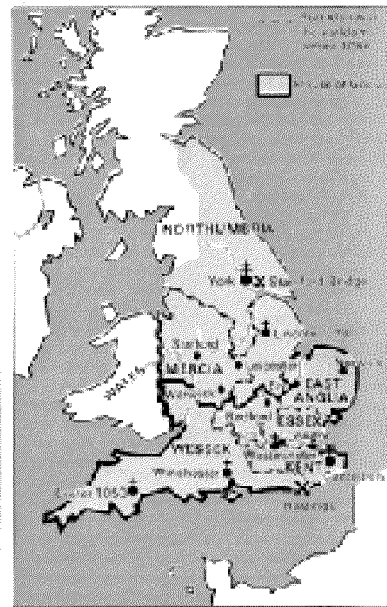124   Early Middle Ages England (to 1066)
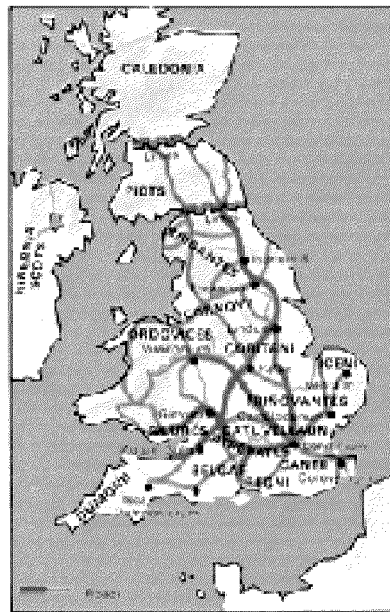
England in the Roman period
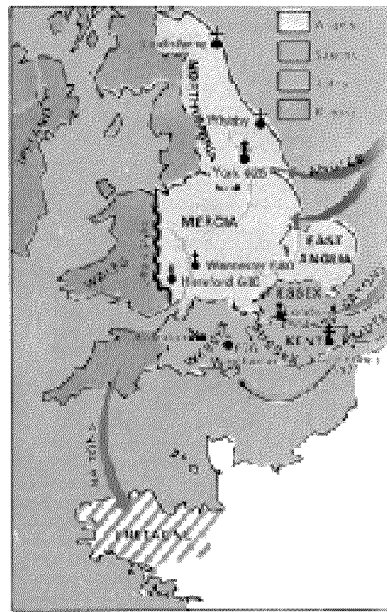
The conquest of Jutes, Angles and Saxons

The Anglo-Saxon struggle against the Danes and Norwegians in the 9th cent.

England, c. 1066

Figure 5

Source: Hermann Kinder and Weiner Hilgemann, *Atlas of World History: From Prehistory to the Eve of French Revolution.*

Nature of the Scandinavian Loans

The Scandinavian loans are marked for their simplicity and democratic nature. Both the languages, i.e., Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian, descended from the same stock, and so they had a shared vocabulary. The Scandinavians were by no means superior to the English, so the English actually felt no urge to borrow any particular set of words from them. As a result words like *man, wife, father, mother, wise, well, ill, egg, over, under, come, sit* are identical in two languages. Otto Jespersen says, "An Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without the Scandinavian words; they are to the language what *bread* and *eggs* are to daily fare." It is this homely nature of the loans that makes them different from their French counterparts. For the sake of clarity we shall read the Scandinavian influence on the English language under two categories: its influence on English vocabulary and on the English grammar and syntax.

● Influence on English Vocabulary

The influence of a foreign language on the vocabulary is measured through the influx of the loanwords from the foreign source into the native language. The Scandinavian loans can be briefly viewed in the following manner:

➢ Certain **names of places** ending in '—by', '—thorp', '—beck', '—dale', '—thwaite', '—toft', and so on, show greater Scandinavian settlement in those areas. All these suffixes mean village or hamlet. Such suffixes still survive in place names like *Whitby, Goldthorp, Braithwaite, Lowestoft,* and so on. More than 1400 of such names have been counted and they are found more in number in places like Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, etc, where the Scandinavians settled down in greater number.

➢ **Scandinavian proper names** are also found in great number in these areas. Names ending in '—son', like *Stevenson, Johnson, Gibson, Thomson* are Scandinavian in origin for the traditional English patronymic was '—ing' as in *Browning.*

➢ As invaders and subsequent rulers, the Scandinavians tried to impose rules of their own and therefore there was a huge influx of war terms and legal terms. The Scandinavian *law-terms* include words like: *law* (coming from Old Danish word *logh*), *by-law* (*by*

originally meant 'town' or 'village' in Danish), *thriding* ('third part'), *carlman* ('man'), *niding*, (read *d* as 'th' in 'then'; meaning 'criminal'), *bunda* ('peasant'), and so on. The **war terms**, mostly related to war and navy, include: *orrest* ('war'), *fylcian* ('to collect', 'marshal'), *liþ* (read 'þ' as 'th' in 'thought'; meaning 'fleet'), *barda*, *cnear* (different types of warships), *ha* ('rowlock'), etc. But subsequently all these war terms and law terms soon disappeared when the next rulers, the Normans, came to England and set up their own system of administration and warfare. However, words like *law* remained in the language.

➢ Apart from these war and legal terms a few more interesting words were borrowed, like *window* from *vindauga* ('wind-eye'), *steak* from Old Norse *steik*, *knives* from Scandinavian *knif* and others.

● **The Consequences of Borrowing**

➢ Where the words in two languages coincided more or less in form and meaning, both were retained in the modern form—*burn, drag, gang, scrape, thick*, etc.

➢ Where there were differences of form the English word often survived. For instance, English words as *bench, goat, heathen, yarn, few, grey, loath, leap* have corresponding Scandinavian words, which are often found in Middle English literature and in some cases still exist in dialects.

➢ In other cases, the Scandinavian word replaced the native word, often after the two had long remained in use concurrently. For instance, Scandinavian *awe* and its cognate *aye* (Old English or OE), English *ey* and Scandinavian *egg*, Scandinavian *syster* (modern spelling *sister*) and OE *Sweoster* both exist in medieval literature. You can see that only the Scandinavian words are retained in modern usage.

➢ Occasionally, both the English and Scandinavian words are retained as doublets: *no—nay, from—fro, shriek—screak, whole—hale, shirt—skirt*, and so on.

➢ Both the words may also be retained but with a slight change of meaning, thus *dream* in OE meant joy, but in Middle English (ME)

the modern meaning of the word was taken from the Old Norse *draumr*; analogous cases are *bread* (OE meaning was 'fragment'), *bloom* (in OE it meant 'mass of metal'), and so on.

> ➢ Some instances could be found where the Scandinavian word reintroduced a long forgotten native word back into the main course of the language, like *till, dale, blend, run, rim,* and so on.

Loanwords play an important role in understanding the cultural standard of the foreign and the recipient culture. In this case, the loanword test seems to tell us that the cultural standards of both the races were almost the same; hence, the English felt no urgent need to borrow any particular type of words from the Scandinavians. The Scandinavian *knives* must have been really good, for the word was introduced into the French language as well, as *canif.* Otherwise, the two races, as we have already discussed, were quite similar to each other and had no new ideas to convey to each other; rather they borrowed everyday words and family terms, which we shall discuss in the following section.

● The Influence on English Grammar, Syntax and Phonetics

If you compare the influence of the loanwords with that of the Scandinavian grammar you would find that the latter plays a more decisive role in shaping the English language to its modern form.

> ➢ The main reason behind this is that the Scandinavian language simplified the inflexional endings of the Old English tongue and made it look more like the modern language. The English and the Scandinavian languages differed chiefly in their inflexional elements and these endings were the main obstacle to mutual understanding. In the mixed population of the Danelaw these endings might have caused serious confusion which led to their gradual disappearance. Jespersen speculates that the tempo of this simplification increased as the settlers wanted more to be understood than be correct in their knowledge of the language.

> ➢ Certain pronominal forms like *they, them, their,* and adverbial forms like *thence, hence, whence,* present plural *are* of the verb 'to be', and the prepositions like *till* and *fro* are all due to Scandinavian influence.

➢ A certain number of inflexional elements peculiar to Northumbrian dialect have been attributed to Scandinavian influence: the '–s' of the third part singular. Again, present indicative of verbs and the participial ending like '—and', '—end', '—ind', were all replaced by the Scandinavian '–ing'.

➢ With regard to the syntax nothing much is known because the want of early texts in Scandinavia or North England makes it impossible for us to state anything very definite. However, by looking at loans we can conclude that the intimate fusion of the two languages must certainly have influenced their syntactical relations. For instance, relative clauses without many pronouns are relatively rare in OE, but they become increasingly common in ME due to Scandinavian influence. Thus 'the man whom I know' becomes 'the man I know'.

➢ One of the most reliable changes in the language took place in sound, particularly in the development of the sound 'sk'. In OE this was early palatalized to 'sh', except possibly in the combination of 'scr', whereas in Scandinavian countries it retained the hard 'sk' sound. Consequently, while native words like *ship, shall, fish,* have 'sh' in Modern English, words borrowed from Scandinavians are still pronounced with the 'sk' sound: *sky, skull, skin, scrape, skill, bask, whisk,* and so on. The OE *scyrte* has become shirt, while the corresponding Old Norse from *skyrta* gives us skirt. In the same way the retention of the hard 'k' or 'g' in such words like *kid, get, gild, egg* indicate their Scandinavian origin.

Activities:

● What is an inflexional language? Is there any modern language that has inflexional endings?

● What is palatalization? Find out about the different parts of the mouth that are used for pronunciation.

1.2.7. The Old English Orthography

The loan words constitute the lexical repertoire, but a language has other components like the orthography (spelling system of the word) and phonetics (sound

of the word) and morphology (internal structure of the word). The discussion would be very long one, but we shall, in the following section, briefly read about the basic features of the Old English to form an idea of the language as it existed in the early phase of the linguistic evolution.
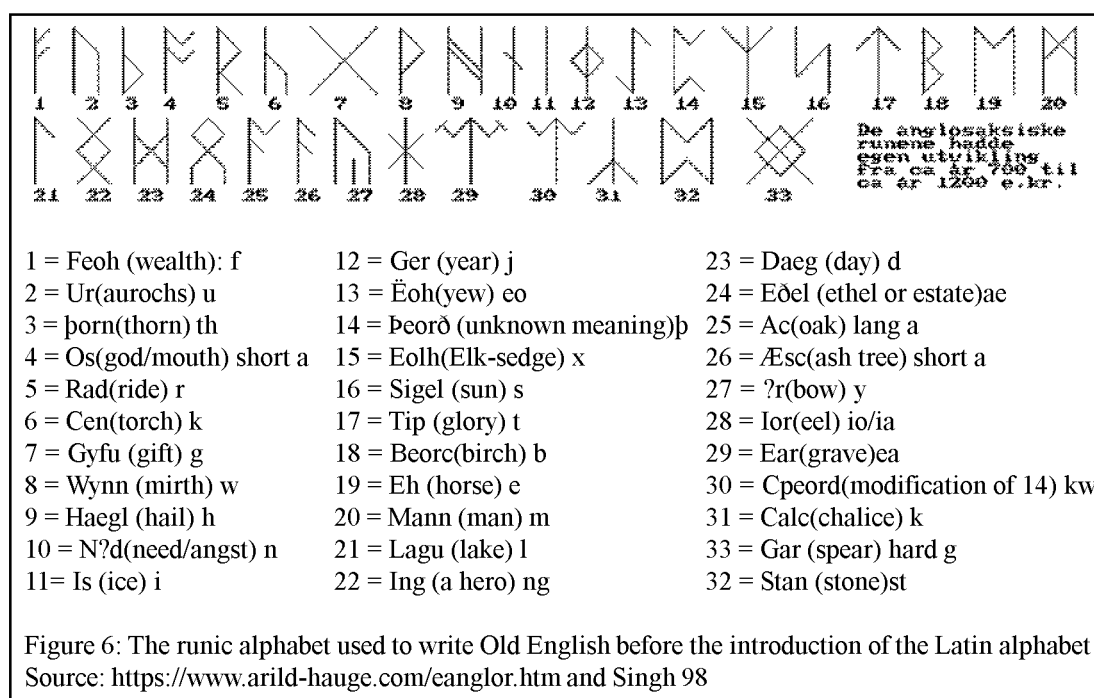
Orthography and Futharks

1 = Feoh (wealth): f	12 = Ger (year) j	23 = Daeg (day) d
2 = Ur(aurochs) u	13 = Ëoh(yew) eo	24 = Eðel (ethel or estate)ae
3 = þorn(thorn) th	14 = Þeorð (unknown meaning)þ	25 = Ac(oak) lang a
4 = Os(god/mouth) short a	15 = Eolh(Elk-sedge) x	26 = Æsc(ash tree) short a
5 = Rad(ride) r	16 = Sigel (sun) s	27 = ?r(bow) y
6 = Cen(torch) k	17 = Tip (glory) t	28 = Ior(eel) io/ia
7 = Gyfu (gift) g	18 = Beorc(birch) b	29 = Ear(grave)ea
8 = Wynn (mirth) w	19 = Eh (horse) e	30 = Cpeord(modification of 14) kw
9 = Haegl (hail) h	20 = Mann (man) m	31 = Calc(chalice) k
10 = N?d(need/angst) n	21 = Lagu (lake) l	33 = Gar (spear) hard g
11= Is (ice) i	22 = Ing (a hero) ng	32 = Stan (stone)st

Figure 6: The runic alphabet used to write Old English before the introduction of the Latin alphabet
Source: https://www.arild-hauge.com/eanglor.htm and Singh 98

English in its early days did not look like as it looks today. In fact, the twenty-six-letter Latin alphabet that we use today was brought by the Christian missionaries. Moreover, the scope of writing was also limited to the religious purposes and few occasions of administrative affairs when some decree or edicts were issued. Inscriptions can be found in sword hilts, torcs—associated with practical or memorial purposes. These letters are called runes and the alphabet is known as futhorc or futhark, the name is formed by the first six letters in the series. Since these letters were first used in Frisia, they are also known as Anglo-Frisian runes. The futhorc were first 28 numbers and later extended to 33. From 25 to 29— these runes represent the additional vowel sounds of á æ ý ia, ea. Þorn and þynn were introduced into the English version of the Latin alphabet representing sounds |O| and |w| respectively, but were replaced by th and w in the Middle English period. In **Plate no 5** you can see the runes and their names with the meanings in the brackets followed by the contemporary pronunciation.

After the advent of the Latin letters, for some time the runes and the Roman letters existed simultaneously and in many cases they were written together on the same object like St Cuthbert's coffin. However, after ninth century the runes were substituted by OE Latin alphabet. They were no longer used after 1000 CE and were banned by King Cnut the Great. The OE Latin letters with their pronunciations can be found in **Plate no 6**. You may find it interesting to see how the letters look different from the earlier futharks and appear similar to our present day alphabet.

Character	IPA transcription	Description and notes
a	/a/, /ɑ:/	Spelling variations like (land) ~ (lond) ("land") suggest the short vowel may have had a rounded allophone [o] before [n] in some cases.
á	/ɑ:/	Used in modern editions to distinguish from short /a/.
æ	/æ/, /æ:/	Formerly the digraph (ae) was used; (æ) became more common during the 8th century, and was standard after 800. In 9th-century Kentish manuscripts, a form of (æ) that was missing the upper hook of the (a) part was used; it is not clear whether this represented /æ/ or /e/. See also ę.
ǽ	/æ:/	Used in modern editions to distinguish from short /æ/.
b	/b/	
	[v] (an allophone of /f/)	Used in this way in early texts (before 800). For example, the word "sheaves" is spelled scéobas in an early text, but later (and more commonly) as scéafas.
c	/k/	
	/tʃ/	The /tʃ/ pronunciation is sometimes written with a diacritic by modern editors: most commonly (ċ), sometimes (ĉ) or (ç). Before a consonant letter the pronunciation is always /k/; word-finally after (i) it is always /tʃ/. Otherwise, a knowledge of the history of the word is needed to predict the pronunciation.
cg	[ddʒ] (the phonetic realization of geminate /jj/)	
	/gg/ (occasionally)	
d	/d/	In the earliest texts it also represented /θ/ (see þ).
ð	/θ/, including its allophone [ð]	Called ðæt in Old English; now called eth or edh. Derived from the insular form of (d) with the addition of a cross-bar. See also þ.
e	/e/, /e:/	
ę		A modern editorial substitution for the modified Kentish form of (æ) (see æ). Compare e caudata, ę
é	/e:/	Used in modern editions to distinguish from short /e/.
ea	/æo/, /æ:o/	Sometimes stands for /æ/, /æ:/ or /o/ after (ċ), (ġ).
éa	/æ:o/	Used in modern editions to distinguish from short /æo/. Sometimes stands for /æ:/ after (ċ), (ġ).
eo	/eo/, /e:o/	Sometimes stands for /o/ after (ċ), (ġ).
éo	/e:o/	Used in modern editions, to distinguish from short /eo/.
f	/f/, including its allophone [v] (but see b).	
g	/g/, including its allophone [ɣ]; or /j/, including its allophone [dʒ], which occurs after (n).	In Old English manuscripts, this letter usually took its insular form (ᵹ). The [j] and [dʒ] pronunciations are sometimes written (ġ) in modern editions. Before a consonant letter the pronunciation is always [g] (word-initially) or [ɣ] (after a vowel). Word-finally after (i) it is always [j]. Otherwise a knowledge of the history of the word in question is needed to predict the pronunciation.
h	/h/, including its allophones [ç, x]	In the combinations (hl), (hr), (hn), (hw), the realization may have been a devoiced version of the second consonant.
i	/i/, /i:/	
í	/i:/	Used in modern editions to distinguish from short /i/.
ie	/iy/, /i:y/	
	/e/, /e:/	Only occurs sometimes in this sense and appears after (ċ), (ġ).
íe	/i:y/	Used in modern editions, to distinguish from short /iy/. Sometimes

io	/iu/, /iːu/	Occurs in dialects that had such diphthongs. Not present in Late West Saxon. The long variant may be shown in modern editions as *īo*.
k	/k/	Rarely used; this sound is normally represented by (c).
l	/l/	Probably velarised [ɫ] (as in Modern English) when in coda position.
m	/m/	
n	/n/, including its allophone [ŋ] (before /k/, /g/).	
o	/o/, /oː/	See also a.
ō	/oː/	Used in modern editions, to distinguish from short /o/.
oe	/ø/, /øː/ (in dialects having that sound).	
ōe	/øː/	Used in modern editions, to distinguish from short /ø/.
p	/p/	
qu	/kw/	A rare spelling of /kw/, which was usually written as (cp) ((cw) in modern editions).
r	/r/	The exact nature of Old English /r/ is not known; it may have been an alveolar approximant [ɹ] as in most modern English, an alveolar flap [ɾ], or an alveolar trill [r].
s	/s/, including its allophone [z].	
sc	/ʃ/ or occasionally /sk/.	
t	/t/	
th	Represented /θ/ in the earliest texts (see þ).	
þ	/θ/, including its allophone [ð]	Called thorn and derived from the rune of the same name. In the earliest texts (d) or (th) was used for this phoneme, but these were later replaced in this function by eth (ð) and thorn (þ). Eth was first attested (in definitely dated materials) in the 7th century, and thorn in the 8th. Eth was more common than thorn before Alfred's time. From then onward, thorn was used increasingly often at the start of words, while eth was normal in the middle and at the end of words, although usage varied in both cases. Some modern editions use only thorn.
u	/u/, /uː/. Also sometimes /w/ (see p, below).	
uu	Sometimes used for /w/ (see p, below).	
ū	Used for /uː/ in modern editions, to distinguish from short /u/.	
w	/w/	A modern substitution for (ƿ).
ƿ	/w/	Called wynn and derived from the rune of the same name. In earlier texts by continental scribes, and also later in the north, /w/ was represented by (u) or (uu). In modern editions, wynn is replaced by (w), to prevent confusion with (p).
x	/ks/ ([xs ~ çs] according to some authors[which?]).	
y	/y/, /yː/.	
ȳ	/yː/	Used in modern editions to distinguish from short /y/.
z	/ts/	A rare spelling for /ts/; e.g. *betst* ("best") is occasionally spelt *bezt*.

Figure 7

Source Singh 95-96

The late Anglo-Saxon society was quite a developed one with an established tradition in arts, architecture, metal work and manuscript illumination. The Latin learning had also made some considerable progress. The law codes and coinage system were quite sophisticated. Also, the Old English period witnessed many linguistic changes in phonetics like vowel shifts, palatalization of velar consonants, vowel lengthening, diphthong changes and so on. The language and literature, particularly in the vernacular, though confined to the monastery, was strongly established. The Anglian Old English along with the West Saxon and Kentish, served as the basis of the Middle English of London, whose pronunciation in many ways determined the spellings of Modern English.

1.2.8. Summing Up

● English is a part of the proto-Germanic language which belongs to the Indo-European family of languages.

● The cosmopolitan background of the Celtic Roman and Anglo Saxon and Scandinavian mixing of races and cultures made English a flexible language which would always retain its originality in spite of the many influences.

● Over the period of time, certain dialects became important due to the military and political reasons. But many dialects show that it would be a long time before the language would reach a standardised form as far as orthography was concerned.

● The loan words borrowed in this period was the rudimentary (Latin source) and democratic (Scandinavian source).

● Old English orthography was markedly different from the present English. Roman letters were borrowed later which substituted the runic script.

1.2.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer type questions:

1. Discuss the historical and linguistic consequence of Roman colonisation of Britain.

2. Describe the nature and extent of Scandinavian influence on English vocabulary, grammar and phonetics.

3. How did the different dialects make an impact on Old English language and literature?

Mid-length answer type questions:

1. Write a short note on the Indo-European language family.

2. Who are the Anglo-Saxons? How are they different from the Scandinavians?

3. What are the features of Old English orthography? Illustrate with examples.

4. How did the advent of Christianity have its impact on the language of England?

Short answer type questions:

1. What is proto-Germanic?

2. What is Tribal Hidage?

3. Why is King Guthrun important?

4. What is a rune?

1.2.10. Suggested Readings

A combined 'Suggested Readings' of Units 2, 3, and 4 has been provided at the end of Module 1, Unit 4.

Unit – 3 ❑ Middle Ages – From Dialects to Standardisation

Structure

1.3.1. Objectives

In this unit you will learn about:

- the Norman conquest and its effects on the English language;
- reasons of re-emergence of English;
- features of the Middle English language;
- details of loan words from Latin and French sources; and
- emergence of different dialects of English towards the end of fifteenth century.

1.3.2. Introduction

Despite the advancements in language, literature, the arts and governance, the martial power of the Anglo-Saxons was inferior to the prowess of the Normans. When on 28 September 1066 the Norman fleet entered the shore, they faced little defence from the English. The shore was literally 'undefended' according to the modern historian Sir Frank Stenton. King Harold II of England was killed in the battlefield.

Originally, the Normans had been Scandinavians. The term 'Norman' comes from the word 'Northman'. They had been granted a territory in France in the early tenth century. The early Normans spoke Old Norse, just like the Scandinavians who settled in England at about the same time. By the early eleventh century, however, the Normans had given up Old Norse and had adopted the French spoken by their subjects and neighbours. It is an irony that these people gave up their language twice (once when they settled in Normandy and then when they came to England) and imbibed the language of their subjects twice in their history. French is descended from Latin; it was a Romance language and not a Germanic one (see the Family Chart of Anglo-European languages in Module 1, Unit 2). The French as it came to be spoken in England is often termed Anglo-Norman.

The history of the French or Anglo-Norman language in England falls into several periods. In the first decades after 1066, those who spoke French were the Norman invaders. They took charge of the administrative, military, legal and spiritual matters of the country and brought in a feudal system of economy and a different kind of lifestyle with which the natives were not fully acquainted. By the end of 1087, Stenton writes, "all directive power within the English state had passed from native to alien hands. In 1087, with less than half-a-dozen exceptions, every lay lord whose possessions entitled him to political influence was a foreigner. The English church was ruled by men of continental birth and training... the leading members of the king's household were all French men..." (680).
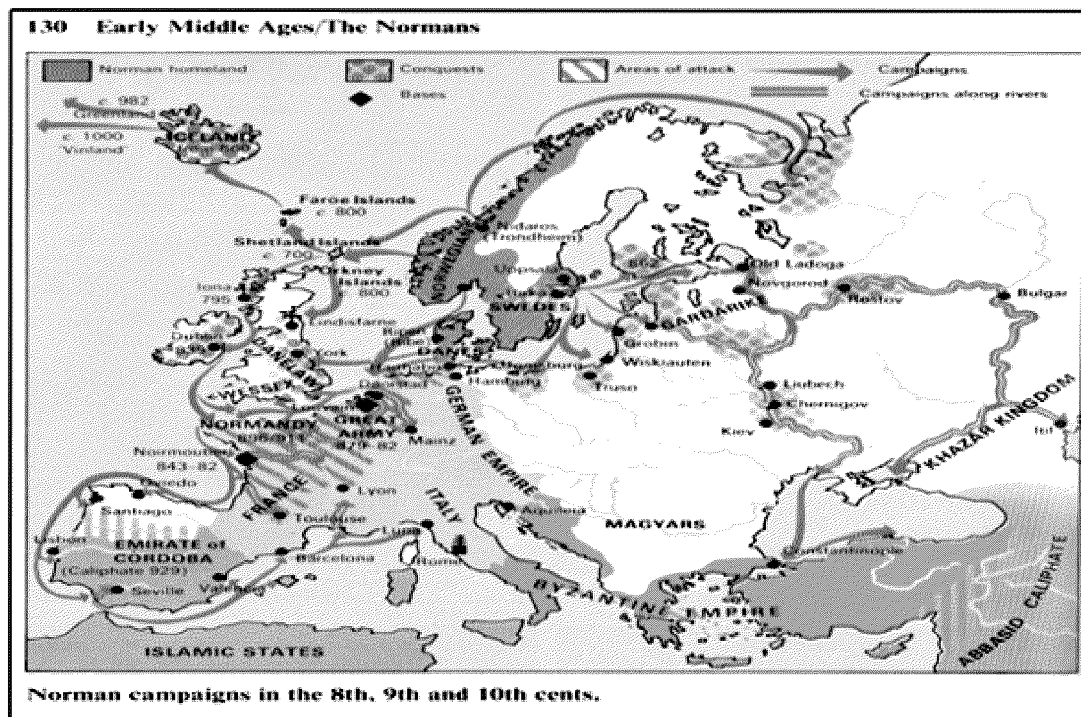
Figure 1: "Norman campaigns in the 8ᵗʰ, 9ᵗʰ and 10ᵗʰ centuries";
Source: Hermann Kinder and Weiner Hilgemann, *Atlas of World History: From Prehistory to the Eve of French Revolution*, Vol. 1

Interestingly, English, though spoken by the majority of the natives, was no longer the language of power, whereas, the French spoken by the aristocratic few was the language of power. However, modern day scholars have debated over this point. Jeremy J. Smith, for instance, observes that it is a bit overstated that English was only spoken by the peasant class who remained largely uneducated and disempowered. He shows evidence where the notable churchmen were quite well versed in French, Latin and the vernacular for the simple reason of disseminating religion (Smith 50-51). English was also spoken in some of the noble households in the early twelfth century. But it can hardly be rejected that Old English had to compete with Latin and French for prestige and any literature, which in those days was dependent on royal patronage, was written in French. Slowly, however, things changed. The issue of when precisely English became the mother tongue, substituting French, is a matter of contention. From the middle of the twelfth century at least, most members of the aristocracy were bilingual for the very reason that they were in the country for a long period of time. Within another hundred years, you will find

educational treatise written in French and the target audience is the educated middle class, which means that some parts of the English society also was becoming more conversant in French. French was no longer the language of the aristocracy but another language of culture. In fact the Anglo Norman habit of using the English mother tongue with French words in between as a mark of class was criticised by Chaucer in his description of the Prioress in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. This revival of English identity after the thirteenth century in spite of the French hegemony was furthered by the changing political scenario in the following two centuries. The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) between France and England and the Black Death (1347-1351) led to massive loss of lives, shortage of labour and slump in agrarian economy. However, throughout Europe towns grew in number and London emerged as an important centre which facilitated the upward social mobilisation of the common man to the 'estate' class. This new emergent middle class, who rose in social status and whose sons were educated in grammar schools, were instrumental in reclaiming the lost prestige of English. From 1362, Parliament was officially conducted in English. Caxton, a merchant in the textile trade, decided to print books in English. Chaucer was the son of a winemaker or vintner and in spite of his exemplary knowledge of French he chose to write in English. But the Middle English showed some remarkable change in the lexis, grammar, orthography and phonology, and some of these we shall cover in the following section.
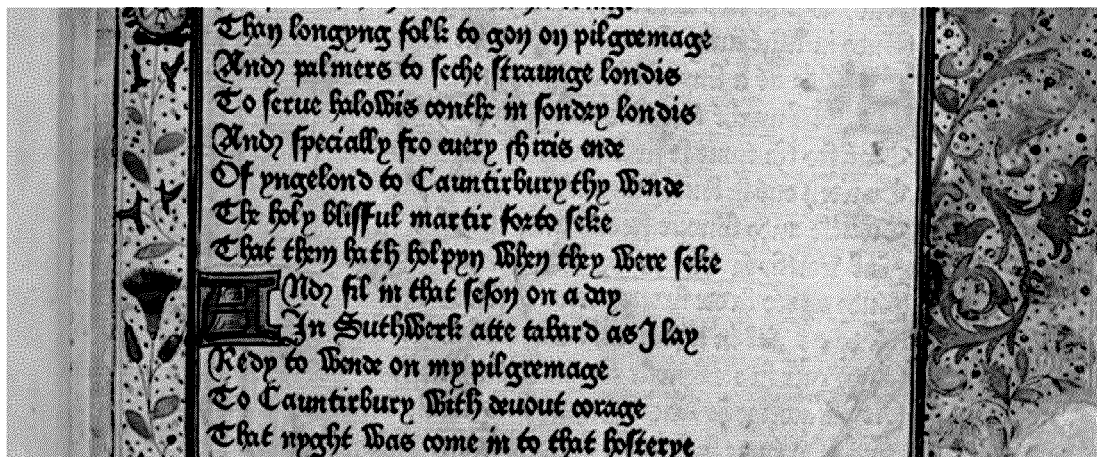

Figure 2: Merton's edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, the first book ever to be published in England from Caxton's press. It contained pages hand-painted pages, illuminated with gold and coloured inks.

Source: https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/mertons-copy-caxtons-first-edition-canterbury-tales

1.3.3. General Features of Middle English: Transition from Old English

- Old Norse was an inflexional language with comparatively free word order, but Middle English became a language with relatively strict word order, suggesting a loss of the inflexional endings. This was perhaps due to the inability of the Anglo-Normans to pronounce the endings correctly.

- A transition from the oral language to the written language is also noticed in Middle English. The Old English stopped being written for official purposes, so Middle English developed various dialects in different regions. From fourteenth century, as London emerged as the most important capital region, the London dialect emerged as a prestigious dialect. It was based on East Midland dialect. Chaucer wrote in the London dialect. On the other hand, the Northumbrian dialect survived as the basis of the Scottish dialect.

- A huge influx of French (Anglo-Norman) loan words and Latin words were noticed. We shall look at separately in the following sections.

- The Middle English retained only two distinct noun ending patterns for the plural form known as strong declension or adding of -s or -es ending (angle—angles) and weak declension, that is, adding of -en ending to the stem of the noun (name—namen). Modern English prefers the first one with exception like ox—oxen, child—children and so on.

- Middle English pronouns were mostly developed from Old English with exception of the third person plural, 'they', which was borrowed from the Old Norse. Similarly, sche>she was borrowed from the same source.

- The regularisation of verb endings like adding -ed, -d, -t was noticed. The conjugation of verbs resembled the modern-day practice. This point will be further explained in the following section on the influence of the French grammar.

- Under the Norman influence the insular script that was used for Old English was replaced by the continental Carolingian minuscule. Interestingly, the insular g and the Carolingian g looked different. The latter was pronounced as |j| or |y| and is retained in the words like night or laugh. Moreover, from

the 20 letter Old English Latin alphabet some were deleted like ash, wynn was replaced by w and so on. The new letters can be seen in **Plate no 8:**

Symbol	Description and notes
A	/a/, or in lengthened positions /a:/, becoming [æ:] by about 1500. Sometimes /au/ before (l) or nasals.
ai, ay	/ai/ (alternatively denoted by /ei/).
au, aw	/au/
B	/b/, but in later Middle English became silent in words ending -mb (while some words that never had a /b/ sound came to be spelt -mb by analogy).
C	/k/, but /s/ (earlier /ts/) before (e), (i), (y).
Ch	/tʃ/
Ck	/k/, replaced earlier (kk) as the doubled form of (k) (for the phenomenon of doubling, see above).
D	/d/
E	/e/, or in lengthened positions /e:/ or sometimes /ɛ:/ (see ee). For silent (e), see above.
Ea	Rare, for /ɛ:/ (see ee).
Ee	/e:/, becoming [i:] by about 1500; or /ɛ:/, becoming [e:] by about 1500. In Early Modern English the latter vowel came to be commonly written (ea). The two vowels later merged.
ei, ey	Sometimes the same as (ai); sometimes /ɛ:/ or /e:/.
Ew	Either /ɛu/ or /iu/.
F	/f/
G	/g/, or /dʒ/ before (e), (i), (y). The (g) in initial gn- was still pronounced.
Gh	[ç] or [x], post-vowel allophones of /h/ (this was formerly one of the uses of yogh). The (gh) is often retained in Chancery spellings even though the sound was starting to be lost.
H	/h/ (except for the allophones for which (gh) was used). Also used in several digraphs ((ch), (th), etc.). In some French loanwords, such as horrible, the (h) was silent.
I, j	As a vowel, /i/, or in lengthened positions /i:/, which had started to be diphthongised by about 1500. As a consonant, /dʒ/ (corresponding to modern (j)).
ie	Used sometimes for /ɛ:/.
K	/k/, used particularly in positions where (c) would be softened. Also used in (kn) at the start of words; here both consonants were still pronounced.
L	/l/
M	/m/
N	/n/, including its allophone [ŋ] (before /k/, /g/).
O	/o/, or in lengthened positions /ɔ:/ or sometimes /o:/. Sometimes /u/, as in some (modern son); the (o) spelling was often used rather than (u) when adjacent to i, m, n, v, w for legibility, i.e. to avoid a succession of vertical strokes.[?]
Oa	Rare, for /ɔ:/ (became commonly used in Early Modern English).
oi, oy	/ɔi/ or /ui/.
Oo	/o:/, becoming [u:] by about 1500; or /ɔ:/.
ou, ow	Either /u:/, which had started to be diphthongised by about 1500, or /ɔu/.
P	/p/
Qu	/kw/
R	/r/
S	/s/, sometimes /z/ (formerly [z] was an allophone of /s/). Also appeared as ſ (long s).
sch, sh	/ʃ/
T	/t/
Th	/θ/ or /ð/ (which had previously been allophones of a single phoneme), replacing earlier eth and thorn, although thorn was still sometimes used.
u, v	Used interchangeably. As a consonant, /v/. As a vowel, /u/, or /iu/ in "lengthened" positions (although it had generally not gone through the same lengthening process as other vowels – see history of /iu/).
W	/w/ (replaced Old English wynn).
Wh	/hw/.
X	/ks/
Y	As a consonant, /j/ (earlier this was one of the uses of yogh). Sometimes also /g/. As a vowel, the same as (i), where (y) is often preferred beside letters with downstrokes.
Z	/z/ (in Scotland sometimes used as a substitute for yogh: see above).

Figure 3
Source: Singh 158

Activities:

• Who are the Normans?

• What is meant by the words 'insular' and 'Carolingian'?

English people were always fond of borrowing words from different languages. It has been estimated that 70 per cent of English lexicon today is made of loan words while in Old English

• Find out more about Chaucer from the books on history of English literature and examine how he contributed to the resurgence and growth of both English literature and language.

> it is a mere 5 per cent. This behaviour of the language speakers, which amounts to a kind of imitation of the others, gives rise to so many synonyms and also the idiosyncrasies of the language.

1.3.4. Foreign Loanwords

In the previous unit, we have discussed the first two phases of Latin loanwords. In this unit we will focus on the third phase.

1.3.4.1. Latin of the Third period or Latin Borrowing in Middle English Age

In the Middle English period, French was the dominating cultural and technical source for new words. Hence, the extent of Latin borrowing is difficult to determine. These Latin borrowings differed from their French counterparts in being less popular and in gaining admission chiefly through the written language. We may, however, refer to some technical, legal, scientific and ecclesiastical terms: *abject, adjacent, allegory, history, homicide, contempt, custody, distract, frustrate, incarnate, include, legal, lucrative, minor, magnify, nervous, notary, ornate, picture, polite, popular, prevent, private, project, quiet, rational, reject, script, secular, solar, solitary, summary, testify, temporal, zenith, zephyr,* and so on.

1.3.4.2. The Extent of the French Influence on the English Language

As you have seen in our earlier discussion, the Anglo-Norman invaders formed the Upper classes of the English society after the conquest, so the first strata of the words belong to administration. Apart from the king and queen, most of other words relating to government are taken from French: *govern, reign, realm, crown, state, government, sovereign, council, chancellor, minister, people, nation,* and so on.

● The French also brought the feudal system along with them. So words like: *fief, feudal, vassal, liege,* and words related to rank like *prince, peer, duke, duchess, marquis, viscount, baron,* and so on were borrowed by the English tongue.

- Adjectives related to court life, like *honour, glory, court*, etc are also taken from them.

- Upper classes also took up the military matters into their hands. Hence the following loans from the various aspects of military life: *war, peace, battle, arms, armour, buckler, banner, ensign; officer, chieftain, captain, colonel, lieutenant, troops, vessel; challenge, enemy, espy, aid, prison*, and so on.

- The next area where the French consolidated their control was law. The legal terms include words like: *justice, just, judge, jury, summon, sue, plaintiff, plea, plead, property, crime, guile, felony, demesne*, and so on.

- The religious matters also came under the French control. We find a great many words related to the church, such as, *religion, service, trinity, saviour, virgin, angel, clergy, parish, baptism, sacrifice, sermon*, to say only a few. As the clergy were teachers of morality, thus we have a whole gamut of words related to moral ideas, from *virtue* to *vice: duty, conscience, pity, disciple, grace, covet, desire, lechery, cruel*, and many others.

- The Normans were the master class hence words like *sir, madam, master, mistress, servant, command, obey*, and others, were also borrowed from the French language.

- The French were (and still are) renowned for their culinary skills. The animals, as they were reared by the servants, the natives, retained their English names in their lifetime *(ox, cow, calf, sheep, swine, boar, deer)* but the moment they came to the dinner table for the masters' consumption, they received French names: *beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, brawn, venison* (Jespersen 82). The superiority of the French cuisine is attested by words like *sauce, boil, fry, toast, pasty, soup, sausage, jelly, dainty*, and others. Though *breakfast* is English, the more wholesome meals of the day, the *lunch* and the *dinner,* and the *feasts* in general are all French.

- On the whole, the masters knew how to enjoy life. The French influence also showcases an adaptation of a different kind of a lifestyle and appreciation of nature. The list includes words like: *joy, pleasure, delight, ease, comfort, flowers, fruits*, and others. We can also find words related to different games and pastime activities: *chase, hunt, brace, couple, leash, falcon, scent, track, cards, dice, ace, deuce, tray*, and others.

  We may also include the terms related to garments and dress in this category: *apparel, dress, costume, garment*, etc.

● The French were the teachers of the English in most matters related to art. In addition to words such as *art, beauty, paint, colour, image, design,* etc., there are also a great number of special words of technical importance, for instance the words related to architecture: *arch, tower, pillar, vault, porch, palace, castle, manor, mansion,* etc. The professionals who came into a closer contact with the upper class also received a French name: *tailor, butcher, painter, carpenter, joiner,* and so on.

● At this point of time you must refer to the introduction and realise that the emerging bilingualism of the English was instrumental in the survival of both the native words and their corresponding foreign loans. This habit of the speaker gave rise to the existence of the synonyms. However, you must keep in mind that never will the two words would have the same implication. In this case, the foreign loan is more formal, polite and refined and is more official, whereas, the native word is more informal, primitive, fundamental and closer to the nation's heart. For example, a *cottage* is finer than a *hut, aid* is more formal than the humble and heartfelt *help, commence* is more literary than *begin, nourish* is more scientific than *feed,* and so on. You can well understand the first ones in the above pairs are French while the latter ones are English.

The Nature of the French Loans

The Normans were felt to be an alien race and they occupied the country as invaders and rulers. Thus, they were quite conscious of their superiority and they did not mix very easily with the natives as the Scandinavians did. They retained close contact with their own nation for a longer period of time, and thus retained their difference. Moreover, they represented a higher culture, and had their own literature. Hence, the words borrowed from them spoke about a different kind of lifestyle and high standard.

A **hybrid** is a composite word formed of elements from different languages. For instance, here you are reading about the French affixes (prefixes and suffixes) which are added to native or foreign words to make new words.

● Finally, we may give a quick look at the hybrids. A few examples of the popular French affixes would include:
Suffixes: *shepherd-ess, mile-age, enlighten-ment, pay-ee, picture-esque, drunk-ard,* etc.
Prefixes: *en-slave, demi-god,* etc.

- After the beginning of the sixteenth century, French became the source of particular classes of erudite and technical words. These words are used mostly by the educated class and they retain their original pronunciation. Such words are:

  Words borrowed in the 16th century: *pilot, rendezvous, moustache, vase,* etc.

  Words borrowed in the 17th century: *parole, reprimand, ballet, burlesque, tableau, coquette, liaison, rapport, soup,* etc.

  Words borrowed in the 18th century: *guillotine, manoeuvre, espionage, tricolour, fusillade, canteen, critique,* etc.

  Words borrowed in the 19th century: *barrage, resume, Renaissance, profile, restaurant, menu, chef, chauffeur, attaché, prestige,* etc.

  Words borrowed in the 20th century: *garage, hangar, limousine, camouflage,* etc.

Activities:

- Hybrids are important ways to create new words from two different sources. Find out more about the hybrids. You may find Jespersen's chapter on 'Native Resources' in his book, titled *Growth and Structure of the English Language,* helpful.

1.3.4.3. French Influence on Grammar and Phonetics

As the grammatical systems of the two languages were very different, the loanwords are borrowed in different forms. For example, the English substantives and adjectives were taken from the French words in accusative case. They were borrowed in this particular case because the French accusatives had no '–s' endings. The English always associated the '–s' ending with the plural. However, in French the noun in the nominative case always ends in '–s'. Thus, when in some cases, the word is borrowed from the French nominative, the '–s' ending also enters the English language even if the word is not in plural form. Such exceptions include *fierce* (it is borrowed from the French nominative form *fiers* and not the French accusative form *fier*), *letters patents,* etc.

- When verbs were borrowed by the English, it is the stem of the French present plural that served as basis of the borrowed form. For instance, the verb *survivre* is conjugated in the present plural from as *nous survivez* (we survive). Thus when the verb was borrowed, the basis was *survivez*

not *survivre* (i.e., the infinitive); hence, in English the word became, to survive. Similarly, the verb *punir,* conjugated in the present plural form as *nouspunissons,* gave rise to the verb *to punish* in English; again, *finir,* conjugated as *nousfinissions* gave rise to the verb *to finish* in English; the French verb *dejeuner*, conjugated as *nousdejeunons* gave rise to dine, and so on.

● French verbs in their infinitive forms are sometimes borrowed in English as nouns because of their ending in the '—er': *dinner, remainder, user,* etc.; and from these nouns new verbs in English were formed: *dine, remain, use,* etc. however, some French infinitives were borrowed intact as verbs as *render, surrender,* etc.

● French words also caused some changes in the pronunciation. French words having long [i] sound got diphthongized into [ai], e.g., *fine, price, lion*; the long [u], written as 'ou' changed into [au], e.g., *spouse, devour.* This change is due to what we have discussed at the beginning of this section, i.e., the importance of the first syllable in English pronunciation. This habit was unconsciously extended to foreign words when they were first adopted. However, if you go back to the later French loans, you will find that these words have retained their original French pronunciation. It is because by this time the English language was mature enough to borrow the word as it is.

1.3.5. Towards Modernisation

Towards the end of the Middle English period a rapid standardisation of the English orthography was witnessed. By this time, you must have realised that changes in language are determined by factors that are not linguistic, rather they are political, social, or religious. This standardisation process, though linguistic, was initiated by certain social and historical developments that in effect altered the Middle English into its modern form.

While going through the Anglo-Saxon period, you have read about the Mercian and West-Saxon dialects, and you have seen that due to the political importance of a particular region, more literary works were written in that dialect. Hence that dialect became the standard norm. During this period, the literary dialect of the southwest Midlands became extremely important. The Old English tradition

continued here and was reflected in two books, *Ancrene Wisse* (later known as *Anchere Riwle*) and a manuscript of *Saints' Lives and Homilies*. These two texts could be found in Corpus Christi College (A) and Bodleian library (B), respectively and due to their same spelling system the language is called AB language by the scholars. This AB language showed certain features of the West Saxon and West Mercian dialects, and was orthographically regular and used conventionalised distinctions like oþer (other) and oðer (or). Since *Ancrene Wisse* was a handbook meant for the nuns, it was widely translated and read. This monastic orthography was popular for quite some time but as English was no longer a language of prestige, the norms of AB language was not followed by the writers.

But towards the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries four standards of English emerged. This has been studied by M. L. Samuels who detected four types of English standard forms that gradually emerged at different times.

Type I is the earliest instance of orthographic change that was based on central Midlands dialect. Characteristic forms were *sich* (such), *mych* (much), *ony* (any), *silf* (self), *stide* (stead), *ȝounn* (given), *siȝ* (saw). This spelling pattern was followed in the texts during the Wyclifffite movement and it dies out by the end of the fifteenth century.

Type II represents the early London English till the 1380s, and can be found in the Auchinleck MS (National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh). This shows a number of East Anglian features, reflecting immigration into the capital from that part of the country. Characteristic forms include *nouȝt/no* (not), *eld(e)* (old), *werld/warld* (world), *þai/hij* (they), *þei(ȝ)* (though), *noiþer/noþer* (neither), *schuld* (should), *wil* (will).

Type III is London English used from 1380 to 1425, often known as Chaucerian English. It is preserved in its best form in the Ellesmere MS of the Canterbury Tales. Once again this shows that this time the immigration was from central Midlands to London. Characteristic forms include *nat* (not), *old/e* (old), *world, they, though, neither, sholde* (should), *wol(e)/wil(e)* (will), *yaf* (give), *bot* (but), *swich*(e) (such), *hir(e)* (their), *thise* (these), *thrugh* (thorugh).

Type IV is often referred to Chancery standard as it appeared in government documents post 1430. It had strong northern Midlands dialect. Characteristic forms show more orthographic regularisation: *gaf* (give), *theyre* (their), *not, but, such(e), thes(e), thorough/þorow* (through), *shulde* (should).

These four types of orthographic changes show that due to the many local dialects, the standardisation of spellings took a long time to evolve. It became a possibility when the acquisition of the language became more systemised and had a strong written basis. The local dialects gradually disappeared from the fourteenth century onwards and with the Great Vowel Shift, English moved onto its modern form.

It would be interesting to follow the nature of migration from the different parts of Midland to London over the period of time. As you have already seen that after the Hundred Years of War and Black Death, the agricultural and feudal organisation of England like the other parts of Europe suffered a setback. The ties between the Lord and his vassals loosened. After the years of declining population, fallen grain price and rise in real wages, the feudal lords found out several ways to counter the situation of crises. In England when the feudal rents declined, the lords introduced sheep farming by enclosing their lands in order to increase their income. "In such regions, the peasants were evicted from the land while in other regions there was a tendency to commute feudal rent payment into money or kind" (Sinha 40). Hence, like today, immigration to the cities was in many cases a forced decision on the part of the common people. And this mass movement or displacement changed the nature of culture and language in unprecedented ways.

1.3.6. Summing Up

● You have learnt how the Norman conquest changed the economic, political, and linguistic behaviour of England. English survives the Conquest and re-emerges as the dominant language.

● The smoothening of the inflexional endings simplified the new form of the language.

● Compared to the Scandinavian loans, French loans show more erudition and culture showing how the English people were confronted with a higher culture and learnt to adapt to the social changes.

● Emergence of different dialects towards the end of fifteenth century shows that the emergent language lacked standard spelling or grammar.

1.3.7. Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer type questions:

1. Discuss the nature and extent of French influence on English language.

2. Analyse the general features of Middle English.

3. What are the four types or stages of standardisation of English orthography in the Middle Ages ?

Mid-length answer type questions:

1. Discuss the importance of Latin loans of Middle English period.

2. Who are the Normans ?

3. Discuss the influence of French grammar on English language.

4. How is Chaucer important for the revival of English ?

Short-answer type question:

1. What is *Anchrene Riwle* ?

2. Give examples of English French hybrids.

3. When did the British Parliament start conducting its session in English?

1.3.8. Suggested Readings

A combined 'Suggested Readings' of Module 1, Units 2, 3, and 4 has been provided at the end of Unit 4.

Unit – 4 ❑ From Early Modern English to World Englishes: Expanding the Canon

Structure

1.4.1. Objectives

In this unit you will learn:

- about the events that led to the modernisation and standardisation of English;

- the influence of Latin on English vocabulary and grammar;

- influence of Shakespeare and the translation of the Bible;

● mass education and the need for dictionaries and further spelling reforms in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

1.4.2. Introduction

The Modern English is characteristically the English spoken between the early Tudor period (which shows the transition from the late fifteenth century) and the late seventeenth century. In literary history, it corresponds to the period when Elizabethan and Jacobean literature was written. This English looks and reads quite like the contemporary tongue, though the differences persist. For example, you can understand Thomas Kyd's and Christopher Marlowe's texts without much difficulty, and may be an avid reader of William Shakespeare, but the lexical, orthographical, phonological and morphological differences are quite obvious. This period is characterised by a certain standardisation process which establishes the basic structure of the language. In the following section we shall look at the different socio-historical and literary incidents that led to the linguistic changes.

In the last section we discussed the four stages or types of English dialects that centred around London and changed according to the dialects spoken by the immigrants to the city. This must make you realise that the form of the language (grammar, spelling, pronunciation) was unstable and was ill-equipped to deal with the literary activities that increased due to complex governmentality, evolution of a written literature, printing of books, political requirement of translation, and the practical literacy of the mass. Under such circumstances one dialect (naturally the one spoken by the majority/people with greater socio-political visibility) supersedes others in importance and all literary activity centre on turning it into the standard form. But you must understand from the very beginning that this process is a dynamic one. For instance, in the later section of this chapter you will see how the English language changed in different centuries depending on the political and cultural interaction of Britain with other parts of the world. R. A. Hudson, a renowned sociolinguist, has listed four criteria of a standard form:

1. Selection: "somehow or other a particular variety must have been selected as the one to be developed into a standard language."

2. Codification: "some agency such as an academy must have written dictionaries and grammar-books to 'fix' the variety, so that everyone agrees on what is correct."

3. Elaboration of a function: "it must be possible to use the selected variety in all the functions associated with central government and with writing."

4. Acceptance: "the variety has to be accepted by the relevant population as *the* variety of the community—usually, in fact, as the national language." (qtd. in Smith 57)

1.4.3. Standardisation of English

We have already discussed how the East Midlands influenced the London language which served as the basis of Modern English. We shall now point out three major events that are associated with the standardisation of the language.

The discussion of the Modern English period should begin with the analysis of the fundamental change which makes a marked difference between Chaucer's English and the early Modern English. This is called the Great Vowel Shift and it was identified by Otto Jespersen. It involves change in the pronunciation of the long vowels that were pronounced with the tongue in the high position. They were diphthongised or tuned to gliding vowel combinations. For instance, the high vowels /i:/ and /u:/ were diphthongised producing the modern diphthongs /ai/ (glide, rhyme, eye) and /aʊ/ (now, out). Other changes are shown in the list in following Plate :

THE GREAT ENGLISH VOWEL SHIFT

An approximate summary in tabular form by Daniel Jones and C. L. Wrenn[1]

Words like	O.E. A.D. (1,000, Æfr...)	Chaucer	Shakespeare	Modern Southern
1. *Time*	iː (written i, í)	iː (written i)	əi	ai, ai
2. *Green*	eː (written e, é)	eˑ (written e, ee)	iː	iː
3. *Meat*	a (written e, æ)	ɛː (written e, ee)	eː	iː
4. *Name*	a (written a)	aː (written a)	eː	ei
5. *Small*	a (written æ, a)	ɑː (written a, au)	ɔː	ɔː
6. *Oak*	ɑː (written a, á)	ɔː (written o, oo)	oː	ou
7. *Food*	aː (written o, ó)	oː (written o, oo)	uː	uː
8. *Now*	uː (written u, uu)	uː (written u, ou)	əu	ɑu, au
9. *Sun*	u (written u, u)	u (written u, o)	ʌ	ʌ
10. *New*	eu (written eow)	iu (written ew)	iu	juː
11. *Few*	eu (written eaw)	eu (written ew)	eu, iu	juː
12. *Know*	ɑu (written aw, áw)	ɔu (written ow, ou)	ɔu, oː	ou
13. *Way*	ei (written eg, eí)	ɛi (written ei, ey, ai, ay)	ɛi, ei	ei
14. *Day*	ei (written æg, æg)	ɛi (written ai, ay)	ɛi, ɛr	ei
15. *Voice*		ɔi (written oi, oy)	ɔi	ɔi

[It is probable that short i, e, a (in closed syllables) and ɔ have not undergone much change.]

Figure: 1 (Source : Internet Open Source)

The Great English Vowel Shift changed the pronunciation pattern for ever which would have an impact on the orthography as well.

The establishment of the printing press was a major development in the history of the language and once again is a reminder of the fact that the change in language is often occasioned by incidents that has otherwise no relation to language. Knowledge of printing was brought to England by William Caxton, a wealthy English merchant who lived for many years in Bruges, a town in Netherlands. He enjoyed collecting books and spent time in translating French works into English. He learnt the craft of printing and constructed his press first in Bruges in 1475 and started publishing books in English. The following year he came to London and set up his workshop near the Palace of Westminster. He printed some hundred books including Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. His most well-known publication was Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, which was written in the Yorkshire or Midlands dialect. Caxton recorded the fact that the English spoken in one shire varied considerably from the language spoken in the other shires. He used the London variety which was being called *'our englysshe langage.'* (Cootes 146).

Caxton's press was followed by Richard Pynson's press in London and he preferred the Chancery English, perhaps because he became the King's official printer. This is a major development in English history because post Reformation, the Tudor monarchs started the translation and printing of the Bible which was previously unthinkable since the Holy Text was supposed to be read in Latin. We will later discuss the history and impact of Bible translation, but for the time being, you must realise the importance of Bible translation in English. The Bible reached every household, was being read aloud, the royalty supported its mass printing and mass accessibility, and in effect it created a standard of the language. Quite a few translations came out between 1525 and 1611. Not only the translation of the Bible, but hundreds of Greek and Latin texts were translated during this period.

The third incident that played a major role in standardisation of the language is the establishment of the **Chancery standard** of the language. "Chancery was the oldest, largest, and most independent of [the] national administrative offices. As custodian of the Great Seal, it was the central agency for the administration both of justice and of national affairs" (Fisher 875). Until the end of the fifteenth century, Chancery was synonymous with the national bureaucracy of England except for the closely allied Exchequer, and it was the extension of the royal household. After the fifteenth century, the bureaucracy was departmentalised and later chancery

was associated with only the legal matters. But during the fifteenth century, the chancery was responsible for all the paper works of the government, which includes the King's grant of land, or pension, licenses to marry heiresses, rights of wardship, appointments of sheriffs, powers of attorney, legal wrangles over inheritances, military commissions, grazing rights, confiscations, acknowledgements of debt, loans to the king, inventories of the king's jewels, agreements with foreign powers— anything that would bear the seal of the King. Its linguistic significance becomes clear from the 1430s, when the Chancery clerks who so far wrote all these documents in Latin or French, started to write in English. English used for this purpose was the London dialect used along with Latin and French words. This established a written standard of official or correct English. How much of this standardisation was an achievement of the bureaucratic clerks has been debated by the linguists but it is for sure that the Chancery norms became the standard. With Pynson's press, it became popular.

Activities:

1. Try to summarise the main point/s of the Great Vowel Shift. Who is Otto Jespersen? Name a book written by him.

2. How would you define 'Modern English'?

3. Define the following terms : orthography; dialect; standard dialect; language variety; Chancery English.

1.4.4. The Influences

The Early Modern period is a complex one when we think of the variety of socio-political changes, each exerting an effect on the development of the language. We can understand that culturally, England has become more self-sufficient and the language has reached a certain maturity level when it can be written and printed for mass consumption and experiment with other languages and its own different forms. From this perspective we shall look at three major influences which aided the lexical extension and morphological changes of the language. These are the influence of Latin loan words which has become a 'deluge' in this period, the translation of Bible as a result of the Reformation, and finally Shakespeare's genius which left an indelible mark on the English tongue.

1.4.4.1. Latin of the Fourth Period or Latin Borrowing in the Modern English Age

You have already read about the Latin influence on both the Old and Middle English phases. The complexity of the loans has varied, for the simpler people borrowed simpler words, the more erudite people would opt for the complex and abstract words. C.L. Barber says, "Latin loans in Old and Middle English are a mere trickle, but in early Modern English the trickle becomes a river, and by 1600 it is a deluge" (191). We shall now take a look at the nature of these borrowings:

- Some words are taken over bodily in their Latin form with their Latin spelling, like, *genius, species, cerebellum, militia, apparatus, focus, torpor, squalor, tedium, lens,* etc. In some cases, however, the original Latin meaning of the words are not retained. For instance, *lens* meant lentil, and it was applied to optical glass because of a double convex lens looks like a lentil seed.

- Borrowing also took place in some specific fields. For example, there are some scientific words like *equilibrium, momentum, vacuum*; some mathematical terms like *radius, calculus, area, series*; some legal terms like *affidavit, alias, caveat*; nouns like *relaxation, relegation*; adjectives like *offensive, relevant*; verbs like *investigate, imbue*; and everyday words like *album, circus, miser,* etc.

- In some cases the loans were given a more anglicised form. For example, Latin *desparatus* becomes English *desperate*—here the ending has changed. The ending may be omitted as in *complexus* which became *complex.*

- Latin words are in many ways influenced by the French words because English had borrowed words both directly from Latin and also via French loans. Remember, many French words are derived from Latin. This peculiar incident of borrowing through another language had led to many interesting developments. For instance, Latin ending '—itas' becomes English '—ity' (as in *immaturity*), Latin '—entia' and '—antia', may become '—ance', or '—ancy' (as in *transcendence, delinquency, relevancy*), etc. In some cases the English had retained the French pronunciation of the Latin words but corrected the spelling after coming across the original Latin word. For

example, *perfect* was first borrowed as *perfet*, from the French word *perfait* which was borrowed from the original Latin *perfectus*. When the English came across the Latin form they introduced the 'c'. Similarly 'c' was introduced in Modern English *verdict* (ME *verdit* < French *verdit* < Latin *uredictum*), 'b' was added to *debt* (ME *dette* < French *dette* < Latin *debitum*), 'p' was added to receipt (ME from Anglo-Norman *receite* < Latin receptum), etc.

● More than 10,000 Latin words were borrowed through the written language, many through the writings of Thomas More and William Shakespeare. For instance, words like *acceptance, denunciation, compatible, dissipate, comprehensible, combustible, implacable,* found its way into the English language through the works of More just as *antipathy, allurement, emphasis, emulate, hereditary* owe their introduction to Shakespeare. Remember the list is by no means an exhaustive one.

● Jespersen has argued that this excessive borrowing from the Latin loans was due to the 'mental laziness' of the English people who found it more convenient to borrow the foreign words rather than looking for their own native resources. So in spite of the presence of native adjectives, Latin words were borrowed. However, every word develops its own shade of meaning as the time passes by and now the overwhelming presence of similar adjectives has added to the richness and variety of the English tongue. For example, look at the adjectives like *watery* and *aquatic*. Both are adjective forms of *water*, first formed from native sources by adding '-y', the second borrowed from Latin. Today they have very different usages. One may have 'watery eyes', but 'aquatic animals' are more common. Similar other cases can

The simultaneous borrowing of words from both French and Latin sources has given rise to synonyms at three levels, where the first is native, second French and the third one is Latin. Their degree varies from being popular, literary and learned, for instance : *rise—mount—ascend, ask— question—interrogate, goodness—virtue—probity, fast— firm—secure, fire—flame— conflagration, fear—terror— trepidation, holy—sacred— consecrated, time—age—epoch.*

be seen in the following list where the first word is native and the second Latin—*fatherly: paternal, motherly: maternal, heavenly: celestial, daily:*

diurnal, bloody: sanguinary, kingly: royal, etc. Some native words have got Latin foreign adjectives, for example—*mouth: oral, ox: bovine, nose: nasal, eye: ocular, mind: mental, school: scholastic, book: literary, house: domestic, town: urban, letter: epistolary,* etc.

● The extreme borrowing of the Latin words has given rise to an incident known as **Johnsonese**. The term owes its origin in the style of writing adopted by Dr Samuel Johnson. He was such an avid follower of the Latin expressions and syntax that his prose became somewhat constricted and peculiar, and the common readers may find it a bit too difficult to understand. However, many writers of post-Renaissance period followed this style. Some examples you may find interesting:

Instead of saying 'a great crowd came to see', you have 'a vast concourse was assembled to witness;' instead of 'the great fire spread,' 'the disastrous conflagration extended its devastating career' was used; and the simple 'to be starved to death' became 'to sink from inanition to non-entity.'

● Though many borrowings of the modern period have been taken over unchanged, a number of them have been anglicised by adding native endings. Latin suffixes such as '—ate' (from '—atus'), '—ic' (from '—icus') and ' —al' (from '—alis') have become part of the English language as in *educate, elastic, abysmal.*

● **Latin influence on English Grammar and Syntax**

Latin influenced English not only in vocabulary but also in grammar and syntax. For a long time, European students were compulsorily taught Latin grammar at school. On account of this Latinate construction it has been long considered wrong to say in English 'it is me'. The usage is not wrong according to English grammar. But in Latin the 'be' verb must always take the nominative after it instead of the accusative one. Therefore, we use 'it is I'. The absolute participle, as in 'this being the case' came into English in imitation of the Latin construction. Owing to this influence words like *who* and *which* became more popular as relative pronouns instead of *that*, which is their old native counterpart. Milton's grand style is in many ways a result of the borrowing of the Latin syntax. Thus, C. L. Wren writes: "English is a Germanic language, belonging therefore to a different group

of the Indo-European family from Latin: yet the ghost of the Latinate traditions still haunts our classes."

The history of Latin borrowing is a complex one since the loan words were borrowed from the Latin in every age for more than 1000 years. In fact, the first Latin words to find their way into the language owe their adoption to the early contact between the Romans and the Germanic tribes on the continent, i.e., much before the settlement of the Anglo-Saxon people in England or the Old English period. They are known as the **Latin of the Zero Period or Continental Borrowing.** The Germanic tribes were located on the northern frontier of the Roman state along the Rhine and Danube. Close to the border was Treves; in the third and fourth centuries it was the most flourishing city in Gaul, having the churches, military roads, and the luxury and splendour of the Roman civilisation. The two races came into contact chiefly because of the military exploits and business relations, particularly the wine trade. The main feature of the words of this group of loans is their simplicity, which was mainly due to the low status of civilisation of the Teutons or Germans. For instance, words are all related to warfare: *camp* (battle), *segn* (banner), *mil* (mile), *straet* (street), etc. Words related to trade: *ceap* (cheap), *mangian* (to trade), *mynet* (coin), etc.; words related to wine trade: *win* (wine), *flasce* (flask), *cylle* (leather bottle), *sester* (jar), *eced* (vinegar), etc.; architectural words: *cealc* (chalk), *copor* (copper), *pic* (pitch), *tigele* (tile), etc.; household articles: *cytel* (kettle), *mese* (table), *teped* (carpet), *pyle* (pillow), *cycene* (kitchen), *cuppe* (cup), *disc* (dish) *line* (rope), etc.; food : *ciese* (cheese), *spelt* (wheat), *pipor* (pepper), *popig* (poppy), *butere* (butter), etc.; and miscellaneous words: *plume* (plum), *pise* (peas), *pawa* (peacock), *sicor* (safe), *casere* (emperor), etc. None of these borrowings speak of any kind of special technical knowledge or show any penchant for learning. These are common everyday words, and they are mostly transmitted orally. Thus, many have changed in their pronunciation and spellings and there is no pattern visible in this change.

Activities:

1. Prepare a chart of all the different kinds of borrowings of Latin into English, i.e., Latin of the zero period, first period (Celtic transmission), second period (OE period due to Christianization), third period (ME period) and fourth period (Renaissance). Point out the similarities and differences of the nature of the loans.

2. What is Johnsonese? Consult relevant books and internet sources and provide a list of examples of Johnsonese?

1.4.4.2. Translation of the Bible into Modern English

Translation of the Bible was seen as a privilege given to the common people for reading it in their own language. Previously, the Bible was only available in Latin and only the clerics with the knowledge of the language were able to read and hence interpret it for the common people. During Black Death, when many priests died due to their close contact with the dying patients, a decision was taken that the last rites could be done by the laity when no priests were available. This practice influenced the radical thinkers like Wycliffe who proposed the idea that the spiritual well-being can be addressed by the individual. The idea was taken forward by Martin Luther and his followers and thus Protestantism and later the Reformation of the Church set off as a historical movement. Added to this was the political condition of England under the Tudor monarchs who were trying to gain more control over the ecclesiastical matters and consolidate monarchical power. Hence, after the initial protests from the Church, the translation of Bible received the royal permission and patronage. And as we have discussed it earlier, translation of the Bible helped the standardisation process of the English language.

We shall now look at the different editions of the Bible to understand the changing pattern of the language and history.

➢ **Wycliffe's Bible**

Born around 1320, John Wycliffe is the first person to translate the entire Bible into English. It took him about twenty-two years to complete the work and he based his translation on the Latin Vulgate, Greek and Hebrew originals. He also divided the Bible into chapters following the pattern set by Cardinal Hugo in 1250. His version of the Bible was quite popular and it was widely copied and translated.

Wycliffe had been much opposed in this work by the Roman Catholics. In fact, Wycliffite Bible must be seen as the beginnings of the protestant movement which was a pan-European movement and later came to England in the sixteenth century as Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church was opposed to the translation of the Bible for the sake of preserving the authenticity of the text that they believed would be lost once it was translated to the common man's language and thus would be open to subjective interpretations. The Reformers believed that the Bible should

be translated so that every man could read the word of God and do not have to wait for the priests to explain it to him. This battle went on for a long time and history relates a long list of martyrs who died at the stake for translating or interpreting the Bible. Wycliffe died in 1384. His Bible was printed in four volumes in 1850.

➤ **Tyndale's Version**

In 1525, William Tyndale (1494-1536), one of the great Protestant Reformers, and a contemporary of Luther, made another English translation based on the Greek translation of the New Testament made by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516. Tyndale' translation was done under great difficulties, partly at Cologne and partly at Worms, in exile, poverty and distress, fleeing from the Catholic persecution. Several editions were printed; this was the first English New Testament on print. Fifteen thousand copies were issued, which were secretly brought to England in bales of cloth or sacks of flour. The church also tried its best to stop this Bible from reaching common people, and thousands were executed and the copies were burnt.

Tyndale's version is remarkable for its language and accuracy. This was the main source for the Authorised Version. He also translated the Pentateuch and Jonah.

➤ **Coverdale's Version**

In 1535, the whole Bible, Old Testament and New, was for the first time printed in England by Miles Coverdale, who made the translation from the German and Latin. Much influenced by Tyndale, he made a few changes to the earlier text, and introduced linguistic conservatism.

➤ **Matthew's Bible**

Matthew's Bible was the first complete Bible to be printed in England in 1537, under the royal licence of Henry VIII. The chamberlain of Colchester, Thomas Matthew was the person behind it and the book was edited by John Rogers, a friend of Tyndale.

➤ **The Authorised Version**

At the beginning of the seventeenth century there were four versions of the Bible existing in England:

- the Great Bible, made from Coverdale's edition in 1539, was the first official version used for the Protestant England. The version was also known as Cranmer's Bible, because Archbishop Thomas Cranmer wrote a preface to it. It was a volume of tremendous influence as it was kept in every parish by the law and was read aloud.

- the Geneva Bible, prepared in 1560 by the Reformers led by William Whittingham in Geneva, where they fled during the persecutions under Queen Mary. Several Elizabethan authors including Shakespeare quoted from it. It was also kept in churches and home as per the Queen's order.

- the Bishop's Bible, published in 1568 by a committee of bishops led by Archbishop Parker, replaced the Geneva Bible. It was the primary text for scholars working on the King James Bible.

- The Douay/Rheims Bible (1582/1609-10) was translated by the Roman Catholics in Europe. The New Testament appeared in Rheims and the two-volume Old Testament in Douay. This was based on the Latin Vulgate.

These translations were by no means perfect. As time went on, the meanings of the English words also changed. So the need for a fresh translation arose. Accordingly, under the patronage of King James I, fifty-four translators, including High Churchmen, Puritans and the best scholars of the land undertook the task of translating the Bible, taking as their source all the best editions hitherto published and also the Hebrew and Greek originals. In 1611, after a period of five years of such intense scholarship, the Bible was published and it is known as the King James Version or the Authorised Version. The Bible that you read today is this one.

We shall now look at the importance of two specific editions of the Bible and the general influence of the biblical language on the English language.

- *Importance of Tyndale's Translation*

Tyndale's chief aim was to make the Bible easily accessible to the common people. His was a fresh translation, using the Latin Vulgate, Luther's German translation, and the Greek text published by Erasmus. Tyndale seems to have a genius for using beautiful phrases which have become idiomatic in their longer usage. Many of his phrases have been taken over bodily by the translators of the Authorised Version. He coined the word *scapegoat* from the Hebrew text. He

was also a master in capturing the beauty of the Hebrew poetry in his translation. The now familiar phrases from the Authorised Version : *the burden and heat of the day, eat, drink and be merry, the powers that be*, and *the fatted calf* are all from his translation. He first attempted to make a literal translation of the Greek words which he believed were changed by the later superstitious connotations. Thus he wrote *elder* for *priest* (Greek *presbyteros*), *congregation* for *church* (Greek *ecclesia*) and *favour* for *grace* (Greek *charis*). But before his death he revised his edition and replaced some of these words with the traditional expressions. Thus, he changed the phrase *highly favoured* that appears in the Annunciation (Luke I, 28) with *full of grace*. However, the makers of Authorised Version preferred the previous translation. On the other hand, he translated the Greek word *agape* as *love* in I Corinthians 13: 'Though I spake with the tonges of men and angels and yet had no **love** I were eve as soundinge brasse: or as a tynklynge Cymball'. The Authorised Version used the word charity in its stead: 'Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, and have not **charity**, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal'. Again, the Latin Vulgate has used the expression *pauperes euangelizantur* (Luke VII, 22), which the Authorised Version translated as *to the poor the gospel is preached*; but Tyndale did a better job when he translated it as *to the poore is the glad tydinges preached*. Thus the phrase *glad tidings* has entered the language. Tyndale is also remarkable for his use of compound words like: *broken-hearted, fellow-soldier, house-top, long-suffering, rose-coloured, sea-shore, stumbling-block, wine-press, two-edged*, and so on.

● *Importance of the Authorised Version*

Contrary to Tyndale's translation, the translators of King James version were more conservative in their approach to language since they were looking more towards the beautification of the existing translation. They used the Bishop's Bible and Tyndale's Bible as their linguistic model. They retained an archaic flavour of the words even though the modern alternatives were available. Hence, word orders like *speak ye unto, things eternal*, or words like *wist* for knew, *brethren, brake* instead of *broke* were kept. This was done to make the language form a certain consciousness among its readers so much so that such usages attained some kind of a linguistic autonomy. Also, such usages are associated with a specific context, hence when one says *a gold, and frankincense and myrrh*, a certain biblical context is immediately identified.

This is why greatest impact of the Authorised Version has been on English phraseology. This version of the Bible had a great influence on the phrase making in English. In some cases, the beauty of the phrase lies in the image it uses. For instance, you have just read the phrase *sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal* that is found in I *Corinthians* 13. You may consider this to be the skill of the translators. However, once you look at the original Latin *aes sonans aut cymbalum tinniens*, you would realise the beauty of the phrase lies in its choice of imagery and not on the language skill of the translators for they have almost translated it verbatim.

Contrary to what the Reformers like Tyndale did, the translators of the Authorised Version used a little bit archaic language for they felt that the language of faith should be a bit different from the language used daily so as to preserve the mystery of religion. Thus they changed Tyndale's more colloquial expressions with more dignified parlance. It is possible that it was because of this tendency to use slightly archaic words in the Authorised Version that a few words, which were becoming obsolete, revived, such as *damsel and raiment* (the latter meaning 'clothing').

The other important contribution of the Authorised Version has been standardisation of the language. The printing of the Bible and later the Book of Common Prayer set up a standard of written English, that streamlined the language and made a formal style that would characterise the lexical nature of the language.

Influence of the Biblical Language on English

The habit of listening to the Bible every Sunday has a more lasting effect on the Englishman's psyche. It has influenced the prose-rhythm and phrasing as well as the images used in the daily speech of the common man. These borrowings are not always intentional. For example, when someone says 'I wash my hands of the whole business' he is not aware of the fact that he is actually referring to a biblical incident. More common expressions like *gone to kingdom come, common or unclean, cared for none of those things* are all derived from the Holy Book.

The influence of the biblical stories and names has become a part of the common European culture. They form the basis of what is known as the 'cultural history' of the people.

Activities:

1. In which language/s was the Bible originally written?

2. What is Latin Vulgate?

3. What is the Book of Common Prayer?

4. Who commissioned the translation of the Authorised Version? How many translators were engaged?

5. Prepare a list of the Bible translators.

1.4.4.3. Shakespeare's Vocabulary and the Enhancement of English Language

Shakespeare's use of language, like the translation of the Bible, influenced the process of standardisation of the Early Modern English. At this juncture of linguistic development, almost a century after Chaucer, William Shakespeare's retinue of successful plays with a flair for experimental linguistic ventures gave the language an edge and vivacity. If Chaucer brought the language back from oblivion and gave it a new form, Shakespeare improved upon this form and added beauty, boldness and panache to it.

➤ **Shakespeare's Extraordinary Vocabulary: Lexical Extension**

The English lexicon grew from 100,000 to 200,000 lexemes during this early period. This is a phenomenal progress which would once again be witnessed during the Industrial Revolution and later global expansion. Otto Jespersen calculated that Shakespeare's vocabulary consisted of approximately 24000 words. The number may not mean that much to you. Let us take it in this way: Milton's vocabulary has 7000-8000 words, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* taken together has 9000 words, the New Testament has 4800 words. Some scholars have argued that Shakespeare must not have used more than 15000 or 21000 words or 17000 to 20000 lexemes.This means that Shakespeare was using almost 12 to 13 per cent of the word stock available during his time. This in itself is a great achievement. Nevertheless, that does not make any compromise with the immensity of Shakespeare's knowledge. What is more important than the volume of the vocabulary is its diversity and variety. Do not think that Milton was less erudite than Shakespeare for he has used lesser number of words. Shakespeare has written upon a variety of topics, he has employed characters from every walk of life in his plays, and he has been honest with their

speeches and characters. Moreover, he has touched upon every chord of human sensibility. Thus, his need of words was so great.

> A lexeme is a theoretical construct that stands for the unitary meaning and shared syntactic properties of a group of word forms. A lexeme is stripped of any inflectional endings. Thus *play, plays, played,* and *playing* are all inflected forms of the lexeme *play.* In a similar vein, *cat* and *cats* are inflected forms of the same lexeme, i.e., *cat.* Source: Andreou (Oxford bibliographies)

An example can be of great use to you. This is taken from *Merry Wives of Windsor* (IV, ii, 92). A disguised Falstaff has been beaten out of the house by Frank Ford and two women, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, who are disgusted with Falstaff. They discuss whether such beating is enough for a person like Falstaff. Mistress Page reflects:

> The spirit of wantonness is sure scared out of him. If the devil have him not in fee-simple, with fine and recovery, he will never, I think, in the way of waste attempt us again.

There are four legal terms used here: *waste*—meaning damage to property by a tenant; *Fee-simple*—meaning a private estate belonging to an owner and his heirs forever; and *fine* and *recovery*—fine refers to an agreement to transfer land possession and *recovery* is a procedure for transferring property into full ownership. Together they mean 'with everything transferred to him'. If we put all the legal terms together, Miss Page believes that unless the devil owns Falstaff fully and completely, he can never stop being wicked and they can never be safe. Shakespeare could adopt new terms and use them as he wished, giving variety to his metaphors and images.

Shakespeare's creativity in the use of words has been recorded by David Crystal in his book *The Stories of English.* He points out that in comparison to his contemporaries like the playwright John Marston who has 200 *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) attributions, Philip Sidney 400, Edmund Spenser 500, Thomas Nashe 800, Shakespeare has been able to add 2035 lexemes to the dictionary. These lexemes can be divided into four groups, namely, (a) no usage of the word recorded by anyone other than Shakespeare; (b) usage of the same word in the same sense recorded after a gap of at least a generation (25 years); (c) usage of the same word

in a different sense recorded after a gap of at least a generation (25 years); (d) usage of the same word in the same sense recorded within a generation. All these divisions show how Shakespeare has controlled the lexical imagination of his own generation and that of the years to come.

> **Shakespeare's Experimentation with Words**

Shakespeare has played with his characters and he has amused his audience and later his readers by experimenting with words. He has borrowed words from the provincial dialects, Latin, and everyday life of the common people with equal veracity. We shall look into these components individually:

- In his early life he tried to introduce 'local colour' in *The Taming of the Shrew* by making Christopher Sly use some provincialisms like, *pheeze* ('to drive away'). Touchstone in *As You Like It* and the Fool in *King Lear* has also used similar words. In his later years he has used such words to achieve poetic effect. For instance, the word *bolstered* used in the expression *blood-bolter'd* in *Macbeth* must have been taken from a West Midland dialect.

- A special mention must be made of the rustic dialect used by Edgar, dressed as a peasant, in *King Lear*. Shakespeare so modified his speech that it retained the rustic flavour but at the same time did not become too remote to be understood by his London audience. In short, it is a literary or stage dialect and not a real one. We shall once again come across such an achievement when talking about Shylock.

- Shakespeare has borrowed words from Latin like, *castigate, auspicious, eruption, peremptory, verbosity,* and so on. He has also borrowed words from everyday usages like, *bump, gloomy, dwindle,* and so on. The word *dwindle* is derived from the Old English word *dwinan* which means 'to pine.' The word was used in the province of Shropshire.

- Shakespeare was well known for his interesting usages like *'sblood* (god's blood), *'slid* (god's eyelid), *Newgate, clack-dish* (wooded dishes used by beggars to make sound and ask for alms), and so on. These words were otherwise common in everyday usage, Shakespeare brought them to the literary texts and gave them a new lease of life.

- Many of his words were again used by the nineteenth century writers like Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who brought them back to life: *antre, cerement, overteem, rubious, silverly, unchary, water-drop*.

Shakespeare has also made new words and compounds in several ways:

- At times he added the French prefix 'en—'/ 'em—' to make new words like, *enact, embattle, enlink, enmesh, enkindle, endear* ('increased in value'), *engirt*, and so on. With the prefix 'un—' he has framed words like *unavoided* ('inevitable'), *unless, unbody, uncharged* (acquit), *unvalued* ('precious beyond valuation') and others.

- He joined one adjective with another to make new effective poetic compounds like *daring-hardy, happy-valiant*.

- He used adjectives as verb like, *happy* as 'to make happy', *safe* as 'to make safe'. He also used nouns as verbs like, *spaniel'd* ('to follow like a spaniel'), *childed* and *fathered*.

- Notable is his use of conversion or functional shifts when once word from one part of speech is used for another part of speech. For example, *thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds* (*Romeo and Juliet*, III, v), *he chided as I fathered* (*King Lear* III, vi).The practice of using body parts as verbs like *arm, elbow* that we do in modern day speech owes to him. Functional shift is a distinctive feature of the English language.

➢ **The Uniqueness of His Phrases**

Shakespeare is the creator of many phrases which we use today, for instance, *past praying for, patience on a monument, to be or not to be, caviar to the general* (where general means 'the common multitude'), and so on. Because of its rampant usage for different purposes some phrases have acquired different meanings. Some interesting examples will be: *a foregone conclusion* (used in *Othello*, it originally meant 'an experience previously undergone') and *more honoured in the breach than the observance* (used in *Hamlet* it refers to the Danish habit of heavy drinking, on which he says that the custom would be more honourable if broken than observed). The popularity of the idioms shows how Shakespeare influenced generations of speakers. He may not have coined all of them but he definitely made them last longer in the public imagination.

➤ Purpose of Such Usages

Shakespeare used his language chiefly to individualise his characters. The speeches of the gravediggers in *Hamlet* and the artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* represent his intimate knowledge of the life of the common people. He has also used euphuistic expressions or inkhorn terms, but mostly to characterise the dramatic personages.

The most interesting creation of characters from the point of view of language is perhaps Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Compare him with Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, you would instantly notice Shakespeare's superiority as far as the language is concerned. There was no such Anglo-Jewish dialect that he could put into his mouth to make him stand out from the others. Yet, he was able to make him linguistically different from the Christians. Shylock knew the Old Testament very thoroughly and therefore could include references to it. He uses some specific biblical words which are otherwise not found in Shakespeare like, *synagogue, Nazarite, publican.* Instead of *interest* he calls it *advantage* or *thrift*, instead of *usury* he calls it *usance.* He uses plurals like *moneys, equal* for 'exact', *rheum* to mean 'saliva', *estimable* for 'valuable' and other such languages which make him sound different from the other characters in the play.

➤ Difference of Elizabethan English from its Modern-Day Usage

Words acquire different meanings in different ages. Thus, as modern readers we may miss many of the implications which were instantly felt by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Let us see a few examples: A *bonnet* then meant a man's cap, thus Lear walks *unbonneted,* to *charm* always implied application of magical power, especially witchcraft, *notorious* could be used in a good sense as 'well known', *succeed* was a colourless word, *companion* had a bad implication, like *fellow* now, and *politician* always meant intriguing or scheming. There are many such examples.

It would also strike many of the modern readers that Shakespeare's English lacks in grammar. You must bear in the mind that Elizabethan and Jacobean English was characterised by a kind of flexibility and freedom which are usually associated with the Renaissance philosophy in general. As the loss of the inflexional endings removed the morphological differences, so it became possible to use nouns and adjectives as verbs. Elizabethans often interchanged the functions of different parts of speech in such a way as it seemed logical to them. They did not always care much about the grammatical correctness.

Figure 2: Idioms popularised by Shakespeare
Source: David Crystal, *Stories of English,* pp 330-31

Shakespeare has used this flexibility to its fullest extent. Jespersen writes, "One of the most characteristic features of Shakespeare's use of the English language is his boldness" (209). You have already read about the boldness of his metaphor in his phrases, but you must also be able to appreciate the boldness of his sentence structure. For instance, he does not always care for grammatical parallelism: *a thought which quartered hath one part wisdom/ And ever three parts coward* (here following the rules of grammar, it should have been 'cowardice', for 'wisdom' is a noun and 'coward' is an adjective); he writes *the whole ear of Denmark* instead of 'the ear of whole Denmark'; he uses the pronoun as a noun as in *Lady, you are the cruellest she alive* (here 'she' is a pronoun being used as a noun); he uses double negatives as in *nor never none shall mistress be of it*; he uses double superlatives, like *it was the most unkindest cut of all*, and so on.

What you must remember is that Shakespeare's syntax is that of an orator. It is meant for a drama that is to be seen and not to be read. Drama is supposed be more authentic in capturing the various degree of emotion of the characters rather than the grammatical correctness of their utterances. Thus, his syntax is familiar, conversational and spontaneous, and not studied, formal and bookish. The greatness of Shakespeare lies in his ability to make his language suitable for the characters and in doing so, he created a unique style that has set a standard for the users of the English language.

Activities:

1. Consult relevant books and internet sources and list some of the words used by Shakespeare that passed into the English language. The list should not include any example mentioned in this unit.

2. Listen to the lecture you will find in the following link:
   https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b
   d&q=Impact+of+Skespeare+on+the+English+language%2C+video
   +lectures#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:da7c4297,vid:ny-G1ijEcSo,st:0
   Find out similar other links to listen to lectures on Shakespeare's English.

3. For a more exhaustive list of idioms that were used by Shakespeare, refer
   to David Crystal's book.

1.4.5. Language as a Social Arbiter

The development of English from the Anglo-Saxon language which was divided
into several dialects, through the long period of political and sociological
subservience during the Anglo-Norman era, to the Elizabethan standardisation,
shows a trajectory of development and evolution of the language. By the sixteenth
century the correct English was established as the language spoken by the urban,
upper class, erudite speakers who had considerable social representation and
visibility, and the correctness of the language was seen as the marker of moral
rectitude. The division in the British society from nobles, clergy and everyone else,
to gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, artificers and labourers, shows that
the social order was opening up, giving rise to a newly emergent middle class—
an event that would be a natural outcome of the rising capitalist economy. With
the crises in agriculture following the Black Death, destruction of the feudal
economy, rise of wool trade and the geographical explorations—all of which aided
the nascent capitalism—the upward social mobilisation was not unlikely. The legend
of Dick Whittington, the poor boy who became the Mayor of London, is a testimony
of the fact. Under such circumstances, the ability to speak the correct language
was an advantage for the middle class: not only did it open the avenues for new
job opportunities, it also increased their social worth. Language, as it developed,
however retained some social markers of hierarchy, *you* and *thou* is a good example
of the point. Traditionally, *you* expressed deference to authority or to social
superiority and *thou* was a more intimate or contemptuous term. By the end of
the fifteenth century, *you* began to lose its special sense of deference and
increasingly, *you* drove *thou* out of usage by the eighteenth century. The rise and
fall of the second-person pronoun show the movement of a society towards a more
egalitarian direction.

1.4.6. Evolution of Modern English from 1700 to 1900

So far in this chapter you have studied the lexical, grammatical and morphological aspects of the language. The history of this period relates more to the changing socio-political significance of the English language that rose as the power of the British nation consolidated and gradually became a world empire. During these two centuries, England and Scotland united, and what was a nascent empire in the 1700, became a colonial power by the 1900 with its colonies in every continent—Africa, Asia, Australia and America. What you learn is the aspect of linguistic hegemony that would help you to understand the emergence of English from a national language to an international language.

The making of the empire is always marked with darker aspects of power. The slave ships and the draining of the wealth of the colonies in the international front and the rising economic disparity between the rich and poor as industrialisation progressed back at home, presented a new social complexity in which language took up a new role. In the previous section we have already read about the importance of linguistic standardisation, and how different factors contributed to this process. In this section we shall learn: (1) how this dynamic process continues and sets up new standards through codification and (2) that linguistic standardisation and state hegemony are inter-dependent though there are various socio-political layers interspersed between them.

The most important aspect of this period is the increase in mass literacy. "With increase in literacy, many readers developed an interest in literary and linguistic criticism. Journalists, philosophers, scientists and clerics... offered verbal criticism, as it was called, finding outlets in the essays of the *Tatler, Idler* and *Rambler*, as well as in the more orthodox instruments of language codification and standardization, namely dictionaries and grammars" (Finegan 105). Thus language was not only used for religious or government purpose, but also for creating various literary, scientific and cultural contexts in which the educated people had a role to play. Three specific new prose genres emerged in literature: essays, fiction and letters; one may add the diary/journal writing as well. Both colloquial and literary prose styles evolved that would cater to the various requirements that the language was supposed to fulfil.

Two important processes of linguistic regularisation must be mentioned in this context: the codification through dictionaries and grammar books and the simplification of spellings.

1.4.7. Attempts at Codification

Dryden described English as 'extremely imperfect' and Johnson commented that it was 'energetick without rules' (qtd. in Finegan 119) and from the early eighteenth century attempts of codification were made. In 1697, Defoe proposed a society to "encourage Polite Learning, to polish and refine the English Tongue and advance the so much neglected Faculty of Correct Language, to establish Purity and Propriety of Stile, and to purge it from all the Irregular Additions that Ignorance and Affectation have introduc'd" (qtd. in Finegan 121). In 1712 Swift proposed a similar academy in his letter to the Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain for "ascertaining and fixing our language forever" (Finegan 121), to deal with the imperfections of the language that was constantly changing. No such society came up, but two dictionaries were published.

In 1775 Samuel Johnson brought out the *Dictionary of the English Language* in two volumes after eight years of hard work. He wanted to impede the linguistic changes but also acknowledged the fact that like human life the words would also experience decay and change. Johnson was well known for his idiosyncratic definitions. For instance, oats was described as 'A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people' (Finegan 122). But his definitions were also serious and sophisticated and his work was the substitute of an academy.

In 1857, the Philological Society in London appointed a committee to prepare a dictionary that was later called *Oxford English Dictionary*. The first instalment of the letter A was published in 1884 and Z appeared in 1928. It was published in ten volumes with more than 5 million excerpts from literary works and 1.8 million quotations for illustrating definitions and meanings. It records every word written in the language since 1000 CE.

Like the two dictionaries, Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* established the codes of sentence structure and parts of speech. The book

came out in 1762, containing in-depth analysis of letters, syllables, words and sentences 'to teach us to express ourselves with propriety' and set the rules of the language. Lowth was instrumental in making the distinction between he colloquial and written styles. He also preferred pied-piping, i.e., to place the preposition before the relative rather than ending the sentence with a preposition. Thus, *the keys with which she opened the door* is more graceful than *the keys which she opened the door with*. He also made the distinction between the usage of *shall* and *will*, *lie* and *lay*, *who* and *whom* and double negatives. His work is a blueprint to establish the notions of a correct language. Lowth was followed by Lindley Murray, an American who shifted to London and George Campbell. All these grammarians were instrumental in altering, codifying and giving a stability to the language, so much so, that even today in the context of international English, certain notions of correctness restrict the scope of experimentation of the language.

1.4.8. Simplification of Spellings

You have already read about the impact on orthography in all the previous ages. From the futharks to the Chancery standard English spellings have already travelled a long road. Further simplification of spellings started with the establishment of the printing press when the printers started to develop their house styles. From sixteenth century onwards scholars like Sir Thomas Smith, John Hart, William Bullokar, Dr Alexander Gill and Charles Butler published several volumes on the phonology and orthography of the English tongue. In 1662, James Howell in his *A New English Grammar* recommended minor changes such as from *logique* to *logic, toune* to *town, warre* to *war, sinne* to *sin, tru* to *true*.

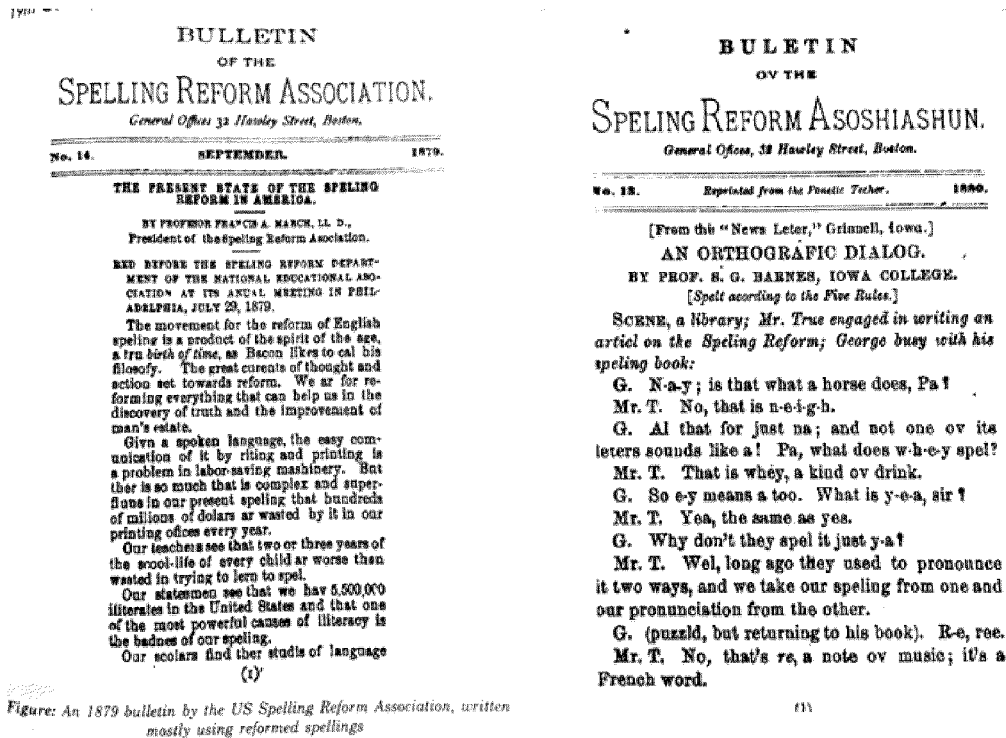Figure: An 1879 bulletin by the US Spelling Reform Association, written mostly using reformed spellings

Figure 3: Image of 1879 and 1880 bulletins of US Bulletin of the Selling Reform Association showing the extent of spelling reform
Source: Singh 190-91

Some scholars however preferred that the English spellings should look more like the Latin words, and you have already read about the changes in the previous section and know how *det* became *debt*. Writers like Shakespeare satirised the disparity between the pronunciation and spellings in the language and this was one of the many reasons why the nineteenth century scholars attempted to reform the English spellings. In the nineteenth century spelling reform played an important role and it coincided with the development of a more scientific approach to phonetics. Noah Webster published his first dictionary *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* in 1806 which included an essay on the idiosyncrasies of the English orthography. He showed how *color* and *center* should be preferred to colour and *centre*. In 1828 after almost twenty years of work he published a more expanded dictionary called *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. Because of Webster, spelling reform took up a more decided role across the Atlantic.

In 1876 philological societies of England and America held a conference on the "International Convention for the Amendment of English Orthography" in Philadelphia through which organisations like English Spelling Reform Association and American Spelling Reform Association were formed. The American association proposed the simplification of spellings of words like *are/ar, give/ giv, have/hav, live/liv, catalogue/ catalog, wished/wisht, though/tho, through/thru, guard/gard, definite/ definit. Chicago Tribune* started to use these spellings. In 1898, the American National Education Association adopted twelve

Figure: President Theodore Roosevelt was criticized for supporting the simplified spelling campaign of Andrew Carnegie in 1906

Figure 4, Source: Singh 193

reformed spellings which are: *tho, although, thoro, thorofare, thru, thruout, catalog, decalog, demagog, pedagog, prolog, program.* The Simplified Spelling Board was founded in 1906 which wanted to simplify three hundred such spellings; however the attempt was not successful as the US Congress passed a resolution in the same year and reintroduced the old spellings. Bernard Shaw was an active member of a similar society which was founded in England in 1908. But the society did not flourish. In the US however, the newspaper houses like the *Chicago Tribune* and later the publishers continued using some reformed spellings and thus, the American and British English became different in their orthographic nature.

Whether the spelling change is required or not has been a matter of great debate. Those who supported it argued that this would reduce the ambiguity of the language by undoing the damage caused by the linguists in the sixteenth century when the Latin spellings were introduced and would remove the redundant letters from the words which are not pronounced. Thus, the language would become more phonetic. The scholars who opposed the motion argued that the language is idiographic and the changes in spelling removes the marks of evolution of the language which has undergone so many influences and developments over the ages. Moreover, as English spread to the other countries across the globe the pronunciation of the

language changed, particularly in the non-native countries. Thus, if the spellings are based on the phonemes, we shall once again go back to the previous ages, where there were many spellings for many dialects.

Impacts of Standardisation

You must keep in mind that the process of standardisation of the language has a deep social impact. The speakers of the standard dialect recognise that they have an advantage over the others by the accident of their birth. Their children are well understood in schools, and later they are better represented in the society enjoying economic privileges. Again, by virtue of education and class power, it is the members of this group who become the codifiers of the language and further consolidate the hegemony of their 'standard' dialect. The cycle continues and, in many cases, ends up in the gradual erosion of all other dialects from the active social life.

Activities:

1. What do you mean by the following terms: codification; standardisation; hegemony; lexis, syntax; phonology; the futharks; the Chancery

2. Prepare a list of persons whose names are associated with dictionary making.

1.4.9. Summing Up

- Modernisation of English is a process that was determined by several factors other than linguistic. It was a selection of a certain dialect over the others which was then validated by the printers, government clerks and finally accepted by the people.

- The Great Vowel Shift changed the pronunciation of the language.

- English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was influenced by the Latin loan words. Translation of the Bible and Shakespeare's use of the language expanded the scope. Though the spellings were still different, the language acquired a morphological resemblance with the contemporary language.

- From eighteenth century onwards the language became more stable as the dictionaries came into being.

1.4.10. Self-assessment Questions

Long-answer type questions:

1. Discuss the extent and impact of Latin borrowing over the ages.

2. Examine the importance of the translation of the Bible.

3. Discuss the contribution of Shakespeare towards the growth and development of modern English language

Mid-length answer type questions:

1. What is Chancery standard?

2. Discuss the impact of printing on the English language.

3. What is modern English?

4. Discuss the importance of Dr Johnson's dictionary.

Short-answer type questions:

1. What is the Great Vowel Shift?

2. Who is Richard Pynson?

3. What is Johnsonese?

4. Mention four idioms that were popularised by Shakespeare.

5. Who is Robert Lowth?

6. When was *Oxford English Dictionary* first published?

7. What is Hobson-Jobson?

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Module – 2

British Literature : From the Beginnings to Early Modern Age

Unit – 5 ❏ British Literature: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages

Structure

2.5.1. Objective

This unit will provide a comprehensive overview of the history of British literature from its earliest period up to the Middle Ages. We will discuss how different tribes from various cultural backgrounds came together in Britain and eventually formed a collective identity. The unit will also probe into the development of British literature amidst the interplay of secular instinct, religious devotion, and the allure of folklore. The correlation between the growth of the English language and the formation of English identity will also be explored. Understanding the perception of British national identity will be crucial to understanding British literature.

2.5.2. Introduction

G.M. Trevelyan famously stated, "History is governed by geography" (6). The British islands, with their fertile soil and abundant mineral deposits, have always been a favoured destination for migrant tribes from Europe. The indented coastlines on the eastern and southern fronts, along with easily navigable rivers, have made Britain accessible to seafarers from the European continent and traders from the Mediterranean area. Although the history of invasions and early settlements in Britain is obscure, the Roman occupation can be said to have occurred between the arrival of the Celts and the Saxons. Julius Caesar's account of the Gallic War in *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* tells us that Caesar landed on the shores of Britain in AD 54 to expand the Roman empire into northern Europe (Trevelyan 13-18). Caesar's conquest of Gaul in AD 55 brought South British tribes closer to Latin civilisation. Emperor Claudius's conquest of Britain in AD 43 concluded Caesar's ambitious expeditions and made Britain a part of the Roman Empire.

The courts of tribal kings in Britain had been in contact with Roman traders and craftsmen for over a century following Caesar's expedition (Trevelyan 17). The Roman occupation of Britain over the next four hundred years introduced the concept of civil government to the Britons, who were mainly an agricultural population divided into several small tribes (Woodward 1). The significant number of Latin loanwords in the English language indicates the influence of the urban and sophisticated Greco-Roman culture on the life of Celtic-speaking Britons. However, the impact of the military presence of the Romans in Britain in the first century AD was less significant than the return of the Roman influence in AD 597 when Pope Gregory sent a group of missionaries led by Augustine for England's conversion.

Between AD 410 and 460, when the Roman Empire was gradually losing its control over the British islands, the Romano-Britons were overcome by the Teutonic Angles, Saxons, and Jutes who migrated from the western part of Germania, settling in southern and middle-western England. These Teutonic settlers encountered a more civilised country in Britain than the regions from which they came (Woodward 8). We learn about the Germanic people from the Roman historian Tacitus and see how, to Tacitus'civilised Roman eyes, the Germanic tribes appeared as "barbarians" (Daiches 3). After initial years of plunder and destruction, the pagan

and Mediterranean ways of life merged into one modified phase, eventually laying the foundation for today's English culture. Notably, the name 'Britain' was derived from the Britons, whereas 'England' was derived from its old English form, 'Engla Land,' which meant 'the land of the Angles.'

The Anglo-Saxon rule lasted for over six centuries, enduring attacks from the Scandinavians and Danes in the ninth century before falling to the Normans in AD 1066. Anglo-Saxon England was divided into seven main kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Sussex, Wessex, Essex, and Kent. During six hundred years of Anglo-Saxon rule, the kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex increasingly consolidated their power. The rise of Wessex, or the Kingdom of the West Saxons under King Alfred in the ninth century, attests to Alfred's brilliance, which produced a collective English identity over the prevailing clan identity and established the West Saxon dialect as the standard in which almost all existing texts are preserved (Foot 52).

Activities:

1. You can watch *The Flintstones* (TV Series: 1960-1966) on YouTube(https:/ /www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLhOnau-tupRP_UtUTVqBeidW00_sFFPh). The show offers a comic representation of the Stone Age as a modern-day domestic drama, which can enrich your perspective of history.

2. If you are a fan of comics, you may already be familiar with the *Asterix* book series. Did you know that the series was inspired by the Gallic resistance to the Roman invasion?

2.5.3. From Orature to Literature: The Making of English Poetry

The earliest phase of British literature is commonly referred to as 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Old English' literature. The Old English heroic poems and elegies were traditional records of Germanic heroic tales, myths, and histories before England's conversion to Christianity. These compositions are best described as "orature," a term that combines "oral" and "literature." The word "orature" was coined in relation to African oral tradition to refer to literature created for oral performance before

widespread literacy (Jackson 5). "Orature" is preferred over "Oral Literature" to accentuate the value of orality in literary culture. The Old English heroic poems and elegies were composed orally and had the characteristics of performative poetry. Although the original primitive forms have been lost, the versions we have today are written copies that might contain concerns from later periods. This non-religious poetry, connected with the Germanic past of the Anglo-Saxons, recounted the hardships of the early generations of proto-Englishmen who had to endure hostile invaders, constant warfare, and the challenges of Nature.

The Old English elegies mourn the changes in life and the loss of human companionship. In contrast, heroic poems celebrate the hero's exceptional life and honour to preserve his memory in popular culture. The presence of a "Scop" (Old English word for "Bard") in most elegies and heroic poems, a songlike quality, the use of alliteration and formulaic phrases, a singular metrical structure, and anonymous authorship indicate the performative nature of the Anglo-Saxon orature. The scops would travel between courts, performing songs that lamented the loss of worldly glory or celebrated the noble deeds of the ancestors. The incorporation of Christian beliefs was a later development. Anonymity of authorship continued until Caedmon and Cynewulf arrived, who may be credited with being the first English poets.

Old English poetry composed before and after the Conversion of England in the early seventh century consists roughly of thirty thousand lines, a negligible nine per cent of the total corpus of surviving Old English literature. These are preserved in four manuscripts, namely: (1) the *Beowulf* Manuscript or "Nowell Codex", containing *Beowulf* and *Judith*; (2) the Junius or the "Caedmon" Manuscript, containing *Genesis A* and *B, Exodus, Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*; (3) the Exeter Book, an anthology of diverse poetic types, containing *Christ, Juliana, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, Widsith, Deor*, and many other lyric poems; and (4) the Vercelli Book, a book of homilies containing *Andreas, The Fates of the Apostles, Soul and Body I, Homiletic Fragment I, Dream of the Rood, and Elene* (Fulk and Cain 27).

Beowulf is one of the oldest English poems. It celebrates the bravery of pagan warrior heroes. The story is divided into two parts. The first part reveals the adventures of Beowulf, a nobleman from Geatland, who helps Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, by defeating the monster Grendel. Beowulf also slays Grendel's

mother, a sea monster seeking revenge for her son's death. The second part of the story is about the old king Beowulf, who dies while fighting a fire-breathing dragon to protect his people. Although the epic poem focuses on a Scandinavian hero, it contains Christian references, which were likely added later. Apart from *Beowulf*, there are other fragmented heroic poems. *Widsith* (or the "Far-traveller") is one of the oldest of these and consists of 150 lines. It recounts the travels of a scop to different courts, providing a catalogue of various tribes and their kings, making it a valuable record of Germanic history. There are also two fragments of *Waldere*, which tell the tales of Walter of Aquitaine. *The Fight at Finnsburg* is another significant poem that recounts the Finn episode in *Beowulf* (lines 1068–1159). It tells the story of the tragic death of Hnaef, the Danish chieftain, and his followers at the hands of their host, the Frisian king Finn, who was married to Hnaef's sister, Hildeburh (Camargo 121). The poem depicts treacherous and vengeful manslaughter, reflecting the values of ancient Germanic society, which prioritised retribution above everything else. *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon* are later works. As parts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, these poems describe the Viking attack in 937 and the attack of the Norse, Scots and Welsh enemies in 993, respectively.

The Old English elegies often revolve around the theme of estrangement, whether from a king, a lover, or God, taking on a religious undertone. Heroic poems also explore this theme at times. *Deor*, for example, blurs the lines between heroic and elegiac verse poems. In this poem, a scop mourns the loss of his position at court and finds solace in bigger tales of misfortune from Germanic legend. This merger of references makes it difficult to categorise *Deor* into a fixed genre. As their titles imply, *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* depict the hardships of travellers, who are either a scop or a king's former favourite. Solitary life signified misfortune in the Anglo-Saxon code, a depiction that suited the melancholic mood of the Old English verse. *The Ruin*, an elegy lamenting the abandonment of a once majestic city, is considered outstanding among Old English elegies due to its poetic merit and powerful expression. The poem reflects on the fleeting nature of worldly glory. Estrangement from a lover is the central theme of other Old English elegies such as *The Wife's Lament, The Husband's Message,* and *Wulf and Eadwacer.*

The English literary world was forever altered by a nine-line hymn composed by an "illiterate" herdsman from the monastery of Whitby in the late seventh century.

This herdsman, Caedmon (died 680), became a poet after receiving inspiration for his composition in a dream. We have details of this account in Bede's (673-735) *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (Ecclesiastical History of the English People)*. With the expression "Primo cantauit Caedmon istud carmen" ('Caedmon first sang this song'), oral compositions began to be attributed to specific authors instead of being seen as products of an entire culture (Fulk and Cain 29). The hymn reflects the fundamental structure of Old English or Germanic poetry: two half-lines, each consisting of two stressed and two or more unstressed syllables. Not being poetically impressive, the lines praise the glory of the Lord. Four other Old English poems on biblical themes, *Genesis A* and *B*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*, were initially attributed to Caedmon's name, with *Christ and Satan* added later to the list. However, due to differences in style and technique, these later additions, probably imitations, are better described as products of the Caedmonian school of poetry.

Cynewulf (born c.720) was known as a learned cleric. Cynewulf's poetry was inspired by classical Latin models and had a sophistication that was absent in earlier Christian poetry. He is known for four poems signed with his cryptic runic letters: *Christ, Juliana, Elene*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*. These poems are profoundly religious and depict Christ's Incarnation, Descent into Hell, Ascension, Last Judgment, and the mystical experiences of saintly figures from Christianity. Additionally, five other poems–*Judith, Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*, *The Phoenix*, and *The Dream of the Rood*–were composed in Cynewulf's poetic style but do not bear his signature. These are collectively known as the Cynewulfian School of Poetry. While Cynewulf's poetry displays scholarly influence, it lacks the raw energy of Caedmon's work. *The Dream of the Rood* is the most imaginative and passionate of all old English Christian poetry. It is the first recorded dream sequence and tells the story of a cross's blessed life, from being a tree to becoming a witness to Christ's passion.

Old English poetry records a curious intermixing of the pagan and Christian ideas. It portrays the heroes as saint-like figures, while the saints resemble pagan heroes. When Beowulf acts like a devout Christian serving in God's army, Cynewulf's heroines, Judith, Elene, or Juliana, appear to engage in physical battles with the devil, either fighting with the enemy or heroically beheading him (Fulk and Cain 8).

[It is crucial to note that terms like 'Anglo-Saxon,' 'Old English,' or 'Middle

English' are not absolute. Critics and historians use these terms to identify patterns in literary production. Specific years, such as AD 450 marking the start of the Anglo-Saxon occupation or AD 1066 marking the beginning of the Anglo-Norman age, should not be interpreted literally. The transition from one period to another may be as indistinguishable as today is from yesterday. History is cultural memory; it is an ongoing process of evaluation of the past by the future.]

2.5.4. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Constructing the English Identity

Old English poetry was mainly composed in the north, while prose was produced in the south and southwest (Hudson 15). The tradition of prose writing was not unfamiliar in the Anglo-Saxon world, as ancient historians such as Tacitus began writing historical tracts as early as the first century AD. Vernacular prose started to develop and was mastered by Alfred of the West Saxon royal house. Alfred aimed to revitalise Latin culture and began translating basic Latin texts into the vernacular with the help of scholars. *Pastoral Care*, a translation of Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis*, outlined the duties of bishops. *Ecclesiastical History of the English*, a translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, and *Seven Books of Histories Against the Pagans*, an annotated translation of Orosius's *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, provided commentary suitable for English readers (Woodward 18). Additionally, Alfred translated classics such as Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae (On the Consolation of Philosophy)* and St. Augustine's *Soliloquies*, which delved into fate, free will, and the challenges of faith.

Alfred's pioneering decision to translate Latin texts into the vernacular helped to establish a shared linguistic identity among various Old English tribes during his time. Although the concept of a 'nation' may not have existed in Alfred's time, the people of England were united by their 'Englishness,' which included a common language, shared land, and the common religion of Christianity (Brady 112). The introduction of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle further strengthened this identity, as it provided a chronological record of events in Anglo-Saxon England and was the earliest historical record in the English language for the English people. Alfred's efforts also elevated the status of the vernacular language, legitimising English as

a scholarly language (Fulk and Cain 23). Alfred's promotion of the term 'Anglecynn'—meaning the race or tribe of the English people—contributed to the creation of the English as a political community, as noted by Sara Foot in her article "The Making of Anglecynn: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest" (Foot 52).

Anglo-Saxon prose shifted towards religious themes after King Alfred's time, mainly through the works of two clerics, Aelfric (c.950–1010) and Wulfstan (died 1095). Aelfric mainly wrote to educate monks, with his *Catholic Homilies*, written around AD 990, providing orthodox sermons. He also translated the first seven books of the *Bible* into the vernacular with his *Heptateuch* and wrote about the lives of saints Swithun and Æthelwold in *The Lives of the Saints*. *The Colloquy*, another work of Aelfric, focused on pedagogy. Wulfstan's notable work, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, was an impassioned appeal to his fellow English citizens suffering from King Sweyn's Danish invasions in AD 1014. This text positions the identity of English Christians as oppositional to the pagan Vikings.

Activities:

1. Did you know that the names of the weekdays are associated with the planets in our solar system and have connections to specific deities from different cultures? Create a chart to identify the Old Germanic gods and goddesses associated with each day of the week and explore the connections between different mythologies.

2. Have you encountered a similar episode to Beowulf's slaying of Grendel in any other epics you have read?

3. *Beowulf*, the first English epic, never mentions England for once. Find out the reason.

4. Consider drawing a map of Geatland or Gotland in southern Sweden, noting its proximity to Denmark. This may help you understand whether Beowulf's decision to rescue Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, was driven by political compulsion or a desire to display his strength. You may flip through the pages of Ruth A. Johnston's *A Companion to Beowulf* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005) for a quick review of Beowulf's time.

5. Watch "The Slow Spread of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England: From Pagan Shrines to Monastic Centers" (https://www.youtube.com/

watch?v=vCCu67ZvW5s) to understand the complex process of the reception of the new faith in England. You may also consult the article "Reluctant Kings and Christian Conversion in Seventh-Century England" by Damian Tyler, published in *History*, vol. 92, no. 2, April 2007, (pp. 144-161).

6. Caedmon's story highlights how miracles or divine inspirations have been seen as integral to the genesis of art. Are there similar stories in your own culture?

7. Watch "Beowulf sung in Old English" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tE-nCZyseaU) to get an idea of Old English performative poetry.

8. You may also watch "Germania: The Battle Against Rome – Documentary" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbZVrWUlJ0A&list=PLXH s6myNRYiEahSWr19hUHbTCUo_Ij7jH&index=2) from the series titled "Long History Documentaries" by BBC.

9. Find out why *The Battle of Brunanburh* is considered the first Old English poem to contain patriotic sentiment.

10. Note down the contribution of the Venerable Bede as the primary inventor of the term "English," predating King Alfred.

2.5.5. Norman Conquest and Transition into the Middle English Period

The period between King Alfred's death and the Norman Conquest was marked by constant conflict among the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans. Following Alfred's death, his successors faced repeated attacks from Danish invaders. A group of Vikings settled in Normandy, adopted Christianity, assimilated into the local culture, and became known as the Normans. Over time, marital alliances between Saxon kings and noble families in Normandy began to form. The death of Edward the Confessor, the Anglo-Saxon king, on January 5 1066, triggered a dispute over the succession to the English throne between Harold of Wessex and William, the Duke of Normandy. This dispute was resolved with Harold's death in the Battle of Hastings; William subsequently took on the name 'Conqueror' following this victory, and this event is known as the Norman Conquest.

The Norman conquest of England had a far-reaching impact on the native Anglo-Saxon culture. The language and literature that emerged after the initial repression became more urban and sophisticated. The language of the period had a simpler system of verb endings compared to Old English, and many French and Scandinavian words were added to the vocabulary. The language had various dialects, with the three main types being the Southern, the Midland, and the Northern dialects, which were further divided into many other minor groups. East Midland English gradually became prominent as it was the dialect of London and was already in use at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The influence of French court culture and Latin classical texts on literature was significant, leading to a shift from the rustic style of the previous age to a more elegant and complex writing style. Metrical romances replaced the Old English alliterative verse, and Christian Knights took the place of the pagan heroes of Old Germanic poetry. Chivalry and romance became the new focus of literature.

2.5.6. Poetry of the Early Middle Age: The Didactic Poems, Romances, and Ballads

The literature of the Early Middle Ages reflected a transition in style and influence. For instance, *Lazamon's Brut* (1205) and *The Owl and the Nightingale* (1220), both Middle English poems from around the same time, drew inspiration from Latin and French sources. *Lazamon's Brut*, with its sixteen thousand lines, is in line with the tradition of Old English epics, narrating the legendary history of England from Aeneas's descendant Brutus, the supposed ancestor of the British people, to the final defeat of the Britons by the Saxons in AD 689 (Hudson 16). On the other hand, *The Owl and the Nightingale* features octosyllabic verse and a light, songlike quality, influenced by the tradition of debate poetry popular in the court of Henry II. Significantly, *The Owl and the Nightingale* uses French end rhyme instead of the old Anglo-Saxon model of alliterative verse (Burrow 10).

The early Middle English period witnessed the emergence of didactic poetry. The most prominent example is *Ormulum* (c. 1215). It was composed by a priest named Orm from Lincolnshire as a series of homilies without rhyme or alliteration. The tradition of didactic poetry continued into the fourteenth century with the anonymous *Cursor Mundi* (c. 1320), an account of scripture and the lives of saints

in verse, and Robert Mannyng's *Handling Synne* (*Manual of Sins*, 1303). Four anonymous poems, namely, *Pearl, Purity, Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, were preserved in a late fourteenth-century manuscript, proving that anonymity still persisted in Middle English literature. These poems combined allegory with romance and religion. *Pearl* is the most remarkable allegory of the first three religious poems. It describes the dream of a father who has recently lost his daughter Pearl. In the dream, Pearl appears, consoles the father, and takes him to the Garden of Eden. The poem ends in a vision of St. John. Despite its overtly religious agenda, *Pearl* weaves elements of romance in its dream sequences. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is an Arthurian romance in which a mysterious Green Knight challenges Sir Gawain with a death threat at King Arthur's court. Sir Gawain will have to respond to that challenge within a year. The rest of the poem is a fantastic tale of adventure in which the Green Knight (symbolising Nature) emerges victorious. The poem ends with the Green Knight chastising Sir Gawain and moralising about the cycle of life and death. This poem is perhaps the finest of all Middle English romances.

Romance was the most prominent literary form in the Middle Ages, whether in prose or verse. The genre originated in 13th-century France, spread through translations for about a century, and became integral to British culture when it arrived in Britain. It explored various themes related to the country's ancient history and legend. The romances revolved around different 'matters' and were influenced by the Anglo-Norman style. These romances can be divided into four cycles: the "Matter of Rome", the "Matter of France", the "Matter of England", and the "Matter of Britain", which intermix history with fantasy and adventure. The "Matter of Rome" includes poems of average quality, such as *King Alisaunder or The Destruction of Troy*, which mainly focus on the exploits of Alexander the Great and the siege of Troy. The group of poems that deal with the legend of Charlemagne, such as *Sir Ferumbras*, is known as the "Matter of France". The romances dealing with well-known figures of English history, like *King Horn, Havelock the Dane*, the famous *Guy of Warwick*, and *Richard the Lion-hearted*, fall under the "Matter of England". Finally, the romances connected to the legend of King Authur, such as *Sir Tristrem, Arthur and Merlin, Ywain and Gawain*, and the *Morte D'Arthur*, are classified as the "Matter of Britain" (Albert 25-26). *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* falls under this category.

These romances were folk narratives representing how ordinary Middle English people wanted their stories to be told (Daiches 64). Another popular form of folk narrative in the Middle Ages was the ballad, an anonymous work transmitted orally from one generation to another often exploring themes of courage and resolution of local heroes or historical figures. Well-known ballads featuring Robin Hood, Chevy Chace, and Sir Patrick Spens added to the mystical allure of the Middle Ages.

2.5.7. Late Fourteenth-Century Poetry: From Chaucer to Gower

During Chaucer's time, the English people began to be seen as a unified racial and cultural entity, laying the foundation for a nation. Power shifted from feudal manors to farmers and small merchants, creating a growing middle class in towns and villages. Chaucer (1340-1400), a Londoner, held various influential positions throughout his extensive career, including serving as a servant in a noble family, a soldier, the king's messenger, a law student, a diplomat, an officer in the royal court, a justice of the peace, and a knight for the shire. His travels on state business to foreign countries allowed him access to various literary resources, which he adeptly utilised. His contemporaries saw him as a "great translateur" (Burrow 6), and it is customary to divide Chaucer's literary career into three phases: French, Italian, and English. Chaucer's early works, such as *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Book of the Duchess*, are distinctly French in their treatment of courtly love and allegory. These works mark a shift in focus from war and heroes to romances about a rose (Burrow 8) and an allegory about the death of a nobleman's wife (Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt). Chaucer's later works, such as *The Parliament of Fowls, The House of Fame, Legends of Good Women,* and *Troilus and Criseyde,* were influenced by Italian masters like Dante and Boccaccio and demonstrate a developing sense of humour and insight into human behaviour. *Troilus and Criseyde* is Chaucer's most significant work from this period and was later adapted by Shakespeare.

Chaucer's most renowned work, *The Canterbury Tales*, belongs to the English phase. The narrative consists of stories told by pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas Beckett in Canterbury. Originally, Chaucer planned for the work to contain 120 stories told by 30 pilgrims, but he could only complete 24 due to his death. Written in the tradition of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, this narrative

combines various storytelling techniques in verse and prose, incorporating allegory, romance, chivalry, and farce. The 'Prologue' to the main narrative is particularly noteworthy as it represents various English people from different classes, such as a knight, a yeoman, a prioress, a monk, a merchant, a man of law, a miller, a pardoner, the wife of Bath and many others. The choice of pilgrims as the subject facilitated this diverse representation. *The Canterbury Tales* exhibit humour that skilfully balances cynicism and kindness. Chaucer's irony is aimed at the morally corrupt, while the remaining characters are portrayed with playful satire.

The corruption of the Anglican Church, which was hinted at in *The Canterbury Tales*, is criticised in Langland's *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. This poem by William Langland (1332-1400) is a dream allegory written in alliterative verse. It exists in three manuscript versions: the oldest 'A' (1362) containing 2500 lines, the main 'B' (1377) with 7200 lines, and the most extended 'C' (1392) with over 7300 lines. The poem begins with the poet's vision on Malvern Hills of a beautiful "field full of folk," which then quickly transforms into several scenes depicting the suffering of ordinary people at the hands of the corrupt clergy and people in power. Portrayals of corrupt clergy were not uncommon in fourteenth-century English poetry, but the outrage expressed in *Piers Plowman* is particularly noteworthy. Langland is often regarded as a forerunner of the Reformation.

Chaucer's friend and competitor, John Gower (c.1332-1408), wrote three long poems. The first one, *Speculum Meditantis*, is in French; the next, *Vox Clamantis*, is in Latin, and the final, *Confessio Amantis*, is in English. In the early days, Gower was better known than Chaucer, but the literary taste of the period changed in his lifetime. "The moral Gower", as Chaucer describes him, was sincere and orthodox in temperament. Gower's most important work, *Vox Clamantis*, dealt with the peasant revolt of AD 1381. He took a very sombre view of the social conditions of the time, pointing out the corruption, disorder and suffering of ordinary people.

Activities:

1. Watch "King Arthur's Britain—The Truth Unearthed"| BBChttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKTxFIwjf2A) or "Was Camelot a Real Place? | Arthur: King of the Britons | BBC Timestamp" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsEOgvo6UJw) on You Tube to relate the Arthurian legend with the archaeological facts.

2. A group of Scottish poets led by King James I of Scotland closely followed the Chaucerian style in their works. This group is known as the Scottish Chaucerians. Find out more about them and note their contributions.

3. Have you noticed the recurrent use of animal imagery in Middle English poetry? Find out more about it. You may consult the following: Brian Gastle's "The Beast Fable" in *A Companion to Old and Middle English Literature*, edited by Laura C. Lambdin, and Robert T. Lambdin (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002) and Susan Crane's "Animality" in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, edited by Marion Turner (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013).

2.5.8. Middle English Prose

As demonstrated by Elaine Treharne, the Norman Conquest was a genuine collective trauma, but Anglo-Saxon identity did not vanish overnight on October 14, 1066 (Brady 119). During the early Middle English period, from about 1100 to 1250, the English voice continued to be heard. A prominent reference would be the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was continually updated until 1131 or 1154 (as per the last recorded event in the *Chronicle*) (Brooks 60). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* not only serves as the repository of the fast-fading Anglo-Saxon voice, but the Peterborough manuscript of the text also documents the transition of the English prose from Old English to Middle English. Two centuries later, English was re-established as the compulsory language for oral communication in legal matters by the *Statute of Pleading* passed in the Parliament of England in 1362 (Ormrod 750). However, the language of official documents was changed from Old English to Latin after the Conquest.

Latin influenced Middle English prose more than French. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium (Courtiers' Trifles)*, and Roger Bacon's *Opus Maius* are examples of this. Some of the homiletic prose of the period that had little literary interest are the writings of the Katherine Group propagating the advantages of virginity over marriage and *Ancren Riwle* (c.1225), a book of instruction for would-be nuns (Daiches 48).

Religious prose took a new turn with John Wycliffe, who persistently attacked the ways of the Church and translated the Bible into the vernacular. Wycliff and

his followers, the Lollards, gave rise to a passionate anticlerical movement. Although Wycliffe's translation, commissioned to Nicholas of Hereford and John Purvey, had little literary merit, it held immense historical importance. It called for wide circulation of English prose and prepared the ground for future editions of the Bible translated by William Tyndale (1490-1536) and Miles Coverdale (1488-1568). It is to this that the present Bible owes its form. Reginald Peacock's (c.1395-1460) *The Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy* and *The Book of Faith* addressed the anticlerical sentiment of the age even more radically than Wycliffe.

Middle English secular prose developed relatively later, although the process had already begun with Chaucer's "Tale of Melibeus." John Trevista's ambitious translations of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (c.1385-87), a book on world history, and Bartholomaeus *Anglicus's De proprietatibus rerum* (1398; *On the Properties of Things*) are a few examples. Another significant work of the age was Sir John Mandeville's book on travels, *The Voyage* and *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1398), which, although possibly fictional, exemplified a shift in interest from romanticism to realism. John Capgrave's *Chronicle of England* (c. 1462) and Sir John Fortescue's (c.1394-c.1476) On the *Governance of England* (c. 1470) also reflect an awareness of national identity.

One of the most impactful events in the late Middle Ages was the establishment of the printing press by William Caxton in 1470. Caxton (c.1422-1492) was a printer, translator, and publisher. He printed the first book in English, his own translation of Raoul de Fevre's *Le Receuil des Histoires de Troye* titled *Recuyel of the Histories of Troye* and also popularised Sir Thomas Malory's (died c.1471) *Morte D'Arthur*, which was instrumental in bringing the legend of King Arthur to a broader audience. Caxton printed nearly all the English literature available in his time, including works by Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, and John Lydgate. By the time of his death, he had published about 100 items of various kinds.

2.5.9. The Development of English Drama

The origin of vernacular drama in the Middle Ages is not entirely clear, but it is believed to have been influenced by sermons and folk rituals. The ancient Greek and Roman plays had disappeared by the start of the Old English period, and it took twelve to thirteen centuries for vernacular drama to develop as a genre.

Middle English drama was produced in churches, marketplaces, and guild halls, serving as a civic celebration, religious commemoration, and economic investment (Kline159). The three famous types of English drama are the "mystery" plays, the "morality" plays, and the "miracle" plays, which were just a few of the many folk forms of performance at the time. Initially, these plays were part of the Church's efforts to attract the general public, but they were later discouraged due to the questionable religious values they portrayed. As their popularity increased, the performances moved from the interior of the Church to the Church's courtyard and then to prominent places in villages or city streets. Once the plays left the church premises, they started being performed in the vernacular language instead of Latin, and the desire to entertain became more pressing than the original religious intent. Since AD 1210, mystery plays were exclusively performed by the town guilds after Pope Innocent III banned the participation of the clergies (Albert 63). The town guilds popularised the production by associating it with the Corpus Christi festival introduced in 1311 (Kline 156). The term "mystery play" comes from the French word "mystère," meaning "guild." Mystery plays were scriptural performances by guilds in York, Chester, Towneley, and N-Town. Four of these cycles have survived: the Chester cycle of 25 plays, the Coventry cycle of 42 plays, the Wakefield cycle of 31 plays, and the York cycle of 48 plays (Hudson 48). Mystery plays depicted episodes from the Bible, such as Creation and the Fall of Humanity, the Old Covenant, Nativity and Childhood of Christ, Ministry and Passion of Christ, Resurrection, and the Final Judgment. These plays were generally divided into two broad sub-groups: the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament" plays. Individual episodes from creation to final judgment were called 'pageants' produced and performed in 'pageant wagons' by separate civic bodies, usually trade or religious guilds (Twycross 39 discussed in Kline 159). A few famous performances of mystery plays were *The Building of the Ark, Abraham and Isaac, Moses and Pharoah, The Harrowing of Hell,* and *Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene.* Miracle plays focused on the miraculous lives of saints and similar figures, intending to impress and inspire the audience to continue to have faith in Christianity. The earliest instance of a dramatic representation was the performance of a Latin play in honour of St. Katherine at Dunstable in AD 1110 (Hudson 47). Famous miracle plays include *The Three Maries* and *The Shepherd's Play.* Notably, the distinction between mystery and miracle plays was relatively thin and mainly recognised in France. Morality plays were allegorical, featuring characters representing abstract ideas of virtue and

vice, which vie for possessing the human soul. Some famous morality plays include *Everyman, Mankind, Wisdom* and *The Castle of Perseverance*, which usually deal with the theme of sin and redemption.

The Interludes emerged in the late 15th or early 16th centuries as a modified form of the morality plays. Unlike their allegorical predecessors, the Interludes featured real characters from the clergy and middle classes, with the focus shifting from moral themes to satire (Albert 66). The term may have originally denoted small plays performed between banquets; literary historians later used this term to refer to plays which marked the transition from Middle English religious drama to Tudor secular drama (Daiches 216). John Heywood's *Four P's*, which depicts a lying competition between a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Pothecary, and a Pedlar, stands as one of this genre's most famous and significant works (Daiches 219). Other notable interludes include Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres* (1497), John Rastell's *The Nature of the Four Elements* (c.1510-1520), *Calisto and Melebea* (c.1527–1530), John Redford's *Wit and Science* (c.1530-48), and *Play of the Weather* (1533). These plays were known for being entertaining and witty, marking the beginning of secular plays written by educated laymen (Daiches 218).

The tradition of Middle English drama continued beyond the Middle Ages. Performances like *Everyman* were staged in Coventry as late as the 1560s (Kline155). Some plays, such as *The Castle of Perseverance or Wisdom* began to display a well-defined theatrical structure. These dramas gradually shifted their focus to secular themes and started addressing contemporary cultural issues. Instead of being seen as a precursor to the Elizabethan era, vernacular drama should be recognised as a portrayal of the emotions of ordinary people who resisted the didactic influence of the clergy. It also provided a sense of social identity for the merchant and artisan classes in England during the late Middle Ages (Kline 155).

Activities:

1. Margery Kempe (*The Book of Margery Kempe*) and Julian of Norwich (*Revelations of Divine Love*) were two significant authors of mystic prose in the Middle Ages. You may learn more about them in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, edited by Marion Turner (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2013).

2. Hamlet's famous warning to the play-actors not to "out-herod Herod" (Act III, Scene 2) can be traced back to the wild and boastful Herod of Middle English drama. Can you find similar references in plays you have watched?

You can also use T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* as a reference point.

2.5.10. Summing Up

This overview covers nearly a millennium of British history, emphasising major developments from the early period to the Middle Ages. In terms of politics and leadership, it has evolved from rule under tribal kings to the establishment of a monarchy in England in the Middle Ages, along with a basic form of parliament to mitigate the absolute power held by the monarchy. Regarding literary production, parchment manuscripts gave way to printed copies of texts; anonymity of authorship was modified into the author's deliberate self-portrayal as a fool, as seen in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The English language evolved, assimilating varied inputs from Roman, Scandinavian, and French cultures into the native Celtic Briton form. Initially, the West Saxon dialect rose to prominence; later, East Midland English emerged as the standard English, attaining the status of the national language.

2.5.11. Self-assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss how *Beowulf* exemplifies the heroic code of honour.

2. Comment on the theme of 'journey'in Old English elegies concerning at least two verses.

3. Old English religious poetry breaks with the tradition of anonymity of authorship. Discuss.

4. In which ways does the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* construct the 'English' identity? Discuss.

5. Comment on the element of folk narrative in Middle English literature.

6. The characters from the peasantry and the petty middle class in Middle English poetry marked the beginning of the modern age. Do you agree?

7. How does the Middle English drama bring forth the cultural concern of its age? Discuss.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. Old English elegies lament transience; Old English heroic poems contest it. Do you agree?

2. Comment on the figure of the 'Scop' in Old English poetry.

3. Compare and contrast the pioneering roles of King Alfred and William Caxton in their respective fields.

4. Write a brief note on animal imagery in Middle English poetry.

5. Why is Langland often regarded as a forerunner of the Reformation?

6. Why did the Church want to dissociate itself from the production of liturgical drama? Discuss.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Explain the term "orature" in the context of Old English poetry.

2. How does *Deor* simultaneously qualify as an Old English heroic poem and elegy?

3. What is the significance of Alfred's use of the term 'Anglecynn'?

4. Who wrote *Morte D'Arthur*? How did *Morte D'Arthur* influence the Middle English romances?

5. In which ways did the town guilds popularise the production of the Middle English drama?

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Unit – 6 ❑ Renaissance and Elizabethan Literature

Structure

2.6.1. Objectives

This unit will provide a socio-cultural and political background of British literature written during the Renaissance and Elizabethan period. It will explore how Renaissance revolutionised the outlook of man throughout Europe and moulded the future course of literature all over the continent. The study of these contexts will help you appreciate the British literature of the period as well as those produced in the mainland Europe. However, the focus will be mainly on the British literature.

2.6.2. Introduction

The century and a half following Chaucer's death (1400) was a turbulent time in both English and European history. This had a profound impact on the English literary scene. William J. Long observes, "While England during this period was in constant political strife, yet rising slowly like the spiral flight of an eagle to heights of national greatness, intellectually it moved forward with bewildering rapidity" (90). Edward Albert too has also effectively put it: "The importance of the time is belied by its apparent barrenness. In reality it is a season of healthy fallow, of germination, of rest and recuperation" (49).

Following Chaucer's death, English literature experienced over a century a significant decline in both quality and quantity. Several factors may have accounted for the decline . Literature, being an art of peace, thrives in a calm and reflective environment. However, England witnessed, among others, events like the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), the Wars of the Roses (1455-86), the Jack Cade Rebellion (1450), and the Reformation. The unrest affected the focus of the country's brightest minds, and many noble patrons of the arts were lost during the Wars of the Roses. Chaucer's unparalleled greatness set a high standard that his successors struggled to meet.

One significant reason why Chaucer's followers struggled to imitate him was the rapid disinflection of the English Language after Chaucer. Additionally, the Revival of Learning and the growing admiration for classical literature also hindered the immediate development of English literature. Scholars increasingly focused on studying the classics, dedicating themselves so fully to this endeavor that they neglected the creation of native literature. They needed time to absorb and integrate these classical ideas before they could generate their own literary works. This process of assimilation eventually gave rise to a flourishing of English literature during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Thus, rather than viewing this period as one of barrenness, it is more accurate to see it as a time of germination, setting the stage for future literary achievements.

2.6.3. Backgrounds

In this section, we may first glance at European history and then at English history before we go for detailed discussion of the British literature of the time.

Throughout Europe, it was a time of widespread unrest. King James I of Scotland (1424-1437) was captured by the English in 1406 and held for 18 years. Upon his return to Scotland in 1424, he ascended the throne and sought vengeance against the nobles responsible for his detention, which led to their hostility. He was ultimately murdered by a group of conspirators in 1437. In 1453, Constantinople, a centre of Greek and Latin learning, fell to the Turks. The fleeing Greek and Latin scholars took their knowledge of Greece and Rome with them, spurring a revival of learning in Europe and marking the beginning of a new era in European history.

In 1450, Jack Cade, an Irishman, led a rebellion of 15,000 men against London as a protest against poor governance. The insurrection was suppressed by an armed force, and Cade was killed. He is often compared to Wat Tyler, the leader of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. The Church's authority suffered a significant blow in 1409 when three Popes vied for control. John Huss, a follower of Wyclif, was convicted of heresy for preaching against the Church and was burned at the stake. In Spain, the Inquisition, a judicial institution that existed in the country from 1478 to 1534, became infamous for its brutal tortures.

Several wars also took place during the period. The thirty-year political strife between the House of York and the House of Lancaster (1455-1486) known as the Wars of the Roses saw the destruction of many noble houses and ultimately the end of feudalism. It ultimately led to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603). Although these wars drained the energy of contemporary England, they laid the groundwork for the country's future greatness and prosperity. The Franco-Italian wars began in 1494 and continued for 25 years. The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), fought intermittently between France and England, had also affected lives of common people in both the countries and beyond.

There were also some positive developments that influenced the cultural life of the Elizabethan period. In 1476, William Caxton introduced printing to London. He translated, printed, and published numerous books in the London dialect, thereby establishing its dominance over other dialects. The invention of the printing press facilitated the multiplication and distribution of books, profoundly impacting the intellectual and social life of the entire country. This period also saw the emergence of the Renaissance, a great intellectual awakening that brought Greek ideas and culture to England. This movement, known as Humanism or the Revival of Learning,

promoted the study of Greek and Roman literature, encouraged scientific inquiry, and fostered individual freedom from institutional control, effectively ending the Dark Ages. The Reformation (tentatively from 1517 to 1555) also took place during this time, with Henry VIII breaking away from the Church of Rome and declaring himself the supreme head of the English Church, thus proclaiming spiritual freedom for individuals. With the Reformation and Renaissance Europe emerged out of the Middle Ages to begin what is known as the Early Modern Age.

The Renaissance transformed the perspectives of people throughout Europe and significantly influenced the future development of literature across the continent. It is also known as the Revival of Learning and Humanism. While the term 'Renaissance' commonly refers to the revival of classical art forms in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 'Humanism' refers to "a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters." It was part of the Renaissance project. Its purpose was to turn "away from medieval scholasticism" and to revive "interest in ancient Greek and Roman thought."

During the Middle Ages, Europeans had a limited worldview focused on the Mediterranean and its surrounding nations. Their thinking was heavily influenced by divine and ecclesiastical authority, strictly adhering to established principles and traditions. Both mentally and spiritually, they were constrained by creeds and dogmas, lacking knowledge of the laws and forces of the universe. There was no spirit of inquiry or desire to explore. The Renaissance emerged as a liberating force, freeing minds from theological dogmas and spiritual authority. It sparked curiosity about the new earth and sky mysteries of which were being revealed by navigators and astronomers. The beauty of Greek and Latin classics was being explored. Some of the important landmarks of the Renaissance are:

1. Geographical Discoveries: Explorations by Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Hernando Cortez, and others revealed new lands, expanding European geographical understanding and showcasing a world much larger than previously known.

2. Invention of Printing: William Caxton introduced a printing press in England in 1476, paving the way for the widespread dissemination of new knowledge.

3. Copernican System: Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) demonstrated that

the sun is the centre of the solar system, with the earth and planets orbiting it. This revelation challenged theological doctrines and freed the minds of the common people from unfounded beliefs and superstitions.

4. Fall of Constantinople (1453): The capture of Constantinople by the Turks led Greek scholars to flee to Italy, where they established schools to teach Greek classics. English scholars who studied in Italy brought this new learning back to England, fostering Greek studies at Oxford.

5. The Reformation: The Reformation, both a cause and an effect of the Renaissance, emerged from the era's questioning spirit. Beginning with the Lollard Movement in the fourteenth century, it culminated in 1534 when Henry VIII declared himself head of the Church of England. The Reformation challenged the Church's dogmatic practices and proclaimed spiritual freedom for individuals.

Activities:

1. There is a BBC broadcasting series entitled *The Story of English* which records the birth and growth of the English Language. Try to watch the series. It will help you have a comprehensive idea about how the English language spread all over the world.

2. There is also a book titled *The Story of English* by Robert McCrum (New York: Viking, 1986). This book will not only help you to understand the historical background of the English but also their language.

3. *Da Vinci's World: Engineering an Empire* (available in youtube.com) is a well-known work on military and civil engineering during Renaissance. Try to watch the series. You will have a comprehensive idea regarding the period.

4. Watch on the YouTube: "The Adventures of English" and "Story of English"

2.6.4. Literature of the Renaissance I

The Renaissance in England shared many characteristics with the broader European movement but it also had unique features that led to a truly national literature in England. Unlike in Italy and France, the impact of Renaissance on

English literature was slower. The English language had not yet matured enough to express all the new ideas, leading many humanists to write in Latin. For example, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) was written in Latin.

2.6.4.1. Poetry

The poets of this era can be categorised into three groups: (a) English followers of Chaucer, (b) Scottish followers of Chaucer, and (c) Wyatt and Surrey.

English Followers of Chaucer were

1. Thomas Hoccleve (1368-1450?): A personal friend of Chaucer, Hoccleve wrote a long poem titled *Regement of Princes* which is addressed to Henry, Prince of Wales. It is a treatise on the duties of a ruler and uses Chaucer's seven-line stanza pattern. In the prologue of this poem, he expresses his sorrow over Chaucer's death and praises him. He also wrote a minor poem titled *Mother of God.*

2. John Lydgate (1370-1451): Lydgate is the most prolific poet of the Middle Ages in England, with about 140,000 lines of his poetry still existing. He modelled much of his poetry on Chaucer's work. But, as E. Albert says, "He has none of the latter's metrical skill and lively imagination, and the enormous mass of his poems only enhances their futility" (55). His longest poems are his *Storie of Thebes, Troy Book, Fall of Princes, Temple of Glass, Pilgrimage of Man*, all retold from French or Latin.

Scottish Followers of Chaucer: During this period, the finest poetry emerged from Scotland. While these poets imitated Chaucer, their works also displayed a distinct spirit of originality. Particularly notable is their treatment of nature, often depicting natural scenes with vivid realism. Most notable poets are:

1. James I (1394-1437): An accomplished prince, he significantly influenced the development of national poetry. His poem, *The King's Quair*, written during his captivity, recounts his first sight of the woman who would become his wife. Although imitative of Chaucer, it is infused with genuine imagination and emotion.

2. Robert Henryson (1429-1508): A schoolmaster known for writing several notable poems including *The Testament of Cresseid, Orpheus and Eurydice*, and *Robene and Makyne*. His style is concise and narrative-driven, with a brisk and lively pace.

3. William Dunbar (1460-1530): Dunbar is the foremost poet among this group of Scottish writers, with about a hundred extant poems. His work is characterised by a wide variety of subjects and meters, showcasing his versatility. His poems include *Tidings from the Sessions, Satire on Edinburgh, Ballad of Kynd Kittok.*

The New Poetry: Wyatt, Surrey and Tottel's Miscellany

A new movement in poetry emerged in the highly Italian-influenced court of Henry VIII (1509-47). Two prominent figures in this movement were Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516-47). Both were deeply influenced by the Renaissance spirit and Italian poetry. Through these influences, they revitalised English poetry by introducing Italian themes and forms, such as the sonnet and blank verse, which would later be perfected by Shakespeare and Milton.

1. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542): Wyatt graduated from Cambridge at fifteen and travelled to Italy multiple times. He brought the sonnet form to England and introduced songs, madrigals, sonnets, and elegies based on Italian models. He authored around ninety-six poems.

2. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516-1547): A poet, courtier, soldier, and envoy, he fell victim to Henry VIII's arbitrary rule and was executed for alleged treason at thirty. He wrote sonnets, lyrics, elegies, and translated and paraphrased portions of the Bible. His notable work, *Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aeneis turned into English Meter*, while not exceptional in translation quality, is significant for being the earliest English blank verse.

3. *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557): It is a collection of poems by courtly poets, including about half by Wyatt and Surrey, circulated in manuscript form for courtly audiences. Published by Richard Tottel, this collection is crucial as it marks the dawn of a new age in English poetry.

2.6.4.2. Evolution of Drama

Drama in England originated from ritualistic art forms such as dance, poetry, and music at the precincts of the Church. These performances, as we have noted in the earlier unit, were known as Miracle and Mystery plays.

Following Morality plays, the Interlude emerged. Interludes, known for their humorous scenes, began to develop in the early sixteenth century and are closely associated with John Heywood (1497-1580). Heywood's most renowned interlude is *The Four P's*, which features a witty contest among a Pardoner, a Palmer, a Pedlar, and a Pothecary. (See particularly "1.3.9. The Development of English Drama" of Unit 3 of this paper for Mystery and Morality Plays as well as Interludes)

2.6.4.3. Regular Drama

English drama begins to reflect the influence of classical literature not before 1550. At this point, English drama shifted from the didactic nature of Miracle and Morality plays to focus more on depicting human life as it is.

The first English play written in accordance with classical principles was Nicholas Udall's comedy *Ralph Royster Doyster* (around 1550). Udall, who was headmaster of both Eton and Westminster, structured the play into five acts and scenes in the Latin style. It was first performed by his students around 1556. The play tells the story of Ralph, a vain young man infatuated with a widow already promised to another. It adheres to the classical unities of action, time, and place and is written in verse. While Udall intended to satirise boastful individuals, his main goal was to entertain.

The second significant English comedy was *Gammer Gurton's Needle* by William Stevenson. This domestic comedy, rich in rustic humour, revolves around Gammer Gurton, who loses her needle while chasing a cat that has gotten into the milk pan. Chaos ensues as the household searches for the needle which is eventually found stuck in the breeches. All this results in a humorous and realistic portrayal of the English life.

The first English tragedy is *Gorboduc* by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, performed at the Inns of Court in 1562. Modelled after the works of Seneca, this play is also notable for being the first English play to employ blank verse, a form introduced into English poetry by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. The play is structured into five acts, each concluding with a lengthy chorus. The plot, drawn from the legendary chronicles of Britain, features Gorboduc and Videna as the king and queen, with their sons Ferrex and Porrex as key figures. The drama unfolds as Ferrex and Porrex dispute the division of the kingdom. Porrex murders his brother, leading to Videna killing Porrex in retaliation. This act of revenge incites a rebellion

among the people, resulting in the deaths of Videna and Gorboduc. The Duke of Albany attempts to claim the throne, sparking a civil war that concludes with widespread bloodshed and chaos.

2.6.4.4. Prose

The Renaissance had a significant, though less dramatic, impact on English prose which began to move away from Latin influences to put a stronger emphasis on native English traditions. Prose writings diversified into various forms, including theological works, historical accounts, philosophical texts, satire, didactic writings, and medical treatises. The volume of translations increased, and there were notable advancements in prose style and technique. Writers began to show greater skill in using prose, developing a heightened awareness of rhythm and cadence, and introduced innovations such as the prose paragraph. This era saw the gradual emergence of all major prose styles in English, which accelerated and solidified the development of English prose.

A key figure in this transformation was Sir Thomas Malory (1395-1471), known for his seminal work *Morte d'Arthur*. Malory, a translator, compiler, and romancer, produced this influential prose work while imprisoned for his involvement in the Wars of the Roses. *Morte d'Arthur*, published by William Caxton in 1485, is a comprehensive collection of the Arthurian legends. It is considered England's first book in poetic prose and has had a lasting impact on English literature. Its stories have inspired many modern poets, including Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, William Morris, and Alfred Lord Tennyson, whose *Idylls of the King* are largely based on Malory's work.

William Caxton (1422-91) is renowned as the first English printer. Over his career, he printed nearly every notable English work of his time, including those by Chaucer, Malory, Gower, and Lydgate. Caxton had a keen appreciation for literature, translating twenty-four books from French, Dutch, and Latin, and producing nearly eighty volumes in just fourteen years. His most significant translation is *The Golden Legend*. The prefaces and epilogues Caxton wrote for the books he printed are notable for their simplicity, personal touch, and humour. English literature owes much to Caxton, as his printing preserved many works that might otherwise have been lost.

Thomas More (1478-1535) was a lawyer and Parliament member who, influenced by prominent humanists, wrote *Utopia* in Latin in 1516. It was translated into English by Raph Robynson in 1551. Although More wrote *Utopia* in Latin, his other works, including *Dialogue of Comfort and History of King Henry III*, are highly regarded in English literature. More was imprisoned in 1534 for his political views and executed the following year.

William Tyndale (1484-1536), a key figure in the Protestant Reformation, translated the New Testament, the Pentateuch, and the book of Jonah into English from Greek. His translations were in rhythmic prose. Tyndale was arrested for heresy and executed by burning. Miles Coverdale (1488-1568), Bishop of Exeter, translated the Bible and Apocrypha into English from German and Latin texts. Coverdale's translations, noted for their rhythmic style, contributed many significant terms to the English language. Both Coverdale and Tyndale had a profound impact on the Authorized Version of the Bible (1611).

Activities:

1. The Renaissance marks the period when the concept of the 'gentleman' begins to appear in Europe. Read Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980) for better understanding.

2. During the Middle Ages, few people owned or read 'books.' Imagine yourself as a reader of that period and write in around 500 words about your experience and about your feelings.

3. Renaissance England saw an increase in the number of women writers. Over 1000 works were composed or translated by English women between 1500 and 1640. Read about the significant contributions of the women writers of the period. Prepare a list of both the women writers and their major works.

2.6.5. Literature of the Renaissance II

The death of Henry VIII in 1547 led to a period of political instability and succession crises. The young King Edward VI became the nominal leader, but his early death in 1553 triggered a turbulent era marked by severe persecution of Protestants under Queen Mary Tudor. When Elizabeth I ascended the throne in

1558 at the age of 25, she ushered in a new era of peace, prosperity, stability and national spirit. Her early reign focused on resolving religious conflicts and consolidating her power. Elizabeth I aimed to address social discontent by improving the conditions of the poor. She implemented a systematic approach to relief and employment. By the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, Elizabeth had solidified her status as a formidable leader, with France and Spain no longer posing major threats to England. The Elizabethan era was also notable for its expansion of geographical horizons. Explorers like Drake circumnavigated the globe, bringing back both material wealth and intellectual ideas, which influenced literature significantly. Elizabeth's influence extended beyond politics and religion, shaping the literary and artistic culture of the time. The period became a cradle for art and adventure, driven by a fervent desire for experimentation and discovery. England embraced both the southern Renaissance and the northern Reformation, fostering advancements in literature, science, statecraft, and religion. This era, marked by freedom and spontaneity, produced legendary figures such as Drake, Raleigh, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Campion, Jonson, and Donne. While Shakespeare was the central figure, the Elizabethan age was rich with other notable talents such as Spenser and Sydney.

The Elizabethan era is often hailed as a golden age of literature, with its peak creativity emerging in the last fifteen years of Queen Elizabeth I's reign. Many of its greatest achievements in poetry, drama, and prose appeared during the reign of her successor, James I such as Shakespeare's *The Sonnets, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, The Tempest,* Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist,* John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi,* Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis.* The delayed onset of this literary brilliance can be attributed to several factors.

Firstly, great literature requires a rich and adaptable language. Early English literary forms were either borrowed from Italy and France or confined to rudimentary translations, which led to experimental syntax. England was not fully integrated into the European mainstream until the Renaissance began to influence its culture. Henry VIII's establishment of a new social order needed to be solidified, which Elizabeth achieved through her reign. The first thirty years of her rule were marked by efforts to stabilise and shape this new order, reflected in the didactic prose of Ascham and Elyot, as well as the poetry of Sidney and the early Spenser.

The Renaissance brought the revival of classical learning to the masses. While Greek and Latin knowledge had previously been confined to a scholarly few,

translations made these works accessible to a broader audience. By 1579, many significant ancient and modern texts were available in English, with translations of works by Plutarch, Montaigne, and Homer greatly enriching English literature. This influx of classical ideas and aesthetics significantly impacted the intellectual and creative climate of the time.

Upon Elizabeth's accession to the throne, the kingdom was deeply divided between Protestants and Catholics. Elizabeth's inclusive approach, involving both the groups in her administration, helped stabilise religious tensions. With religious controversies largely resolved, writers were freed from the constraints of religious persecution and could focus on their craft. The Elizabethan Age thus emerged as a time of relative social contentment and creative flourishing.

The surge of creative energy in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign can also be explained by the exceptional talent that emerged. The Elizabethan society was diverse and nationalistic, with a wide range of religious beliefs—Anglicans, Catholics, Puritans, skeptics, and atheists—and a spectrum of cultural experiences. This vibrant, multifaceted environment fostered a diverse and innovative literature. The contrast between brutal entertainments like bear-baiting and refined plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* exemplifies the rich variety of experiences in London at the time.

2.6.5.1. Poetry

For nearly 150 years after Chaucer's death (1400), English poetry experienced a resurgence. Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) is a key precursor to the vibrant Elizabethan poetry that followed. Additionally, Elizabethan drama, which is a significant part of the period's literary achievements, also contributed to the era's poetic richness. Many playwrights of the time were engaged in pure poetry as a form of relaxation, producing verses in the popular poetic styles of the day.

As David Daiches says, "Edmund Spenser marks both a culmination and a new beginning in English poetry" (166). The significant poets are:

Edmund Spenser (1552-99)

Edmund Spenser had a significant impact on English poetry. His exposure to classical and Italian poets, combined with his knowledge of Celtic poetry and Chaucer, shaped his work. Spenser's major contributions include:

- *The Faerie Queene* (1589-96): It is Spenser's greatest work, notable for its length and influence, blending allegory and epic. It stands as a monumental achievement in English poetry.

- *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579): It is Spenser's first major work, marking the beginning of Elizabethan poetic excellence with its pastoral themes and classical influences.

- *Astrophel* (1586): An elegy for Sir Philip Sidney, dedicated to a prominent contemporary.

- *Amoretti* (1595): It comprises a series of 88 sonnets detailing Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle.

- *Epithalamion* (1595): It is a celebrated wedding hymn, praised for its lyrical beauty.

- *Prothalamion* (1596): It is a celebratory spousal song for two marriages.

- *Mother Hubard's Tale* (1590): It is a satirical poem on societal issues.

Thomas Sackville (1536-1608) is known for *The Mirror for Magistrates*, a melancholic and elegiac poem reflecting on the fall of great leaders, written in rhyme royal.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) is an important figure in English sonnet tradition. His *Astrophel and Stella* is a sequence of sonnets and songs addressing his unfulfilled love for Penelope Rich. His sonnets are noted for their emotional depth and Petrarchan form.

Michael Drayton (1563-1631): Drayton is a prolific poet known for works such as The *Shepherd's Garland* (1594) and *Poly-Olbion* (1622), an extensive poem celebrating Britain's geography and history.

Samuel Daniel (1562-1619): He is noted for his epic *The Civil Wars*, which covers the Wars of the Roses, and his sonnet sequence *Delia*. His work is marked by strong patriotism and lyrical quality.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616): While best-known for his plays, Shakespeare made substantial contributions to Elizabethan poetry:

- *Venus and Adonis* (1593) is a narrative poem in six-line stanzas about Venus's unrequited love for Adonis.

- *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) is based on classical sources. It explores the tragic story of Lucrece in rhyme royal stanzas.

- *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599) is a collection of poems, though only a few are definitively attributed to Shakespeare.

- *The Sonnets* (1609): A collection of 154 sonnets divided into two main groups: one addressing a young man of high rank and the other a "dark lady." The sonnets are known for their intricate language and emotional depth.

Thus we find that Elizabethan period saw a remarkable flourishing of English poetry, with each poet contributing to the rich tapestry of Elizabethan literature.

2.6.5.2. Rise of the Drama

The Elizabethan era, marked by profound political, social, and cultural changes, is renowned for its vibrant and influential drama. The period's theatrical achievements are a testament to the era's dynamic spirit and intellectual vitality. The drama of the time reflects the complexities of the age, including its exploration of human nature, social issues, and political themes. As Emile Legouis says, "Rich in all its manifestations though the English literature of the Renaissance may be, the drama is its chief glory, just as it is the nation's most direct and original expression" (119).

The rise of Elizabethan drama was a gradual process that built upon earlier theatrical traditions and was significantly influenced by various developments. Here are some key factors that contributed to this phenomenal growth:

Legacy of Earlier Plays: The Miracle and Morality plays established foundational themes and dramatic structures that influenced Elizabethan playwrights. These plays provided a basis for the allegorical and moral explorations that would later evolve into more complex and sophisticated forms of drama.

Institutional Support: The royal permit granted to Lord Leicester's Men in 1574 was crucial. It allowed professional actors to perform plays publicly, which helped establish theatre as a legitimate and popular form of entertainment. This endorsement from the monarchy elevated the status of theatre and encouraged the development of the dramatic arts.

Theatres and Playhouses: The construction of the first permanent playhouse, "The Theatre," in 1576, was a pivotal moment. It provided a dedicated space for performances and contributed to the growth of a professional theatre industry. The presence of playhouses attracted audiences from various social classes and fostered a vibrant theatrical culture.

Audience Engagement: The theatre became a central social and cultural activity in London. The enthusiasm and engagement of the audience created a dynamic environment where playwrights were motivated to produce innovative and compelling works. The interaction between the audience and the performers helped shape the content and style of the plays.

Professionalisation of Acting: The establishment of permanent acting companies and playhouses led to the professionalisation of acting. Companies like Lord Chamberlain's Men and Admiral's Men attracted talented actors and playwrights, leading to higher standards of performance and writing.

Literary and Artistic Environment: The Elizabethan period saw the influence of Renaissance humanism, which emphasised classical learning and the exploration of human nature. This intellectual climate inspired playwrights to experiment with new dramatic forms and themes.

Economic Factors: The growth of London as a commercial and cultural hub contributed to the flourishing of theatre. Economic prosperity and the rise of a prosperous middle class created a larger audience base for plays and encouraged investment in theatrical ventures.

On the whole, the Elizabethan drama emerged from a rich tapestry of historical, social, and cultural influences, and its growth was a result of both the legacies of earlier theatrical forms and the new opportunities provided by the evolving theatre scene."Whenever an author found his pocket empty, he knew that his best chance of filling it promptly was on the stage. Therefore all the authors wrote or tried to write for the theatre. There is hardly a poet or novelist of this period who did not at some time turn his attention to drama, not to speak of those who gave almost all their energies to it" (Legouis and Cazamian 378).

2.6.5.3. University Wits

To have a clear understanding of the drama of this period, it is necessary to recognise the distinction between classical and romantic plays. Classical drama

adhered strictly to the unities of time, place, and action, with events occurring in a single location and within one day, and involving a single story without subplots. Actions were largely described offstage and relayed through dialogue, with a clear separation between tragedy and comedy. In contrast, romantic drama, as established by the University Wits, embraced a broader view of life, spanning months or even years, and featured multiple incidents played out on stage. This form also integrated elements of both tragedy and comedy, reflecting a more flexible approach to storytelling.

For about twenty years following the creation of *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553) and *Gorboduc* (1561), English drama experienced significant turmoil. *Ralph Roister Doister* combines classical and English elements, while *Gorboduc* follows a classical model. During this time, all of Seneca's tragedies had been translated into English, and English playwrights were shaping their dramatic styles. Some favoured Seneca's classical approach, while others, influenced by humanists like Sir Philip Sidney, supported adherence to classical models. Conversely, many writers and actors opposed Senecan conventions, preferring dynamic plots and action to suit the English audience's tastes. Ultimately, the preference for national taste over classical tradition prevailed, and by the time Shakespeare began his career, the romantic form of drama had been established. This romantic style was pioneered by the University Wits, a group of playwrights who laid the groundwork for Shakespeare.

The University Wits—John Lyly, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Kyd, and Thomas Nash—were Oxford and Cambridge graduates who turned to playwriting to earn a living. They were known for their ambitious, bohemian lifestyles and played a crucial role in developing Elizabethan drama. Their plays shared common traits: they featured heroic themes, grand and emotional treatment, and a style marked by strong, powerful lines. Their works were predominantly tragic and lacked humour. A detailed discussion of the University Wits is important to understand the rise of drama in this period and also to understand the works of Shakespeare.

John Lyly (1554-1606): Lyly pioneered high comedy in English using prose as its medium. His notable plays include *The Woman in the Moone, Alexander and Campaspe, Sapho and Phao, and Endimion. The Woman in the Moone* is his only play in blank verse; the others are in prose. His plays, with their aristocratic lovers and witty dialogue, foreshadow Shakespearean comedy.

Robert Greene (1560-92): Greene's major works include *The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, The Scottish History of James the Fourth, and Alphonsus, the King of Arragon*. He is known for his depiction of women, influencing Shakespeare's portrayal of female characters. Greene's plays are early examples of the romantic comedy genre, which Shakespeare later perfected.

George Peele (1558-97): Peele wrote *The Arraignment of Paris, The Battle of Alcazar, The Old Wives' Tale, David and Bathsheba*, and *Edward the First*. His works, while diverse and talented, often lacked strong plot construction and character development. Peele's blank verse had a grandeur not previously seen in English drama.

Thomas Lodge (1558-1625): Lodge's dramatic output is limited. His only surviving play is *The Wounds of Civil War*, a chronicle play. He also collaborated with Shakespeare on *Henry VI* and other plays.

Thomas Kyd (1557-95): Much of Kyd's work has been lost, but his surviving play *The Spanish Tragedy* is notable for its exploration of horror, involving murder and madness. Another surviving play, *Cornelia*, shows advancement in plot construction and character development.

Thomas Nash (1567-1601): Nash's sole surviving play is *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, a masque celebrating the harvest festival. It is considered weak in both plot and character.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93): Marlowe, often regarded as the foremost of the University Wits and a pioneering figure in English tragedy, significantly shaped Elizabethan drama. His breakthrough came with the publication of *Tamburlaine* (1590), marking the beginning of the Elizabethan drama's golden age. Marlowe wrote only four major tragedies over a five-year period from 1587 to 1592, showing little interest in comedy, which appears less developed in his works. While he was not the first to use blank verse in English drama, Marlowe elevated its use to new heights, rivalled only by Shakespeare, who was deeply influenced by Marlowe's style and may have collaborated with him.

Tamburlaine the Great (1590): This play, split into two parts of five acts each, presents the epic story of Timur the Tartar. The narrative follows Timur's rise from a shepherd-robber to the King of Persia, driven by boundless ambition and ruthless cruelty. His conquests and ultimate defiance against the gods are portrayed with

dramatic intensity. The play ends with his death and that of his beloved. The play achieved immediate success.

Doctor Faustus (1588): In this play, Marlowe explores the story of a scholar who, disillusioned with traditional sciences, turns to magic. Faustus sells his soul to the Devil for twenty-four years of unlimited power and knowledge. The play chronicles these years as Faustus uses his newfound abilities, ultimately leading to his tragic downfall.

The Jew of Malta (1592): This drama depicts the destructive nature of greed through the character of Barabas, a wealthy Jew. When the governor of Malta seizes Barabas's wealth to pay a tribute demanded by Turkey, Barabas seeks revenge through a series of violent acts. His ultimate demise, falling into a cauldron he had prepared for his enemies, parallels Shakespeare's Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*.

Edward II (1593): Marlowe's first historical drama, *Edward II*, examines the tragic flaws and suffering of King Edward II. It offers a profound reflection on the fleeting nature of earthly joys and power, exploring themes of weakness and misery in the context of historical events. Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Richard III* may have drawn inspiration from Marlowe's portrayal of historical tragedy.

2.6.5.4. Shakespeare

The evolution of English drama, beginning with the miracle plays and maturing through the University Wits, reached its zenith with Shakespeare. It is remarkable that Shakespeare, a poor boy with limited schooling, rose to become one of the world's greatest dramatists. After joining a London acting company, he acted in various roles, revised existing plays, and eventually became an independent playwright. His extensive theatrical experience and exceptional talent made him the preeminent English dramatist. Over roughly twenty-five years, he authored thirty-seven plays—tragedies, comedies, and historical dramas—and became the most celebrated playwright of his era.

Shakespeare's keen understanding of audience psychology allowed him to capture and reflect their emotions and thoughts, which resonated universally. He transcended his time and place, exploring fundamental human traits that appeal to people across all cultures and eras. His ability to portray these universal aspects

of humanity is the essence of his enduring global appeal. Goethe praised Shakespeare, acknowledging his intellectual and artistic greatness that surpassed even the confines of the stage.

Shakespeare's plays can be categorized into four distinct periods:

Preparatory Period (1591-1595): Characterised by experimentation and youthful energy, this period includes plays such as *Henry VI* (Parts 1-3), *Richard III, The Comedy of Errors, Titus Andronicus,* and *Romeo and Juliet.* These works display Shakespeare's early exploration of different styles and forms.

Period of Brilliant Maturity (1596-1600): During this time, Shakespeare's dramatic craft reached new heights. His works from this period, including *Richard II, The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV* (Parts 1-2), *Much Ado About Nothing,* and *Julius Caesar,* showcase improved artistry, refined plots, and deeper character insights.

Period of Gloom and Depression (1600-1607): This era is marked by Shakespeare's exploration of darker themes and complex tragedies. Notable plays from this period include *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear.* This is considered the peak of Shakespeare's dramatic power.

Period of Serenity, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness (1608-1616): In his later years, Shakespeare's work reflects a more peaceful and reconciliatory tone. This period includes the plays *Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tempest.* His plays from this time are characterised by a reflective calm, contrasting with the intensity of his earlier works.

Shakespeare's plays are distinguished by their remarkable variety, encompassing comedies, tragedies, and histories with exceptional skill. His characters, drawn from all social strata, are vividly portrayed, from kings and clowns to heroes and villains. Shakespeare's exploration of human nature and his deft handling of language have enriched English literature profoundly. His use of blank verse, his versatile meter, and his inventive vocabulary have made a lasting impact on the English language. Shakespeare's works continue to inspire and influence countless writers, securing his place as a monumental figure in the literary world.

2.6.5.5. Prose

The allure of Elizabethan poetry often overshadows the intellectual achievements of the prose written during the same period. However, the prose of this era was

not just ornamental; it was crafted to both inspire and instruct, aiming to engage reason as well as imagination. This prose, influenced by the Renaissance, grew significantly in depth and quality, encompassing a wide range of forms, including pamphlets, fiction, essays, polemical religious writings, political treatises, and educational and literary theory.

The period also saw a flourishing of diverse prose genres such as devotional texts, sermons, translations, histories, biographies, and contemporary accounts. Through this rich array of prose, two key developments emerged: the infusion of native English colloquial speech, which added vigour and liveliness, and the conscious cultivation of an artistic prose style.

Elizabethan prose can be broadly categorised into fiction and non-fiction. Fictional prose ranged from picaresque narratives to pamphlets, with many writers excelling in both areas. Much of the prose was imaginative and impassioned rather than purely argumentative or instructional, leading to the popularity of prose romances. Influences of Boccaccio, Cinthio, and Bandello helped shape these literary romances, laying the groundwork for the English novel.

Elizabethan prose made remarkable strides as compared to the pre-1558 prose. Although some eccentricities remained and it had not yet achieved the clear, simple style, it was steadily establishing its own identity. An examination of Elizabethan prose writers highlights the genre's impressive range and diversity during this period.

- **John Lyly** (1554-1606): Lyly is credited with popularising the euphuistic style, which features complex sentence structures, extensive use of parallelism, and a love for rhetorical devices. His writing was notable for its moral teachings and was influential in shaping the prose style during his era. His major works are: *Euphues, or The Anatomy of Wit* (1579) and *Euphues and His England* (1580).

- **Robert Greene** (1560-1592): Greene is better known for his pamphlets and plays, but his prose fiction also played a significant role. His stories, especially *Pandosto*, were important in the development of the romance genre and influenced Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. His major works are *Pandosto* (1588) and *The Life and Death of Ned Browne* (1592).

- **Thomas Lodge** (1558-1625): Lodge is recognised for his romantic and pastoral 'novels.' *Rosalynde* directly inspired Shakespeare's *As You Like*

It, and his works often combined classical themes with contemporary issues, marking his impact on English prose and drama. His major works are *Rosalynde* (1590), *Euphues' Golden Legacy* (1590), and *The Life and Death of Robert the Devil* (1596).

● **Sir Philip Sidney** (1554-1586): Sidney's *The Arcadia* is an important work in English prose, known for its intricate narrative and poetic language, mixing prose with verse. His *Apologie for Poetrie* is an early critical essay defending poetry and its importance. It influenced later literary criticism. His major works are *The Arcadia* (1590) and *The Apologie for Poetrie* (1595).

● **Thomas Nash** (1567-1601): Nash's *The Unfortunate Traveller* is an early example of the picaresque novel, featuring the adventures of a roguish hero and providing a satirical look at 16th-century Europe. This work laid the groundwork for the picaresque genre that would later flourish. His major works are *The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594).

● **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626): Francis Bacon, an essayist, philosopher, statesman, scientist, and pioneer of inductive philosophy, stands out as a leading prose writer of the Elizabethan era. Influenced by the Renaissance, Bacon became a key figure in modern philosophy, exploring the natural world and developing a distinctive English prose style noted for its "infinite richness in a little room," a phrase from Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. Bacon's personality is complex and paradoxical. Although he was a cold and calculating politician primarily focused on personal success, he saw himself as a servant to humanity, dedicated to advancing knowledge and praising the Creator for the betterment of human life. Despite his deep respect for religion and the Anglican faith, his work does not align closely with Christian moral teachings. Bacon's character was notably flawed, and his actions often contradicted his thoughts. He believed that Latin was the only language for significant works, yet his contributions to English prose are substantial. As William J. Long aptly notes, Bacon's complex and contradictory nature poses a challenge for his biographers (166). Bacon's works fall into three categories:

1. **Philosophical Works:** This category includes *The Advancement of Learning, Novum Organum, De Augmentis Scientiarum*, and *Sylva Sylvarum. The*

Advancement of Learning surveys contemporary knowledge and explores methods for advancing it, expressed through forceful, rhetorically rich prose.

2. **Historical Work:** This category comprises *The New Atlantis, The History of Henry the Seventh, and Apothegms New and Old. The History of Henry the Seventh* is a precise and objective account, suggesting that Bacon could have been a skilled historian if he had pursued that path.

3. **Utopian Work:** *The New Atlantis* is inspired by Plato's *Republic* and Thomas More's *Utopia.* In Bacon's version, the inhabitants of Atlantis have rejected traditional philosophy in favour of Bacon's empirical method, creating an advanced society with institutions resembling modern scientific academies, observatories, and other innovations. Bacon's essays, influenced by his French contemporary Montaigne, cover familiar themes such as learning, power, studies, death, and truth. They offer practical advice for courtiers and statesmen, filled with profound worldly wisdom. Bacon's style is noted for its frequent Biblical and classical references, vivid illustrations, and striking aphorisms. Today, Bacon is particularly remembered for these essays, which not only offer a view of his precise, condensed thoughts but also reflect his application of experimental analysis to human life, laying the groundwork for future scientific inquiry.

● **Sir Walter Raleigh** (1552-1618): *Discoveries of Guiana* discusses Raleigh's colonisation plans and his quest for the mythical El Dorado. *The History of the World* covers events from creation to the fall of the Macedonian Empire but is noted for its inaccuracies. Despite its unreliable content, the work is praised for its simple and dignified style.

● **Robert Burton** (1577-1640): Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* explores the nature, causes, and treatment of melancholy, with particular attention to love and religious melancholy. It is rich with quotations from the Bible, Latin, Greek, and French. The style is meandering and discursive, characterised by deep irony and pathos.

● **Richard Hooker** (1554-1600): *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,* comprising eight books, provides a scholarly defence of the Anglican Church against Presbyterianism. It is known for its broad vision, logical

arguments, and balanced perspective. Hooker's style, influenced by classical writers, is marked by clarity, well-constructed sentences, and a blend of precision and melodic language, representing an early example of refined English prose.

● **Richard Hakluyt** (1552-1616): Hakluyt's three-volume work, *Principal Navigations, Vayages, and Discoveries of the English Nation.*, first published in 1589, chronicles the voyages of English explorers. The first volume covers Northern voyages, the second focuses on India and the East, and the third details the New World explorations. Except for a mythical account of King Arthur's voyage to Iceland, the narratives are authentic, capturing the adventurous spirit of the English people.

● **Samuel Purchas** (1575-1626): Purchass' works, although less distinguished compared to Hakluyt's, are notable for their interest in adventures and hold a place in the history of English literature. They continue the tradition of chronicling voyages and explorations. His major works are *Purchas, His Pilgrimage* (1613) and *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625).

Elizabethan prose is notable for its remarkable diversity and adaptability, but only a few genres left a lasting impact. The works of historians and classical translators like Holinshed and North deeply resonated with the Elizabethan audience. Additionally, Hakluyt's adventurous accounts captivated readers of the time. The popularity of pamphlets and religious writings reflected the eclectic tastes of the era.

Activities:

1. Prepare a list of works on travel and exploration and discuss the concept of the 'New World' which was central to the Elizabethan imagination.

2. To explore more on travel, landscape and geography, see *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* by John Gillies (1994) and *Geography, Cartography and Nautical Science in the Renaissance* by WGL Randles (2000).

3. Watch the plays of Shakespeare available in YouTube.

2.6.6. Summing Up

In this unit, we have discussed how Renaissance has revolutionised the outlook of man throughout Europe. A detailed picture of the socio-cultural and political background has also been provided. This will help your understanding of how and why literary works of high quality emerged during the period. We have also discussed both fictional and non-fictional works, and works of different genres written in both prose and poetry. It is hoped that after reading this unit you will have a better comprehension of the Elizabethan and Renaissance world and its culture.

2.6.7. Self-Assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the impact of the Renaissance on English Literature in the Elizabethan period.

2. Write an essay on any three of the chief lyric poets of the Elizabethan period.

3. Trace the development of English drama in the Elizabethan period.

4. Critically discuss the contribution of the University Wits.

5. Write an essay on Shakespeare as a dramatist.

6. Discuss Bacon's contribution to Elizabethan literature.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. What is Renaissance? What are its main features?

2. What is *Tottel's Miscellany*?

3. Comment on the theme and 'characters' in Shakespeare's sonnets.

4. Who are the members of the University Wits? Briefly comment on any one of them.

5. Briefly analyse Philip Sidney's contribution to English literature.

6. Write short notes on any two of the following:
   Richard Hakluyt; Robert Burton; Sir Walter Raleigh; Thomas Nash; John Lyly; Sir Thomas Wyatt; *The Faerie Queene*; *Tottel's Miscellany*; Humanism; Reformation.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Who are notable Renaissance playwrights besides William Shakespeare?

2. Name some plays of Christopher Marlowe.

3. Who wrote *Astrophel and Stella* and what is its theme?

2.6.8. Suggested Readings

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature.* Oxford UP, 1979.

Alexander, Michael. *A History of English Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Chowdhury, Aditi and Rita Goswami. *A History of English Literature: Traversing the Centuries.* Orient Blackswan, 2014.

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Nayar, Pramod K. *A Short History of English Literature.* Cambridge UP, 2009.

Module – 3

British Literature: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Unit – 7 ❑ Seventeenth-Century British Literature: Poetry

Structure

3.7.1. Objectives

This unit will provide a social, political and religious background to British poetry written during the seventeenth century. It will explore the key poetic movements and figures of the period, examining how they reflect and respond to the socio-political and cultural contexts of the time. It also aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the major poets including the Metaphysical poets, Cavalier poets, and Restoration poetry, their thematic concerns, stylistic innovations and contributions to the evolution of English poetry.

3.7.2. Introduction

The seventeenth century was a transformative period for British poetry, marked by profound shifts in style and theme influenced by the era's sociopolitical

turbulence. This unit explores the diverse poetic landscapes of the time, focusing on three prominent poetic traditions: Metaphysical Poetry, Cavalier Poetry and Restoration Poetry, and a major poet – John Milton. Metaphysical poets, such as John Donne and George Herbert, are renowned for their intricate and intellectual approach to poetry. Their work delves into abstract themes like love, death, and spirituality, employing elaborate metaphors and philosophical inquiry. Donne's poetry, with its complex conceits and intense emotional exploration, exemplifies the metaphysical style, while Herbert's devout and introspective verse reflects a deeply personal spirituality. In contrast, the cavalier poets, including Robert Herrick embraced a more straight-forward and pastoral style. Their poetry often celebrates rural life, the fleeting nature of youth, and the pleasures of the moment, embodying a carpe diem (literally, 'pluck the day,' meaning 'enjoy life while we can') ethos. The Cavalier poets' work is characterised by lyrical beauty and a focus on themes of love and nature, presenting a more light-hearted counterpoint to the metaphysical approach. Restoration poetry often reflects the political and social upheavals of the period marked by a shift towards satire, wit and a focus on realism. Poets like John Donne and Samuel Butler used sharp wit, humour and criticism to comment on the changing dynamics of their society. By examining these poets and their contributions, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the seventeenth-century British poetry and its lasting impact on literary traditions.

3.7.3. Historical Background

This section provides a picture of the main socio-political and religious contexts of the seventeenth century for understanding the era's literary developments. It focuses on the key political events such as the English Civil War (1642-1648) and the Restoration of the monarchy which significantly influenced the themes and styles of contemporary poetry.

The Tudor dynasty ruled England from 1485, when Henry VII became king, until 1603, when Queen Elizabeth I passed away. After her death, James VI of Scotland became James I of England. While the English people had long been loyal to their monarchs, they also deeply desired personal freedom. This tension between loyalty to the crown and the wish for liberty often led to conflicts. The situation escalated when James I began to disregard Parliament, despite the fact that it was instrumental in bringing him to power. He imposed heavy taxes and persecuted

the Puritans, prompting many to leave England and settle in America in 1607 and again in 1620. As the middle class gained influence, it frequently came into conflict with the king, who responded by dissolving Parliament three times in 1604, 1614, and 1621. The people sought to limit the king's authority, which he claimed was granted by the Divine Right of Kings. After the death of James I, his son Charles I (1625-1649) became the king of England. Charles I was known for being deceitful and impulsive and quickly lost favour with his subjects. He married Princess Henrietta Maria, a French Roman Catholic, and fell under the influence of the Catholic Church. Charles strongly believed in absolute monarchy, which was opposed to the idea of personal liberty for his subjects. Public resentment grew when he dissolved three Parliaments within four years and imprisoned some of its prominent members. For eleven years, Charles ruled without calling Parliament. This led to a Civil War (1642-1648) between the king and the Parliamentary forces. Oliver Cromwell led a cavalry force of Puritans, known as the Roundheads, against the Royalists, called the Cavaliers. Cromwell's forces defeated Prince Rupert in 1644 and decisively crushed the Royal Army in 1645. Eventually, the Parliamentary forces emerged victorious. Charles I was captured, charged with treason against his country, and executed at Whitehall on January 30, 1649.

After the death of Charles-I, England was declared a Commonwealth (1649-1653), essentially a Republic in nature. In 1649, Oliver Cromwell suppressed a rebellion in Ireland and, in 1651, defeated the forces of Prince Charles in Scotland. In 1653, Cromwell established a Council of State, which led to the formation of a new Parliament.

Five months after establishing the new Parliament, Cromwell dissolved it. The Council then appointed him as Lord Protector and the sole ruler of the Commonwealth. Cromwell governed with dignity and strength, even declining the title of king offered by Parliament in 1657. By 1658, his Protectorate had effectively become a monarchy in all but name. After Cromwell's death in 1658, England experienced a period of instability. In 1660, Parliament decided to restore the monarchy, and Charles II became king.

The Puritans were strict moralists who led austere lives and encouraged others to do the same. They opposed the disorderly lifestyles of the Cavaliers. During the Puritan ascendancy under Cromwell, harsh laws were enacted, and a strict standard of living was imposed on the people, often against their will. Many simple pleasures were banned, including horse racing, bear-baiting, Maypole dancing, and

theatrical performances. In contrast, the Cavaliers were known for their indulgence in profanity and excessive behaviour. Despite their severity, Puritanism had a largely positive impact on society, fostering an atmosphere of purity and restraint. The Puritans were not fanatical or rigidly dogmatic; they were people of high principles who were tolerant of differing opinions. Their spirit helped the Commonwealth uphold England's national ideals and was represented by great writers such as Milton and Bunyan. Puritanism also encouraged progress in various fields, including philosophy, medicine, and architecture. (For a comprehensive understanding of the historical background of the seventeenth century, you are advised to read Module 3, Unit 8, Section 3 and Module 3, Unit 9, Section 2 as well.)

3.7.4. Seventeenth Century British Poetry

3.7.4.1. Metaphysical Poetry

The term 'Metaphysical Poets' was coined by John Dryden and later adopted by Samuel Johnson to describe a group of poets from the early seventeenth century, including John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, and Abraham Cowley. Johnson initially used the term derisively, but these poets became quite notable for their distinctive style and their influence on later poets. John Donne is considered to be the leader of this group. Metaphysical poetry is characterised by its use of elaborate conceits, learned imagery, and unconventional metaphors and similes. The poets often employed extravagant hyperboles and showed off their erudition, which, while making their work seem artificial at times, also contributed to its originality. Despite their occasional affectations, Metaphysical poets are recognised for their keen psychological insight and subtle development of ideas. Their work is packed with affectations, striking conceits, learned imagery, strange metaphors, far-fetched similes, and extravagant hyperboles. They tried to show their learning, and, therefore, though their thoughts are often new, they are seldom natural. But it must be admitted that their works reveal keen psychological insight and subtlety of thought-development. Some of the well-known poets of this tradition are introduced below:

> ➢ John Donne (1573-1631): John Donne, a renowned clergyman and preacher, produced a diverse body of work including songs, sonnets, marriage hymns, elegies, divine poems, and satires. His poetry is noted for its unique blend

of contrasting elements: it combines genuine poetic emotion with harsh meters, imaginative and often bizarre imagery, and irregular versification. Donne is particularly known for his use of 'conceits'—intricate and elaborate metaphors that often involve surprising comparisons and intellectual ingenuity. These features contribute to the distinctive and sometimes paradoxical nature of his work. like "The Good Morrow", "The Canonization", "The Flea", "Twicknam Garden", "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", "Death be not Proud" and many more.

➤ Andrew Marvell (1621-1678): Andrew Marvell was a prominent English poet known for his metaphysical poetry and involvement in political life during a turbulent period in British history. Marvell's poetry is characterised by its intellectual wit, complex imagery and exploration of themes such as love, nature, politics and religion. One of his most famous works, "To His Coy Mistress," exemplifies the carpe diem theme, where he urges his lover to seize the moment before time runs out. "The Garden" reflects Marvell's deep connection to nature, presenting the natural world as a place of spiritual contemplation and solace. Marvell's political writing often took the form of satire, as seen in "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," where he delicately balances praise and critique of Oliver Cromwell.

➤ George Herbert (1593-1633): Professor Palmer describes George Herbert as the first English poet to have a direct and intimate spiritual conversation with God. Herbert, unlike many poets of his time, remained unaffected by the conflict between Puritan and Cavalier attitudes, maintaining a sense of peace and tranquility in his work. His reputation is primarily based on his collection *The Temple*, published in 1633, which includes 160 poems. Herbert described the book as a reflection of the spiritual struggles he experienced before fully submitting to the will of Jesus, in whom he found perfect freedom. Herbert's poems are known for their simplicity, quiet devotion, and colloquial style, often interspersed with subtle humor. While some of his imagery and conceits may seem strained or unconventional, his work is valued for its profound thought, emotional depth, and overall harmony. As a careful artist, Herbert's precise and simple expression and his love of harmony are evident throughout his poetry.

➢ Henry Vaughan (1622-1695): Henry Vaughan, who authored both secular and sacred poetry, is known for his diverse body of work, including *Poems* (1646), *Olor Iscanus* (1651), *Silex Scintillans* (1650), and *Thalia Rediviva* (1678). Initially, Vaughan wrote secular verse, but after a serious illness in 1651, he experienced a profound religious awakening that deeply influenced his poetry. His sacred poems, marked by this new fervour, are generally considered superior to his earlier love poems. Vaughan was both a mystic and a keen observer of nature. His nature descriptions, particularly in "The Retreat," foreshadow Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," both in terms of language and thematic content. Vaughan's poetry is distinguished by its felicitous phrases, deep emotional resonance, quiet awe, detailed nature observations, and mystical elements.

➢ Abraham Cowley (1618-1667): Abraham Cowley was a remarkable child prodigy, demonstrating his literary talent early on. At just ten, he wrote a lengthy epic romance, *Pyramus and Thisbe* (1628), followed by an even longer poem, *Constantia and Philetus* (1630), two years later. His most famous work is *The Davideis* (1656), a somber epic about King David written in heroic couplets. Cowley also published *The Mistress* (1647), a collection of love poems, and *Pindarique Odes* (1652). Although Cowley's poetry includes some metaphysical elements, these are relatively weak, and his work often lacks profound emotional depth. His use of heroic couplets in The *Davideis* and other works anticipates the style of the eighteenth century, reflecting the emerging poetic conventions of that period.

3.7.4.2. Cavalier Poetry

The term "Cavaliers" refers to the supporters of King Charles I during the English Civil War of the seventeenth century. "Cavalier poetry" refers to the lyrical poetry that flourished during Charles I's reign. Notable Cavalier poets include Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace. This school of poetry is also known as "Caroline poetry." The term "Caroline," derived from the Latin *Carolus*, meaning Charles, describes the writers from the period of Charles I. There is a clear distinction between the Metaphysical poets and the Cavalier poets. Metaphysical poets, such as John Donne and George Herbert, are known for their religious and mystical themes (besides some love poems), reflecting the

religious spirit of their time. In contrast, Cavalier poets focus on themes of love and war, often in a lighter, more frivolous, and sometimes licentious manner. The Cavaliers' lyrics are generally characterised by their gaiety and triviality, standing in open rebellion against the serious and austere Puritan ethos. Some of the Cavalier poets are discussed below:

➢ Robert Herrick (1591-1674) Robert Herrick, a true Cavalier poet, lived unhappily in a rural parish, yearning for the vibrant life of London and the Mermaid Tavern. He excelled in both secular and religious poetry. His notable volumes are *Noble Numbers* (1648) and *Hesperides* (1648). *Noble Numbers* contains 270 sacred poems, while *Hesperides* features about 1,130 secular poems, including epistles, folk songs, epigrams, and eclogues. Herrick's poetry is celebrated for its personal charm, delicate clarity, imaginative play, pagan mood, and hedonistic enthusiasm. Among his well-known shorter poems are *To Anthea, To Julia, Cherry Ripe* and *Corinna's Maying*. Many of Herrick's poems are included in the finest English anthologies.

➢ Thomas Carew (1598-1639): In Thomas Carew's poetry, there is a distinctive blend of sensuality and religiosity. His work is known for its polished craftsmanship, neat and musical phrases, and skillful use of the heroic couplet. Some of his notable poems include "Ask Me No More, When Thou," "Poor Excommunicate," and "Read In These Roses the Sad Story," all of which are featured in anthologies.

➢ Sir John Suckling (1609-1642): He was a prominent wit in the court of Charles I, and his poetry reflects the traits of a typical Cavalier poet: loyalty, flair, and a light-hearted, often morally relaxed, demeanour. His poetry, known for its gaiety, generosity and wit, includes well-known works such as *Ballad upon a Wedding, Why So Pale and Wan Fond Lover*.

➢ Sir Richard Lovelace (1618-1658): He shares many characteristics with Suckling and is frequently grouped with him as a quintessential Cavalier poet. His single volume of poetry, *Lucasta* (1649), features the celebrated poems "The Grasshopper" and "To Althea from Prison."

3.7.4.3. Milton

John Milton (1608-1674) is often considered as a class by himself due to his exceptional stature and unique contributions to English literature. His epic poetry, complex themes, and profound impact on literature elevate him to a singularly distinguished position in the literary canon. In his work there is a perfect union of the classical art and the moral ardour of the Bible. Milton added to the Renaissance culture the religious and moral earnestness of the Puritan. In other words, he is a perfect representative of his age as well as of the Renaissance. Milton's poetic career can be broadly divided into two periods: (i) The period from the college days to 1640 includes his early poetry that established his reputation; and (ii) 1660 to 1674 features his major works like *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regained* (1671). The twenty years between these two periods, from 1640 to 1660, can be called the period of his prose writings; during this period, he also wrote a few sonnets.

First Period: At just twenty-one, John Milton penned his first major work, *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629), which celebrates the triumph of the newly born Christ over pagan deities and hints at themes that would later be developed in *Paradise Lost*. Next he wrote a few successful poems. *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1632) offer some idealised visions contrasting the cheerful with the contemplative man. *Comus* (1634) is a Puritan allegory on the Triumph of Chastity over the god of Revelry; it is a protest against the carnality of the time. It is a hymn to chastity. The young heroine is assaulted by the god of wine and sensuality, Comus, but she emerges with all her purity from the trial. *Lycidas* (1637) is a superb monody written in memory of Edward King, a college friend who had been drowned in shipwreck in the Irish sea. It is a pastoral elegy based on classical conventions. Additionally, Milton wrote several sonnets during this period, including "On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough" (1628), "At a Vacation Exercise in the College" (1628), "On May Morning" (1630), and "On the University Carrier" (1631). These early works are noted for their exquisite beauty, impeccable craftsmanship, and Milton's command over evocative diction. Even if he had written nothing else, these poems would have secured his place among England's greatest poets.

Second Period: After his staunch support of the Commonwealth and his subsequent imprisonment following the monarchy's restoration, John Milton faced

profound personal and professional challenges. Despite his blindness and poverty, he turned to his early ambitions and created his most celebrated works: *Paradise Lost* (1667), *Paradise Regained* (1671), and *Samson Agonistes* (1671). *Paradise Lost* is Milton's monumental epic, initially published in ten books and later reorganised into twelve. It explores profound themes, including man's disobedience, the fall of Satan, the loss of Eden, and the concept of redemption. The epic begins with Book I, detailing man's disobedience and the subsequent fall from Paradise, the expulsion of Satan and his followers to Hell, and the construction of Pandemonium. Book II continues with a council of fallen angels debating their next move and Satan's journey to the new world, which is Earth. The poem covers the rebellion against God, the war in Heaven, the creation of the world, the temptation of Adam and Eve, and their eventual expulsion from Eden. Milton's intent was to illustrate how human disobedience led to sin and death but also to present the possibilities of redemption and hope. Writing of *Paradise Regained*, a follow-up to *Paradise Lost*, was suggested by one of Milton's friends. It contrasts the fall of man in *Paradise Lost* with the triumph over temptation in *Paradise Regained*. While it features noble thoughts and vivid imagery, it is often seen as less grand compared to its predecessor. *Samson Agonistes* is a tragedy written in blank verse, focusing on the story of Samson, the blind and defeated hero of Israel, working as a slave among the Philistines. The play adheres to the classical structure of Greek tragedy, maintaining the unities of time, place, and action. It mirrors Milton's own circumstances and feelings of defeat, making Samson a reflection of Milton himself in his time of struggle. The strict adherence to classical form offers a clear example of what Greek tragedy entails.

3.7.4.4. Restoration Poetry

The Restoration Age was marked by intense political and personal conflicts, creating a fertile environment for satirical writing. This period was rich in both political and personal satires, most of which were written in heroic couplets. Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) is an excellent example of political satire, while his *Mac Flecknoe* (1682) is a notable personal satire. George Villiers' *The Rehearsal* (1672) is a satirical play that mocks the literary flaws of the time. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663) targets the Puritans in its satire. John Oldham is renowned for his satirical works, with Scott referring to him as "the English Juvenal." These satires, especially those by Dryden, laid the groundwork for Alexander Pope's later

works. Emile Legouis and Cazamian aptly notes that "it is, upon the whole, the satiric spirit which predominates, and with it the new age obtains its least contested successes" (596). The ode is a favoured form in this era, with Dryden standing out as a leading figure in its development. His works, such as "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," "To the Pious Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew," and "Alexander's Feast or The Power of Music," all composed in Pindaric meter, are considered some of the finest odes in English literature. The Puritan Age is characterised by a lack of lyrical spirit, with the lyrics from this period often being artificial in thought and lacking originality. Despite this, Dryden stands out as the most notable lyricist of the time. Other lyric poets of the age include the Earl of Dorset, the Earl of Rochester, and Sir Charles Sedley, whose poems typically explore love themes in a contrived manner. A defining feature of Restoration poetry is the development of the heroic couplet.

> ➤ **John Dryden (1631-1700):** John Dryden stands out as the preeminent literary figure of the Restoration Period, capturing both the virtues and vices of his time through his work. Though he excelled in drama and prose, Dryden's reputation is most firmly established in poetry. He is renowned for his verse satire, with *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) being his most notable work and a powerful example of political satire in English literature. During this period, England was polarised between the Tories, who supported royal authority, and the Whigs, who sought to limit it. Dryden, a staunch Tory, used the biblical story of David and Absalom to critique the Whig party, portraying Charles II as King David, the Duke of Monmouth as Absalom, and the Earl of Shaftsbury as Achitophel, the instigator of rebellion. Dryden's use of biblical allegory effectively highlights contemporary political issues. His portrayals of Achitophel and Zimri (the Duke of Buckingham) are particularly sharp. *The Medal* (1687) mocks the Whigs' decision to strike a medal in celebration of Shaftsbury's acquittal. *Mac Flecknoe* (1682) attacks Dryden's rival, the Whig poet Shadwell, with scathing satire. *Religio Laici* (1682) defends Christianity against Deism and supports the Anglican Church over the Roman Catholic Church. This shift in allegiance brought Dryden criticism from his opponents. *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) is an allegorical poem that defends the Roman Catholic Church against the Church of England. Dryden's odes include notable works such as "To the Pious Memory of

Mrs. Anne Killigrew" (1686), "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day" (1687), and "Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Music" (1697), which further demonstrate his mastery of verse and his significant impact on Restoration literature.

➢ **Samuel Butler (1612-1680):** Apart from Dryden, the most notable poet of the Restoration Period is Samuel Butler, who gained instant fame with his single work, *Hudibras.* This mock-heroic epic poem, consisting of over ten thousand lines, was published in three parts in 1663, 1664, and 1668. *Hudibras* satirises the Roundheads, another name for the Puritans, and is inspired by the adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The poem narrates the exploits of a Puritan knight named Hudibras and his squire, Ralpho, as they attempt to suppress innocent pleasures such as bear-baiting, which the Puritans vehemently opposed. Upon its release, the book became immensely popular, serving as a vivid portrayal of the Royalist perspective on the Puritans even after the Restoration. Samuel Butler, along with Dryden, is one of the most significant poets of the period. Butler's *Hudibras* stands out as a substantial contribution to Restoration literature, offering a vivid and critical perspective on the Puritans and reflecting the Royalist sentiment of the time.

Activities:

1. Explain the following terms: Cavalier; Commonwealth; Restoration; Puritans; Roundheads, Royalists; English Revolution; Civil War; *carpe diem.*

2. Consult relevant print and internet documents and research on the following and write short notes on them: Oliver Cromwell; Charles I; Tudor dynasty; Stuart Dynasty;

3. Catalogue the key historical events and societal changes of the seventeenth century, such as the English Civil War or the Restoration, and their impact on poetry. This will provide a deeper understanding of the external influences on poetic works.

4. Consult some volumes of History of English Literature and try to find out names of (a) major and minor poets, and (b) prominent volumes of poems who/which have not been mentioned in this unit. Prepare two separate lists of such poets and works. Consult volumes of History of

English Literature and internet sources. Form an idea about the characteristic features of Metaphysical poetry. Prepare a list of these features. Read the Metaphysical poems prescribed in your syllabus and check whether these features can be found there.

5. Try to create a timeline that map major events of the seventeenth century alongside key poetic works and their publication dates. This visual representation can help you connect historical context with literary developments.

6. Try to create visual art based on the imagery and symbols found in metaphysical poems. You may draw, paint, or create digital art that represents the complex metaphors and themes from the poetry.

3.7.5. Summing Up

This unit has tried to capture the diverse and complex socio-political and religious reality of the seventeenth century and analyse the equally multifarious nature of British poetry written during the period. It has established the fact that the poetry produced during the period manifested qualities ranging from the intellectual to the spiritual, philosophic to the theological, humorous to the satiric, and quite conventional to the most innovative. These diverse poetic activities demonstrate a rich tapestry of themes and styles. Each of these poetic forms responded uniquely to the complexities of the era, contributing to a dynamic literary landscape that has left a lasting impact on English literature.

3.7.6. Self-assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Examine the evolution of Metaphysical Poetry in the seventeenth century, focusing on the works of John Donne, George Herbert and Andrew Marvell. How do these poets utilise metaphysical conceits? Which themes distinguish their poetry?

2. Discuss the major literary movements of the seventeenth-century British poetry, including Metaphysical and Cavalier poetry. How do these movements reflect the social, political, and religious contexts of the time?

3. Examine the impact of the English Civil War and the Restoration on the poetry of the seventeenth century. How did these historical events shape the themes, tone, and style of poets during this period?

4. Evaluate the contribution of Metaphysical poets like John Donne, George Herbert and Andrew Marvell to the development of the seventeenth-century British poetry. What distinguishes their poetry from other traditions of the period?

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. What are the key features of Metaphysical poetry, and how do they manifest in John Donne's works?

2. How did the English Civil War influence the themes and tone of Cavalier poetry?

3. What were the main differences between Metaphysical and Cavalier poetry in terms of style and themes?

4. How did the Restoration influence the development of literary forms and themes in the seventeenth-century British poetry?

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. What are the defining characteristics of Cavalier poetry?

2. Which historical event marks the beginning of the Restoration period, and how did it influence poetry?

3. Name two major Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century and trace one common theme in their poetry.

4. Which poetic form did John Dryden popularise during the Restoration period?

3.7.7. Suggested Readings

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford UP, 1979.

Alexander, Michael. *A History of English Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

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Unit – 8 ❏ Seventeenth-Century British Literature: Prose Writings

Structure

3.8.1. Objectives

The following are the basic objectives of this unit :

- to explore different forms or genres of prose writings that existed during the seventeenth-century England;

- to mark the impact of Renaissance and Reformation on prose literature of the time and its evolution;

- to provide you the historical, socio-cultural, political and economic backdrop of England against which the prose literature of the seventeenth century was produced; and

- to learn about the great translators, philosophers, pamphleteers and diary writers who contributed significantly to the rise of prose writing ultimately leading to the 'age of prose and reason'.

3.8.2. Introduction

All of you, learners, are aware of the fact that Old English prose was basically utilitarian in purpose with its focus on religious, legal and historical topics. It also underscored the importance of translating Latin originals into English. Under the leadership of King Alfred who is popularly known as 'the father of English prose' various historical and religious treatises were translated into English – Bede's *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*. Besides, abbots like Aelfric and Wulfstan with their homilies also contributed to the development of English prose. They maintained the alliterative cadence in prose. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, composed during the reign of Alfred, records the history of English wars and royal campaigns. The Middle English period witnessed the amalgamation of the West Saxon dialect with French, Latin and Scandinavian loan-words. Notable prose works of this period are *The Ancrene Riwle*, Chaucer's prose tales, i.e., "The Tale of Melibeus," "The Parson's Tale" etc., Sir John Mandeville's Travels, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) and John Wycliffe's English translation of the Bible. A flexible, simple and unembellished style was introduced in English prose.

Duing the Renaissance prose literature blossomed. The loss of inflections made the English language more recognisable to modern readers. Apart from the religious and historical issues, English prose started to embrace science, philosophy, history and so on. Due to the impact of Renaissance humanism, rationalism and empiricism scholarly prose works were composed. Prose became more ornate and rhetorical. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Roger Ascham's *The School Master* (1570) are notable examples of Elizabethan prose.

In continuation with the Renaissance tradition, the seventeenth century prose literature incorporated some significant issues. The political, social and religious upheaval of this period brought diversity to English prose. A refinement in structure, syntax and vocabulary became visible in the prose works. Michael Alexander states that "during the 17th century prose became plainer, less elaborate. Its stylistic model was not the artful Cicero but the shorter Seneca; and there were English exemplars of this"(146).

In this unit we shall divide seventeenth century prose writings under several categories such as devotional works, sermons, translation, travelogues, histories, biographies, and philosophical works.You should also note that the seventeenth century can also be divided into Jacobean Age (1603-1625), Caroline Age (1625-1649), the Commonwealth or the Republican Age (1649-1660) and the Restoration Age (1660-1688). While discussing literary works, we usually extend the Restoration Period to cover rest of the seventeenth century. Alternatively, therefore, one can discuss the seventeenth centry prose under each of the periods mentioned above.

3.8.3. Seventeenth-Century England: Historical Background

The seventeenth century is considered as one of the most tumultuous periods in English history. It witnessed social, political and religious upheavals. After the completion of the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603), the Stuarts (1603-1714) ascended the throne of England. In 1603 King James I of England or James VI of Scotland came into power and ruled upto 1625. Following the Latin name of James ('Jacobus'), this period is known as the Jacobean period. In spite of his close adherence to Protestantism, initially James was sympathetic to the Catholics. But after the failed attempt of the Gunpowder plot (1605) the catholic conspirators were executed at the instruction of James I. Charles I ascended the throne of England in 1625 just after the death of his father James I. The period of his reign (1625-1649) is known as Caroline Age, the word 'Caroline' is derived from 'Carolus' (Latin for Charles). Both James and his son believed in the 'divine rights of the king' and they claimed absolute rights over their subjects. In 1629 Charles-I dismissed the Parliament and started 11 years of 'personal rule.' Consequently, the English Civil War began in 1642 between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists.

As a result of this war theatre was closed in 1642. With the execution of King Charles I in 1649, the Commonwealth period started in England. This period is also known as the Republican period or Puritan Interregnum. Oliver Cromwell, the staunch Puritan, became the head of the state and Charles II, son of Charles I fled to France. Oliver Cromwell became the Lord Protector of England. The Protectorate had an end in 1659 and monarchy was restored to the throne of England in 1660. Charles II or the 'merry monarch' came back to England and he reinstated the church of England, theatres and all other forms of entertainment that were strictly prohibited during the rigid Puritan rules. In 1660 the Royal Society of England was established which ultimately led to the scientific discoveries of the period. In 1665 and 1666 two major calamities, i.e., 'The Great Plague of London' and 'The Great Fire of London' occurred in England that destroyed a section of population of London. (You are also advised to consult the background of the period analysed in Module 3 Unit 7 Section 3 and Module 3 Unit 9 section 2)

Activities:

1. Learners, kindly go through the two sections – "The Reformation and Counter Reformation" section and "The Stuart Age" – from Padmaja Ashok's book *The Social History of England* (see pp. 24-36).

2. Kindly note down the differences between the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church and the Anglican Church and their roles during seventeenth-century England. Consult relevant books, articles and internet sources to find out information in this regard.

3. Bibhas Choudhury in his book *English Social and Cultural History* provides some short notes on important topics (i.e. Royal Society, Whigs and Tories, Popish Plot etc) at the end of the chapter "In Transition: From the Restoration to the Age of Reason" (see pp. 179-186). Go through those short notes and try to understand their impact upon the literature written during the Stuart dynasty which ruled England, Scotland and Ireland from 1603-1714.

4. Watch on the You Tube: "The English Civil Wars - A People Divided - Full Documentary - Ep 1 (https://youtu.be/KDvQw9SzoV0?si=OXoQzQpoS-DhHPbO).

3.8.4. Genres of Prose Writings in the Seventeenth Century

3.8.4.1. Theological and Religious Works

With the publication of Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), the Reformation movement, which originated in Germany, ultimately resulted in Protestantism in England. The impact of Reformation and Counter Reformation is distinctly visible in the literary pieces produced during sixteenth and seventeenth-Century England. The theological and religious prose works that were developed during the period had a significant influence on the contemporary English prose writings and those of the later periods.

Let us start with one of the most notable theological prose works of the seventeenth century i.e., the Authorized Version of the *Bible* (1611), which is an English translation of the Christian Bible published under the authority of King James I (also see the relevant sections in Module 1 Unit 4). The eagerness of the Reformers to use vernaculars in worship resulted in a series of translations of the Holy Scriptures which finally culminated in the publication of King James' Bible. You have already been informed that after the rejection of William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, it is Miles Coverdale who brought out the first complete version of the Bible in 1535. However, in 1611, at the instruction of King James I, a new revision of the Bible came into existence. Relying heavily on Tyndale's translation, this prose work retained the archaic words and phrases. David Daiches states that "though archaic in its time, it had a great influence on the rhythms and the vocabulary of later English prose, especially in the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries" (471). It is a work of great artistic skill and dignity. As Compton-Rickett points out, "The influence of the Bible is two-fold — there is the rhetorical influence of the Old Testament and the conversational influence of the New. It has both the thematic and the stylistic influence". The King James Bible has incorporated numerous proverbs, idioms and sonorous phrases and thereby enriched the English vocabulary, e.g., 'a broken reed', 'the eleventh hour', 'a good Samaritan', 'a thorn in the flesh' etc. (For details see Module 1, Unit 4).

John Donne (1573-1631), the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, who is chiefly remembered as a metaphysical poet, also contributed to prose literature. *Essays in Divinity,* written in 1614, is comprised of private meditations. It talks about the creation of the world, image of the God, unity of the church etc. Donne here uses

'rhetorical techniques' and it sometimes resembles Montaigne's *Essaies* (1580). *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), another prose piece of Donne, which was written during his serious illness, narrates his religious meditations. This work "dwelt upon the interconnection of the dying and those meditating upon death" (Sanders 119). Since Donne was a preacher, his 'Sermons' were also developed as engaging prose works. His sermons make the listeners aware of senses of guilt, fear, repentance and rapture. His last sermon "Death's Duell or A Consolation to the Soule, against the Dying Life, and Living Death of the Body" emphasises the interconnection between life and death throughout human existence. Donne's mastery over the language and energetic style are commendable. Donne's prose style, Daiches comments, "tends to fall into long sentences made up of linked short clauses, arranged in parallel rather than in series, as it were; neatness in subordination of clauses in the total pattern of the sentence was an achievement of the next age" (498).

Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), an Anglican theologian, also became renowned for his eloquent prose and devotional writings during this era. His *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650) and *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651) are devotional handbooks of Christian practices during the disruptive years of the Commonwealth. Christian piety, repentance, ethical conduct, and importance of prayer have been discussed in detail. *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying* (1646) is another theological treatise by Taylor where he argues in favour of 'religious tolerance' and 'freedom of conscience.' He, like Donne, also had great skill in writing sermons. Taylor's prose style combines simplicity and grandeur.

Apart from these theological prose works, some religious prose pieces were also developed during this period. Sir Thomas Browne's (1605-1692) *Religio Medici* (The Religion of a Doctor), published in 1642, is considered as one of the greatest works of English prose. Browne here writes as a "well-informed and experimental physician who found his religious faith confirmed by his scientific awe" (Sanders 220) and tries to establish the relationship between science and religion by using scientific imagery to exemplify the religious truth. David Daiches opines that *Religio Medici* "emphasizes a reconciliation of traditional opposites, the numinous and the scientific; for, as Browne points out in the very first sentence, the world does not generally consider doctors to have any religion at all" (490). This book expresses Browne's close association to the Church of England and his personal Christian

faith during the Reformation era. The doctor has been portrayed 'more as a moralist than as a diagnostician'(Sanders 220). Besides Browne's religious tolerance, his personal opinions on martyrdom, predestination and divine providence can also be found in the text.

Another well-known prose writer of this century is John Bunyan (1628-1688), who became extremely popular for his religious prose works. Being a nonconformist preacher and staunch Puritan, Bunyan devoted himself to the intensive study of the Bible and this has been reflected in most of his prose works. His most celebrated religious allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Part I,1678, Part II,1684) established his reputation as a prominent prose writer. The first part of this dream allegory narrates the journey of Christian, the protagonist of the text, from the "City of Destruction" to the "Celestial City" while the second part describes the pilgrimage of Christian's wife Christiana and their sons. The language of this work is vivid, simple, and straightforward. Bunyan's prose style is dignified. This work has a substantial impact on writers such as Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte and Mark Twain. Thackeray took the title of his novel *Vanity Fair* directly from Bunyan's work. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682) are also two major prose allegories of Bunyan dealing with Christianity, sin and morality.

3.8.4.2. Translations

Translation of classical literature played a pivotal role in the development of English language and literature during the Elizabethan Period. Elizabethan translators' dynamic role encouraged the Renaissance people to peruse literature of ancient Greece and Rome. Daiches notes that "if religious and other controversies helped to stimulate the development of a polemical prose style, a more profound shaping of English prose was going on at the same time by means of the discipline of translation" (465). Some translations must be mentioned in this context from the Elizabethan period which have a huge impact on the seventeenth century translators i.e., *Plutarch's Lives* translated by Sir Thomas North in 1579, translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by George Chapman in 1616 etc. John Dryden (1631-1700), the most accomplished writer of the Restoration period, published his collection of translations of classical and medieval poetry under the title *Fables, Ancient and Modern* in 1700. It contains translations of excerpts from several books, e.g.,

Homer's Iliad, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* etc. His translations are composed in 'heroic couplet', a form popularised by Dryden himself. He introduced important terms to translation theory, i.e., metaphrase, paraphrase etc. in his 1680 preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles*. Another well-known translator belonging to this period is Sir John Denham (1615-1669). He translated Book II of Virgil's *Aeneis* in 1636 and published it as *The Destruction of Troy* in 1656. After all, these translations assist in the overall growth and development of English literature and more specifically prose literature.

3.8.4.3. Travelogue

The pride and glory of the Renaissance lay in the courageous expeditions of its sailors, explorers, or buccaneers and in the colonial expansion throughout the world. Most of them tried to note down their personal travel experiences in book form that popularised travel writing as a literary genre and thereby contributed to the growth of seventeenth-century prose literature.

Sir Walter Raleigh, a writer, historian, courtier, explorer and colonist has a significant contribution in setting up travel writing as a literary genre during the Elizabethan period. Being an explorer, he tried to help establish colonies in different parts of the world, ultimately leading to the formation of the English colony in Virginia. Raleigh's expedition in search of the fabled El Dorado or the 'city of gold' is recorded in his notable work *The Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), which is a prime example of Raleigh's prose. His prose style is characterised by clarity and, candidness. Richard Hakluyt is another important writer whose keen interest in colonialism and expansionism found expression in his travelogue *The Principal Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Though it was first published in 1589, an enlarged version came into existence in between 1598 and 1600. It is a collection of travel writings that describes voyages of the sailors, traders, adventurers and explorers during the age of Discovery. Partly based on the data acquired by Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas, an editor and publisher of travel literature, published *Hakluytus Posthumous, or Purchas his Pilgrimes, Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travell* (1624-25). This collection later on became a source for writers like Dryden, Milton *(Paradise Lost)* and Coleridge ("Kubla Khan"). However, Purchas's importance as a travel writer lies in the publication of his most significant prose

work *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613). It is a compilation of travelogues dealing with geographical descriptions, history and theology.

Apart from the above-mentioned writers, two more remarkable explorers of England whose travel writings enriched the seventeenth-century prose works are Sir Thomas Herbert (1606-1682) and William Dampier (1651-1715). Sir Herbert, a historian, traveller and courtier to Charles I, who travelled throughout Persia, the Middle East and Africa, chronicled his journey in his travelogues. His *Some Years Travels into Divers Parts of Africa and Asia the Great* (1638) describes the empires of Persia and Hindustan during the seventeenth century. William Dampier, another voyager, who is famous for exploring different parts of Australia, records his adventures around the world in his prose work *A New Voyage round the World* (1697). This book had a substantial impact on Jonathan Swift's prose satire *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

3.8.4.4. Essays

One of the most distinguished literary gifts that the Renaissance offered in the field of English prose is the 'essay' form. Though its earlier ancestry lies within the works of Greek philosophers i.e., Theophrastus and Plutarch and their Roman contemporaries i.e., Cicero and Seneca, it is the French author and philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) who coined the word 'essai' and published his first collection of essays *Essais* in 1580.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a true product of Renaissance, proved himself as a worthy successor of Montaigne by the publication of his most erudite prose work *Essays, or Counsels Civil and Moral* (1597). Second and third editions of this work were published in 1612 and 1625 respectively. In the final edition of this volume, fifty-eight essays were published altogether. In his *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J.A. Cuddon mentions that "whereas Montaigne was discursive, informal and intimate, Bacon was terse, didactic and aloof" (286). Bacon wrote essays on several issues i.e., friendship, love, death, morality, government, human behaviour etc. Bacon's essays are impersonal and objective in tone. His early essays are read like a series of proverbs and characterised by his use of aphorisms. According to Daiches, it is his aphoristic elements that makes his sentences 'memorable and quotable', e.g., "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready

man; and writing an exact man;", "What is truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer.", "Revenge is a kind of wild justice...", "If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts;", "Money makes a good servant, but a bad master" etc. Bacon also introduces an epigrammatic style in his writing which was influenced by Latin diction and rhetoric and observational skills. His essays deal with both public life and private life. He is very rational in his approach. For him the new knowledge of the world is supported by our thought-processes, emerging arguments and experiences. Therefore, we can say that as a result of the Renaissance, English literature acquired a secular, rationalist and modern approach. So you can clearly understand how essay became an established form of non-fictional prose from the early seventeenth century.

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), basically known as a metaphysical poet, is also recognised as an essayist. His prose works include some pamphlets, i.e., *A Proposition for the Advancement of Learning* (1661), *The Visions and Prophecies Concerning England* (1661) etc. and some essays (1668). His compilation of essays was published with an introduction and notes by Henry Morley. Some of his notable essays are "Of Liberty", "Of Solitude", "Of Obscurity", "Of Agriculture", "Of Myself", "Of Avarice", "The Danger of Procrastination" and so on. His prose works is marked by 'grace and simplicity of style' (Birch 255).

3.8.4.5. Scientific Writing

It is needless to say that the Renaissance spirit of discovery which ultimately leads to the Scientific Revolution of England became a crucial factor in the establishment of the Royal Society of London in 1660. Holding the hands of Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei the Renaissance people stepped on the field of science. During the seventeenth century, scientific works were written on the basis of empirical approach focusing on observation and experimentation. Among the seventeenth century scientific prose writers we must mention the names of Sir Francis Bacon, Thomas Browne (1605-1692) and Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727).

Sir Francis Bacon, the essayist, philosopher and scientist, opened a new window for scientific enquiry while advocating empiricism and introducing an inductive method of reasoning which is also known as Baconian method of inquiry. Bacon's

Latin prose works were fashioned into a scheme which is known as *Instauratio Magna* or 'The Great Instauration' for the foundations of human knowledge. David Daiches states that "reacting against scholastic philosophy and against all a priori thinking and systems of thought derived deductively from premises laid down by authority, the Great Instauration, basing knowledge on observation, would restore a truer relationship between the observing mind and observed nature and so make scientific progress possible" (485). Though Bacon planned to complete the project in six parts, most of them remained incomplete. They are: *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), *Novum Organum* (1620), *Sylva Sylvarum, Scala Intellectus, Prodromi and Philosophia Secunda. De Augmentis Scientiarum* gives us an overall idea on human knowledge and Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), a tract on education, is embodied in this spirit. According to Sanders, *The Advancement of Learning* attempted to draw a distinction between two kinds of Truth, a theological Truth 'drawn from the word and oracles of God' and determined by faith, and a 'scientific' Truth based on the light of nature and the dictates of reason" (192). Bacon's *Novum Organum* or the 'New Instrument' is a foundational text in the development of scientific inquiry. Bacon here rejects Aristotelian syllogism which is drawn from deductive reasoning and initiates inductive reasoning for acquiring knowledge. Bacon's unfinished utopian fiction *The New Atlantis* (1626) is another scientific prose piece which introduces an ideal design for a college of the sciences. This work is modelled on More's *Utopia* (1516).

Being deeply influenced by the Scientific Revolution, Sir Thomas Browne wrote *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or Enquiries into Very Many Received Tenets, and Commonly Presumed Truths* (1646, revised and enlarged 1650, 1658, 1672), which established him as a man of learning. Commonly known as *Vulgar Errors*, it echoes Baconian philosophy of knowledge i.e., empiricism. Taking cue from Bacon's distinction between 'truths' and 'vanities' and 'distempers' of pseudoscience, this treatise moves "from human to natural history, from theology to physiology, from the superstitious distortions of logic to the radiance of beliefs erected on 'the surer base of reason'" (Sanders 221).

Another important figure of this century whom we cannot avoid while discussing science is Sir Isaac Newton. His most celebrated work *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) discusses the 'law of motion' and 'law of gravitation'.

3.8.4.6. Historical Writing

The use of anecdotes and allusions in telling stories about their heroes and the nation was quite prominent in the historians and writers of this age. Few of them have been discussed in this section. As for example, we can mention that, Sir Walter Raleigh, who was discussed earlier in this module, also became famous for his unfinished prose work *The History of the World* (1614). His work is an amalgamation of the 'medieval and the Renaissance.' It is considered as one of the 'principal glories' of seventeenth-century literature.

Another distinct historian of this age is Thomas Fuller (1608-1661). Fuller, an antiquarian, theologian and writer, who was basically famous for his sermons, also focussed on writing history which became important testimonies for England. His *The History of the Holy War* (1639), *The Holy State and Profane State* (1642), *The Church History of Britain* (1655) became very crucial to the historians of English literature. His writings are marked by anecdotes, epigrams, and conceits. Thomas Sprat, a member of the Royal Society also wrote his *History of the Royal Society* (1667) which chronicles the growth and achievements of the Society with a detailed study of the Society's members. Apart from the above-mentioned historical prose works, Bacon's *History of Henry VII* (1622), Milton's *The History of Britain* (1670) also provides some valuable information about England and its English people.

3.8.4.7. Political Treatises, Tracts and Pamphlets

The political upheaval of the seventeenth century broadens the scope for its writers to compose their political treatises and pamphlets. The execution of King Charles I, Civil War, Licensing Order of 1643, Restoration of monarchy, the Exclusion Crisis are some major political events that promoted pamphleteering and tract writing. During the Civil War, pamphlets played an important role in the debates between the Puritans and the Anglicans, between the king and the parliament.

John Milton (1608-1674) has been widely acclaimed for his eloquent prose as well as for his poetry. His prose writings are polemical in nature and basically dealt with political issues. Embracing Republican iconoclasm, Milton started writing prose tracts against episcopacy. He wrote five anti-prelatical or anti-episcopal tracts on the reformation of the church government. They are —*Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England* (1641), *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641),

Animadversions: An Apology (1641), *The Reasons for Church Government* (1642), and *An Apology against a Pamphlet* (1642). Milton's unhappy marriage with Mary Powell ultimately resulted in the publication of his four tracts on divorce. Taking examples from *Genesis*, Milton here argues in favour of legalising divorce. Among the four tracts we must mention the first one, i.e., "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" (1643). In 1644, Milton wrote a short tract *Of Education* where he talks about an ideal curriculum and the education system of that time. However, Milton's most remarkable prose work is *Areopagitica; A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing, to the Parlament of England* (1644). It was written as a response to the Licensing Order of 1643. Milton's defence of the freedom of the press is recorded in this treatise. According to him, 'books are not absolutely dead things.' He remarks: "As good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye" (qtd. in Sanders 229-230). He strengthens his argument by the use of Biblical and classical references. Apart from these tracts, Milton writes some anti-monarchical pamphlets. His anti-monarchical pamphlet *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) justifies the trial and execution of Charles I. In another tract of this type *Eikonoklastes* (1649) Milton shatters the image of Charles I and compares him with Richard III. Almost all of his prose works are controversial in nature. Milton uses rhetorics and classical phrases which greatly influenced the prose writers of England.

In this section the contribution of some other writers must also be mentioned. During the Restoration period when Restoration drama was at its zenith, Jeremy Collier (1650-1726) wrote his anti-theatrical pamphlet *A Short View of the Immortality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698). Here he attacks a number of Restoration dramatists (i.e., Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh) for their portrayal of immortality, uses of vulgar language, blasphemy etc. After the publication of this work a pamphlet war began in England. John Dennis (1657-1734) replied to Collier's attack by writing his pamphlet *Usefulness of the Stage, to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government, and to Religion* (1698). John Vanbrugh's (1664-1726) and William Congreve's (1670-1729) answer to Collier have also been recorded in their pamphlets *A Short Vindication of the Relapse and the Provok'd Wife from Immortality and Profaneness* (1698) and *Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations* (1698) respectively. We can rightly observe that pamphleteering has a significant contribution in the development of English prose.

3.8.4.8. Philosophical Writing

The continuous emergence of problems related to state, mankind, civil society etc., the necessity of the acquisition of knowledge, the demand of education theory in England or the cult of melancholia caused by the Reformation are some of the factors that prompted the seventeenth century writers to compose their philosophical writing which became influential documents in the field of philosophy. Some notable philosophers of this period included Robert Burton (1577-1640), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Thomas Browne (1605-1692), John Locke (1632-1704) who later on influenced philosophers like David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant etc. A few of their works have been discussed below.

Robert Burton's masterpiece *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was first published in 1621, and then enlarged and revised in 1624, 1628, 1632, 1638, 1651. Burton published this work under the pseudonym 'Democritus Junior.' Divided into three parts, the work talks about various disciplines, i.e., science, history, philosophy, poetry, psychology, theology etc. It has a deep philosophical undertone. Burton delineates different types of melancholy, its causes and symptoms, and the process of its cure. Burton introduces moral and religious passions into a medical context. Burton's references to classical writers and his uses of Latin quotations mark his artistic skill as a prose writer. His prose style is distinctive and eloquent, loaded with allusions from classical literature. Daiches notes that "Burton's prose style is flexible and varied; he can be colloquial, pedantic, picturesque, or epigrammatic. The perpetual interlarding of his English with Latin quotations produces a strange mosaic effect" (495).

Thomas Hobbes's most acclaimed philosophical treatise *Leviathan, or The Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651) sets up his career as a political philosopher. A believer in the divine rights of king, Hobbes in his work states that man is in a 'state of nature' in which he engages himself in fulfilling his natural desires which ultimately leads to conflict and war and therefore, Hobbes proposes that an absolute sovereign is required who comes to power by 'social contract theory' for the maintenance of a state. The Old Testament monster Leviathan is used here as a symbol of the state or the absolute monarch's body. Hobbes also mentions that without a social contract between man and the state human life would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. Divided into four parts namely, "Of Man," "Of Commonwealth," "Of a Christian

Commonwealth\" and "Of the Kingdom of Darkness," this work anticipates John Locke's theory of empiricism. Hobbes's prose style is structured and concise.

Thomas Browne about whom you have already read in a previous section (3.8.4.5. Scientific Writing) also wrote an insightful philosophical treatise. His *Hydriotaphia, Urne Buriall; or, A Discourse of the Sepulchrall Urnes Lately found in Norfolk* (1658) is a detailed study of the funeral customs which focuses on human mortality, death, decay, 'religious rights' etc. Influenced by the discovery of the archeological pots (urn) in Norfolk, Browne highlights the uselessness of the rituals that are performed after death. It has been mentioned in the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* that *Hydriotaphia* is a 'sceptical meditation on human pomp in magnificent baroque prose' (Birch 512).

John Locke, popularly known as the 'father of liberalism' is another important philosopher and thinker of the seventeenth century England. Following the Baconian method of empiricism, Locke claims that the mind which is a 'tabula rasa' at birth is a white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas' and it acquires 'all the materials of reason and knowledge' from experience (Sanders 277) His magnum opus *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) rejects the doctrine of innate ideas or knowledge and maintains that the source of knowledge is only experience. Another philosophical treatise by John Locke is *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) which advocates the educational theory. This work deals with the importance of education, more specifically moral education, the role of discipline and self-control in the overall development of a child, learning through various practical experiences etc. Jean Jacques Rousseau was deeply influenced by this philosophy of Locke. Locke's prose style is lucid, dignified and free of any verbosity. His essays not only offer philosophical insights but also assist in the development of the English language.

3.8.4.9. Biographical and Autobiographical Writing

Seventeenth century witnessed an increase in biographical and autobiographical writings. John Bunyan, whose religious prose allegories have been discussed earlier in this module, penned his spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners: Or a Brief and Faithful Relation of the Exceeding Mercy of God in Christ, to his poor Servant* in 1666. Bunyan was first imprisoned in 1660 for preaching non-Anglican doctrine without a license. *Grace Abounding* was written during Bunyan's imprisonment.

Thomas Fuller (1608-61), a preacher, historian and biographer became famous for his *History of the Worthies of England* (1662), which is a collection of English biographies. These biographies are arranged by counties in their alphabetical order. This is a 'storehouse of information, anecdotes, and miscellaneous facts.' Fuller gives us information about the 'worthies' of England.

Another famous biographer of the seventeenth century is Izzak Walton (1593-1683), who wrote biographies of several writers, which were published separately between 1658 and 1678. His lives of John Donne, Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and Bishop Robert Sanderson represent a gentle combination of 'realistic biography and idealistic hagiography'.

Activities:

1. Learners, go through the following sections from Bibhas Choudhury's book *English Social and Cultural History* – "The Intellectual Context of the Scientific Revolution" and "The Scientific Revolution in Europe" from the chapter "In Transition: From the Restoration to the Age of Reason" (see pp. 145-150).

2. M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham in their *A Handbook of Literary Terms* define essay and trace its development in a comprehensive way. You are advised to have a look at it to mark the evolution of this form (see pp. 95-96).

3. Watch on You Tube "John Milton Documentary" to understand the factors that gave rise to the composition of Milton's political treatises and pamphlets. (https://youtu.be/jPJH8TT6PGc?si=ZzVFp5ZY1NaFk3iC)

3.8.4.10. Diary Writing

Two well-received diarists of Restoration England initiated diary writing as an art form and thereby contributed to the growth of English prose. Along with the personal details their diaries became crucial testimonies which provide us enough information about the social, political and religious condition of England.

Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), an administrator of the British navy, kept his private diary during the Restoration period. His diary opens on 1st January, 1660 and continues till 31st May, 1669. Though initially he supported Oliver Cromwell, after the death of Lord Protector he became a supporter of Charles II. Pepys's Diary

(1825) provides us with a realistic picture of England. Three major historical events – Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665), the Great Fire of London and the Great Plague of London – have been vividly described by Pepys in his Diary. He uses his creativity to recreate history. Whereas Pepys's diary vastly chronicles historical events, John Evelyn's (1620-1706) Diary is more concerned with his experiences of everyday life. His Diary (1818) has a greater length than Pepys's. It has entries running from 1640 to 1706. It provides us authentic information about the English people.

3.8.4.11. Literary Criticism

Students, you have already been informed from the previous module that the Renaissance scholars, thinkers and critics were engaged with different notions of literary criticism. Renaissance criticism was mainly influenced by the recovery of classical literature. Their main focus was placed on the function of poetry. Instances can be traced from George Gascoigne's *Certayne Notes of Instruction* (1575), Stephen Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595).

The Renaissance tradition of literary criticism was further extended by critics of the early seventeenth century. Thomas Campion (1567-1620) in his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602) defended the classical metres against 'the vulgar and unarteficiall custome of riming.' Samuel Daniel (1562-1619) wrote his treatise *A Defence of Rhyme* (1603) as a reply to Campion's attack and asserts that rhyme was 'the fittest harmonies of words that comportes with our language.'

However, the most renowned critic of this period who gave a new dimension to literary criticism is John Dryden. He was addressed by Dr. Samuel Johnson as "the father of English criticism" for his immense popularity as a Neoclassical critic. You have already read about his translations in the previous section of this unit and in this section his contribution to English criticism will be mentioned. His most notable critical work is *An Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668) which is modelled on Plato's *Dialogues*. It is a conversation among four characters – Eugenius (Charles Sackville), Crites (Sir Robert Howard), Lisideius (Sir Charles Sedley) and Neander (Dryden) – who discuss the relative merits of Classical, French and modern drama. Dryden here appreciates Shakespearean drama. He mentions that Shakespeare never followed the conventions of classical dramaturgy nor was

he (Shakespeare) interested in the French models. He observes that Shakespeare was the man "who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul" and hence he was addressed by Dryden as the 'Father of our Dramatick Poets.' Dryden defends tragicomedy and rhyme in this treatise. Apart from this *Essay* two other important critical works of Dryden are *Preface to the Fables* (1700), *A Discourse Concerning Satire* (1694). The former contains his opinions on the authors whose works have been translated in his *Fables* (i.e., Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Boccaccio, Chaucer etc.), his comparison between Homer and Virgil, Ovid and Chaucer and his lengthy appreciation of Chaucer. The later work is a preface to his translation of Juvenal's *Satires* (1693). Dryden is considered as the pioneer of comparative criticism and liberal classicism. His critical works made undeniable contribution to English prose.

3.8.5. Summing Up

This unit has tried to provide you some ideas about the various forms of prose writing that flourished in the seventeenth century. This was a time when learned individuals interested in philosophy, science, critical thinking made significant efforts to document their ideas and activities in their works. Literary forms such as essays and literary criticism which had their roots in the Renaissance period, thrived in the seventeenth century. More personal genres such as biography, autobiography and diary writing also emerged, offering valuable information about the prominent personalities of the time and socio-historical developments in contemporary England. With this knowledge at your disposal, you will now be better equipped to engage with the seventeenth-century prose texts included in your syllabus.

3.8.6. Self-Assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the importance of travel literature on the overall development of prose writing of seventeenth century England.

2. Write an essay on the theological prose works that were developed during the Reformation in England.

3. Briefly comment on the development of scientific writing with special reference to Bacon's scientific prose works.

4. How does essay as a genre flourish in England? Discuss the role of Bacon in the evolution of English prose.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. Assess the contribution of John Bunyan to the development of English prose.

2. Briefly comment on the significance of the political tracts of Milton.

3. Write a short note on the two major diarists of seventeenth century England.

4. Dr. Johnson addressed Dryden as 'the father of English criticism.' Do you agree with this? Elucidate your opinion.

5. Briefly comment on the prose style of Robert Burton with close reference to his *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

6. Analyse the role of John Dryden as a translator and his contribution towards the development of English prose.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Mention the name of any two pamphleteers of seventeenth-century England with their pamphlets.

2. Who wrote *Leviathan*? What is the subject matter of this work?

3. Mention two devotional prose works of Jeremy Taylor.

4. To which earlier translator does the Authorized Version of the Bible owe a debt?

5. Who wrote *Religio Medici*? What does the title of the work mean?

6. What is a travelogue? Give two examples of this form of writing.

7. Mention two biographical prose works of seventeenth-century England.

3.8.7. Suggested Readings

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Unit – 9 ❏ Seventeenth-Century British Literature: Drama

Structure

3.9.1. Objectives

This unit will

- provide a brief account of the social and political background of the seventeenth-century England;

- correlate the developments of dramatic literature to the political changes of the period;

- trace the growth of various forms of dramatic literature during the century;

- identify major or minor dramatists of the era and discuss their works; and

- provide activities to encourage you to go beyond this unit to gather further knowledge about the dramatic literature of the period.

3.9.2. Introduction: Political History of Seventeenth-Century Britain

The seventeenth century had been a period of great political and social change in Britain and the literature of the century is but a reflection of the same. Hence a study of the literature of the age, especially drama, must begin with the political drama that unfolded through the century and influenced its literature. We need to provide a picture of the historical background of the period to understand the corpus of drama produced during this time.

Seventeenth-century Britain had seen consistent political struggle that can be divided into two phases: the first was the conflict between the Monarch and the Parliament till 1649 that led to the abolition of monarchy and the consequent rule of the Parliament; and the second was the unrest that rocked the nation during the rule of James II which culminated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. However, an interim period of some peace was seen during the period of Charles II's reign between 1660 and 1685. The reason behind the clash between the Monarch and the Parliament was for supremacy and control over finances. Religious reasons also dominated the scene but it was mainly used by either party as a means to gain power.

James I and Charles I faced immense financial crunch when it came to meeting expenses of running the government. However, the Parliament controlled any attempt of the king to raise taxes if it clashed with their interests because, they too were mostly landed gentry and merchants from the economically developed south and east of England and dominated both houses of the Parliament. The kings had loyalists only from the north and west of the country, regions that were economically backward. James I, the first Stuart king of England, asserted the Divine Right of the kings to rule and tactlessly proclaimed himself above the law by calling the judges 'lions beneath the throne.' His foreign policy of coming to terms with Spain infuriated the Parliament and monarchy was being seen as a red flag by the time Charles I came to power in 1625. Charles tried to raise taxes without the consent of the Parliament and started imprisonment without trial. The House of Commons was dominated by Puritans, who wanted a Puritan reformation of the Church of England. They were alarmed when the king conformed to the rites of the Anglican Church. The clash between the two was so intense by this time that it resulted in the first civil war in 1642 that ended with the defeat of the king

in 1646. It was followed by the second civil war in 1648 that culminated in his execution in 1649. Morally upright and a patron of arts, the king had a court of gentlemen of high taste, people derogatorily called Cavaliers, who were eventually banished from England for their participation in the civil war after the tragic end of the king. The year 1649 saw the end of monarchy and rise of the parliament under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell. However, this was an interlude that was overshadowed by deep sentiments for the royal house and the martyr king among English traditionalists.

The Interregnum, the period between 1649 and 1660, was first ruled by the House of Commons and a Council of State (1649-53) followed by the Protectorship of Oliver Cromwell and his son Richard (1653-58). The end of the parliamentary rule came with the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 and the inability of Richard Cromwell to secure support of the army leaders. Political order completely broke down and people sought for the old ideas of Parliament with a hereditary monarch. On the basis of the assurance of Charles II, son of the former king, that he would submit to the decision of the Parliament, monarchy was restored in May 1660. Politically unscrupulous, Charles was successful initially for things were in his favour with the Cavalier Parliament in power. People were tired of Puritan fanaticism and by the Act of Uniformity of 1662 the Anglican establishment was restored. Thirty-nine Articles of the Act penalised every Puritan activity that stood against the Anglican church. Puritanism still held ground and the turbulence of the previous reign was to return.

The term 'Puritan' started as an expression of contempt for those Protestants who were involved in militant activities during the reign of Elizabeth. They were unhappy with the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 that, they believed, compromised with the Catholics and thereby made attempts to purify Catholic abuses of religion. They considered the Bible as the 'pure Word of God' and rejected all other spiritual authorities. They also believed that church administrators should only be true believers and opposed the appointment of church authorities by political heads. Puritans believed that no intermediary authority could bring the believer closer to God for the Voice of God spoke to each man as his conscience. The austerity in their worship, their dislike of images, rituals and ornaments worn by priests made them think of fashionable clothes and worldly entertainment like stage plays as deceiving vanities that misled men from God and true faith. This was an extreme

form of Protestantism. Puritanism chiefly appealed to the mercantile middle class. Importance of work and prosperity in worldly pursuits was seen as divine blessing.

After 1660 religion slowly lost the passion, it held in the minds of people. Pursuit of science and reason slowly started filling in. If religion was used again as a weapon to control king James II, the reason was clearly political. Though Charles II had embraced Catholicism, the conversion was not proclaimed. His brother and successor James II, however, antagonised both parties of the Parliament by undermining its authority and embracing the Catholic belief to which he desired to convert the Church of England. Lord Shaftsbury had already tried to prevent his succession because he was a Catholic. It is during these years, during the final years of Charles II, that the two political parties came into existence: the Whig and the Tory, both being terms of abuse initially. Some Torries allied with the Whigs and summoned William of Orange and his wife Mary to be joint monarchs with Parliamentary support though James was still the legitimate king. Mary was his protestant daughter from a previous marriage and by this 'bloodless' revolution James was replaced in 1688. This was called the Glorious Revolution. This was the final triumph of the Parliament. By the Bill of Rights of 1689, the Parliament had legally altered the succession. By the Act of Settlement of 1701 they had excluded the scope of succession of James's Catholic son and grandson from by choosing George I from the House of Hanover to be king after Queen Anne. The parliament by this time was the sovereign and the kingmaker, and the Divine Right of kings was permanently denied. John Locke, writing in 1690, says the ruler was merely a trustee of the people who had the right to remove him if the trust was broken.

Activities:

1. Consult relevant books, articles and internet sources and write notes on:
   (a) Execution of Charles I; (b) Glorious Revolution; (c) The Interregnum; (d) Tudor Dynasty; (e) Stuart Dynasty

2. Consult relevant sources and write brief notes on:
   (a) Protestantism; (b) Anglicanism; (c) Puritanism

3. Consult relevant sources to write brief notes on the following:
   (a) Bill of Rights on 1689; (b) Act of Settlement of 1701; (c) House of Hanover; (d) Divine Rights of kings; (e) John Locke

4. Prepare a chronological list of kings and queens in England during the seventeenth century. Mention duration of their reigns within brackets against their names.

3.9.3. Jacobean Revenge Tragedy

Jacobean tragedy was so dominated by bloodshed and themes of revenge that it is almost synonymous with revenge plays. Originally derived from the tragedies of Seneca, revenge was a dominant theme of the Elizabethan stage since 1587 with the performance of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. The structure of these plays is very similar in which a dear one has been harmed and the avenger must bring justice. In the process, however, there is complete carnage where even the avenging protagonist gets killed too. The necessity to bring justice is taken up since the villain is generally seated in a position of power and the legal authority is either in his hands or he is protected by it. This state of primitive lawlessness where justice must be delivered to the weak and unprivileged is seen in these plays. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (performed 1589-92) and *Hamlet* (performed c.1600-01), John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1599-1601), George Chapman's *Revenge of Busy d'Ambois* (performed c. 1610), Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (performed in 1602), Cyril Tourneur's or Thomas Middleton's (there is some controversy about the authorship of the *play*) *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607), Middleton's *The Changeling* (1623), and *Women Beware Women* (1621), Tourneur's *Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613?) are notable examples of this form of drama. *The Duchess of Malfi* begins as a love story, when the recently widowed Duchess marries beneath her class, and ends as a tragedy of revenge as her two brothers, absolute abusers of power, undertake their strategies to destroy her, but destroy themselves in the process.

The necessity for revenge is almost like a duty and the avenger in this genre is an instrument of Divine Vengeance. One must understand, however, that revenge carried out outside the legal domain was crime and also a sin according to Christianity. We naturally see conflicting opinions in these plays on the idea of taking revenge, for example, Hamlet is truly indecisive on revenge fearing that the devil might make a sinner out of him. These plays are dominated by sensationalism, melodrama, savagery and bloodshed. Marston's comedy *The*

Malcontent (1604) is a rare example in the revenge tradition where there are multiple revenging characters. Chettle's Hoffman is a boastful revenger who is more a villain than a hero for he is morally corrupt and his cause is not good enough. This shows a development of the genre from the tradition Kyd had started: the avenger was no longer the hero. The villain had taken over as protagonist.

Ghosts, graveyards, insanity, adultery, incest, rape dominated these plays showing a complete breakdown of social and moral order apart from the decay in the judicial system. Treachery and murder seem commonplace events and there is no place for trust. The villains exult in their deed and their world is a microcosm of hell.

Activities:

1. Consult relevant books, articles and internet sources and write notes on:
   (a) Influence of Seneca on revenge tragedies
   (b) consider why revenge was necessary for the protagonist and why it could not be avoided

3.9.4. Comedy of Humours

Comedy of Humours presented characters whose actions and temperament were ruled by the influence of their physical constitution or 'humours' according to the medieval and Renaissance beliefs. This physiological interpretation of character and its distortions were specially associated with Ben Jonson and written towards the fag end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. Influenced by Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence, Jonson took to ridiculing the follies of human nature and became a moral reformer of society using the theory of humours.

The four humours described by Hippocrates and developed further by Galen are the vital body fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Hippocrates believed that an excess or deficiency of any of the humours in a person was a sign of illness and the imbalance in the mixture of these fluids produced abnormal behavioural patterns. Good health is primarily a condition in which these fluids are present and mixed in correct proportion and strength. The pathology for the moral diseases of society were thus, for Jonson, an imbalance in the humours.

This was a period of flourish in trade and of great social mobility that nourished

greed, unbound lust and egotism. Comedy of humours was a satire on these personal extravagances nurtured by prospects of wealth. A strict observer of classical dramatic laws, Jonson was famed to present perfect plays. His first successful play was *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), which, though set in Italy initially, soon focused on London life and its follies and pretensions. Though this play was not yet directly linked to the four 'humour' principle, it paved way for the genre with its foolish characters that are gulled due to their idiosyncrasies. *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) focused on the illustration of the theory of humours and the characters are named aptronymically in accordance to their follies and idiosyncrasies, for example, Carlo Buffone is a profane jester and Fastidius Brisk has the affectation of presenting himself in fashionable clothes. Jonson too is present as a character and acts and comments like Chorus. The absurdities of the characters, caused due to the imbalance of humours, are shaken out at the end of the play either due to scathing ridicule or punishment.

Jonson presents a world of predators and victims who are free from the restraints of morality and religion. Be it Sir Epicure Mammon of *The Alchemist* (1610), who due to unbound greed, rushes into speculation on fantastic projects to attain gold, or the megalomania and avarice of Volpone and Mosca in *Volpone or the Fox* (1605), Jonson's plays document an emphasis on the need to temper passions with reason and virtue. Through these characters Jonson displays how human weaknesses actually make them gullible.

Volpone presents himself as a prey to legacy hunters by feigning to be a childless and mortally ill man with immense fortune. His servant Mosca spreads the word to his wealthy neighbours and we see the rush where each one tries to court his favour in order to be named his heir. The competition is so ruthless that promises of undying friendship and rich gifts are not enough to lure the dying man. Characters like Corvino who, despite being a jealous husband is prepared to sacrifice his wife, the innocent Celia, and Corbaccio, who is ready to disinherit his son and transfer his property to Volpone to win his favour, exposes the avarice and low morals of society.

Morose of *Epicœne, or The Silent Woman* (1609) has the humour which makes him detest any form of noise and wishes to disinherit his nephew and marry a silent woman, if possible. One is found but post marriage she is anything but silent and Morose seeks help from his nephew to arrange for a divorce in exchange of

reinstating him as his heir. The silent woman is revealed to be a boy in disguise and a part of the nephew's plot to gull his uncle.

Each situation, however farcical, in this form of comedy is fun but there is a persistent moral tone and purpose. This genre highly influenced not only citizen comedies but also the Restoration comedy of manners. Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* (1603) was a tragedy that greatly used the 'humours' for projecting the over reacher and his downfall.

Activities:

1. What do the following terms mean? What do they refer to?
   (a) Jacobean; (b) Caroline; (c) Carolean; (d) Restoration

2. Arrange the following periods chronologically. Insert the temporal span of each Age against their names:
   Restoration Age, Jacobean Age, Interregnum; Caroline Age

3. Consult relevant sources and write notes on the following:
   (a) Hippocrates; (b) Galen

4. What is the meaning of the word 'aptronymically' used in section 2.7.4.?

3.9.5. Citizen Comedy

This form of comedy was written between 1600 and 1640 using contemporary London middle class life as its setting and each play produced in this genre became a model for another. The principal playwrights were Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, John Marston, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Dekker, John Day, and John Webster. Most of the plays of the companies of boy players, the Children of Paul's and the Children of the Chapel, were city comedies. The conventions of city comedy developed from Ben Jonson's late-Elizabethan comedies of humours and is characterised by caustic satire. Driven not by love, the plots of these comedies are realistic and present a wide spectrum of characters from different ranks of London society. With the expansion of trade to the newly discovered lands, London became an important settlement for the trading companies and saw a spurt in population and soon became a hotbed for crime, prostitution and moral vices. This exactly became the subject matter of citizen comedy.

Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman* (1609), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), Thomas Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1608) and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1611), Philip Massinger's *The City Madam* (1632) are important examples of this genre. John Marston's citizen comedy *The Dutch Courtesan* shows his violent revulsion from sensuality and worldly vice of his time and this disgust became his characteristic.

Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) uses a famous annual fair held at Smithfield, London as its setting and naturally incorporates characters like traders, showmen, gamblers, dupes, criminals and even a dubious Puritan to expose the hypocrisy and vices of his age with eloquence. Each character is an overreacher and they bring their own doom as a consequence.

Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1611) focusses on social mobility and the rush amongst the citizenry for entry to a higher class. Their vanity, lust and greed mobilise their intrigues against one another and makes the play a social satire. Yellow hammer, a merchant, in his drive to enter the landed gentry, plots to secure the hand of Sir Walter Whorehound's daughter in marriage. Whorehound, a dissolute gentleman, on the other hand, schemes to marry off his mistress to Yellowhammer's son for monetary benefit.

Massinger's *The City Madam* (1632) is an attack on the extravagance and pretensions of urban bourgeoise and presents the story of Sir John Frugal, a London merchant, who wishes to teach his wife and daughters a lesson. Frugal empowers his brother, Luke, with his finances, in order to control their outrageously extravagant lifestyle. Luke, who pretends to be humble initially, misuses his power to humiliate and control his sister-in-law and nieces and presents the predatory nature of society.

Activities:

Consult relevant books, articles and internet sources and write notes on:

(a) The influence of Ben Jonson and the theory of Humours on this form of comedy.

(b) Read basic summaries of some of the texts that fall under this genre.

3.9.6. Tragi-comedy

Tragi-comedy was a form of drama that had both elements of tragedy and comedy and the roots of this dramatic form goes back to Euripides's *Alcestis* and *Iphigenia*, which were both tragedies with happy endings. Other forms of this genre had comic sub-plots in tandem with serious main plots. Elizabethan-Jacobean tragic vision displayed that life is a combination of macabre elements and sudden serious events that coexist with mordant wit. This form thus invoked both catharsis and laughter in tandem. English tragi-comedies merged both these elements by the end of sixteenth century and considerable development is seen in this generic form between 1610 and 1640. This form of drama was not predominantly formed by scholarly taste but by mixed serious and comic appeal. The immense popularity of this genre marked the decline in taste amongst the theatre goers. Drama as the imaginative expression of strong deep emotions lost appeal and was seen as a vehicle of strong but transitory impressions. Though Ben Jonson called this genre 'mongrel' and openly disapproved of it, its popularity was such that he too wrote one called *The Sad Shepherd* in 1641 but did not complete it beyond two acts.

This decadence is not seen in Shakespeare's tragi-comedies. The reconciliation plays of Shakespeare, particularly *Pericles, Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* (1610-11) have plots that move towards a happy conclusion despite the tragic climax midway in the story. In *The Tempest* (1611-12) the tragic elements are done with before the play begins. The entire play is devoted to restoration of happiness and righting the wrong. In each of these works the protagonist faces an ordeal characterised by his loss of family. However, in each of them there is a daughter who is instrumental in bringing about a happy reunion. Published in 1609, *Pericles* explores a father-daughter relationship. Pericles is separated from his daughter and wife and is led to believe that both are dead. The stupor of sorrow that dominates the play till middle of the final act is over and happiness and health are restored with the family reunion. *Cymbeline*, published in 1609-10 is a tragi-comedy with elements of romance. Set in the court of the ancient British king, Cymbeline, a vassal of the Roman empire, the climax is the defeat of a Roman invasion and the victory of British patriotism. Shakespeare combines historical chronicle with the story of the British princess Imogen. These plays express the forces of renewal and freely uses imaginative licence with the introduction of magic as in *The Tempest*.

Guarini (1537-1612), an Italian, wrote a pastoral drama, *Il pastor fido* in 1585 which combined both tragic and comic elements. This work influenced English drama considerably in the seventeenth century. John Fletcher's version of Guarini was *The Faithful Shepherdess* (c.1608) and he collaborated with Francis Beaumont to produce many tragi-comedies for courtly audiences. They wrote *Philaster, or Love Lies Bleeding* (c.1610-11) which is derived from the prose romances of chivalry popular in France and Spain. The plot centres on Philaster, the rightful king of Sicily, whose throne has been usurped by the king of Calabria. Philaster is in love with the usurper's daughter Arethusa and is helped by Bellario, his page, who is actually a woman in disguise and deeply loves him like Viola of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Arethusa's father desires to get her married to Pharamond of Spain and she reveals that Pharamond and Megra, a lady of her father's court, were in a romantic relationship. Bellario has to come out of disguise when a revengeful Megra alleges that the page was having an affair with the Arethusaand is accordingly dismissed from service by Philaster. Though the play shows a skillful command of theatrical effect, it lacks Shakespeare's strong unifying imagination. The play appealed to fashionable taste for verbal wit, pathos and exalted sentiments though it lacked deep conviction.

George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1612), John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (1599), Thomas Heywood's *The English Traveller* (1627), Philip Massinger's *The Maid of Honour* (1621), *The Bondman* (1624), *The Renegado* (1630), *The Great Duke of Florence* (1636), *The Emperor of the East* (1632), and *The Bashful Lover* (1655), James Shirley's *The Traiter* (1631), and *The Cardinal* (1641), John Dryden's *The Rival Ladies, a Tragicomedy* (1636), *The Spanish Friar or The Double Discovery* (1681) and Sir William Davenant's *Love and Honour* (1649), *The Fair Favourite* (1673) and *The Siege of Rhodes* Part I and Part II were popular tragi-comedies.

Activities:

1. Consult relevant books, articles and internet sources and write notes on:
   (a) Euripides; (b) *Twelfth Night*; (c) *Philaster, or Love Lies Bleeding*

2. Prepare a list of tragi-comedies Shakespeare wrote.

3.9.7. Restoration Comedy of Manners

With the restoration of Charles II in 1660 the Cavaliers returned to the court and so did their hedonistic lifestyle. The tiresome Puritan restraint was over and a witty, and often, erotic fashion dominated the literary scene which was a reflection of the king's court. Most restoration dramatists were court wits who wrote for a small fashionable and rich city circle and did not represent English provincial life or the middle classes. If the provinces existed at all in these metropolitan plays, it was to project how despicable they were. Satire was a dominant literary fashion used to denigrate uncouth rustics, their rambling houses and their middle-class Puritan virtues. The central characters were gallants and court wits, generally rakes, involved in amorous intrigues and display of costly clothing and hair accessories. Since the Puritans believed that all forms of fiction, like stage plays, were a diversion of men from spirituality, in 1642 all theatre houses were closed down. They not only disapproved of costly clothing, long hair and any form of display of wealth they were even against the wearing of vestments by priests. In other words, they insisted on self-denial. The world of Restoration comedy was completely opposite. Frivolousness, earlier considered 'sinful', was the established manner. Restraint on women no longer existed and idealisation of women was absent in the new literary tradition. Apart from the picture-frame stage, use of artificial light and moveable scenery, actresses were now doing female parts. Women of the upper-class, who were already taking important roles in public life, were on equal footage with their male counterparts as characters in comedy. This is noticeable in the wit combats between men and women characters, as seen in *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) by Sir George Etherege, where Dorimant and Harriet strike a balance, with wit and sophistication, between lust, prudence and freedom. It is about choosing the best match for one's wit. The dislike of the countryside is so strong that a long list is presented on its despicable attributes and yet Dorimant's love is stronger and he is ready to follow Harriet to the country abandoning all London pleasures. Etherege's other plays were *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub* (1664), *She Would if She Could* (1668).

This lighthearted wit combat between male lust and female prudence or the fooling of the country knight, who is deceived by his lustful wife for a city gallant, only exist on the surface in most comedies. William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*

(1672-73) exposes the selfish animality of a generation without any scruples. Mr. Horner proclaims himself a eunuch and thus gains access to ladies of the upper class through their husbands, who are convinced of his impotency. He is, however, a pretender who enjoys sexual favour with these ladies who keep his virility a secret. We see Jonsonian influence in this play. In another play Wycherley aims a sense of moral disgust and outrage at the predatory and brutal nature, of both men and women, beneath the surface of outward respectability. Manly, a misanthrope, in Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer*, is disgusted with the hypocrisies and rails at its moral squalor. Here the reliance upon Molière's *Le Misanthrope* (1666) is evident. Molière's Alceste, the protagonist of the play, is so cynical of the world that he chooses sea life over it.

William Congreve was the most successful writer of the comedy of manners. The chief influence behind his comedies were the comedies of Molière where the manners of the leisured class were presented with brilliance. Though Ben Jonson's satirical mode was used, it lacked Jonson's moral purpose. Molière and Calderon were translated and adapted apart from the farcical comic elements of commedia dell'arte of Italy. Characters like the bluffing sailor, the gullible astrologer, the resourceful servant, the amorous widow, the country squire, the witty lovers dominated the scene and the plays were highly influenced by Jonsonian humours. His satiric exposure of reality beneath sophisticated manners is done with wit and intelligence. He makes his purpose as a dramatist clear in the Prologue to *Love for Love*. He says that he wishes to 'lash' the age where the ideal Elizabethan knightly code had been completely replaced by the courtly Restoration gallants. *The Way of the World* (1700) is written in the Restoration mode but Congreve's country squire is more admired than mocked: his honesty weighs over his rusticity. The same tension exists between social reputation and personal lust and the protagonists, Mirabell and Millamant, are perfectly aware of this and also of each other's shortcomings.

John Dryden, known more for his tragedies, also wrote comedies in the Restoration mode. Influenced by Jonsonian humours Dryden modelled his comedies on the Spanish comedies of intrigue and the Restoration wit combats and love disputes existed in tandem with melodramatic scenes. *The Wild Gallant* (1663), *The Rival Ladies* (1664), *Secret Love* (1667), *Sir Martin Mar-all* (1666-7) and *Marriage a la Mode* (1672) emphasise on eloquence in verse and decorum notable in Jonson.

Mrs. Aphra Behn was writing for a living and thus broke all cultural barriers. She wrote *The Rover or* the *Banish'd Cavaliers* (1676) that deals with the amorous adventures and is a revision of Thomas Killgrew's play *Thomaso*, or *The Wanderer*.

The Restoration comic mode however breaks down and looks forward to the sentimental comedy of the next century with Sir John Vanbrugh and George Farquhar. *The Relapse* by Vanbrugh blames a husband's sexual passion and his lack of good judgement for his adultery. The play emphasises how he truly loves his wife and thus the hero is remarkably different from the Restoration rake. Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) was a contemporary attack on the amoral Restoration comedy comparing it to the decency of the ancient Latin and Greek drama. The witty cynical comedy of late seventeenth century was but a reflection of the change in public taste.

3.9.8. Heroic Tragedy

Early seventeenth-century British architecture saw the growth of a cultivated taste with the classical qualities of restraint, balance, proportion, order and elegance in the work of Inigo Jones. These classical attributes influenced drama and specially tragedy too. It was grand, operatic and rhetorical and used the themes of love and honour. The greatest influence for the English dramatists, that came through the returning Cavaliers, was the French dramatist, Pierre Cornielle. He had unfortunate but admirable heroes whose passion and valour made them irresistible.

When Restoration comedy was presenting the actual social life of the times, Restoration heroic tragedy written in high rhetorical rhymed couplets, was related to a world far flung from the unheroic qualities of the age: a remote world of wish fulfilment where heroes were not rakes. This was also upper-class drama like the comedy of manners. The characters are trapped between irreconcilable conflicting demands of love and honour in their role as friends, subjects, lovers or rulers and flare up on the slightest occasion. The protagonists vent their emotions in declamatory speeches before their death or downfall which unfortunately made this conception of heroism artificial and inflated. The human situation is not explored and the world is unreal. The use of rhymed heroic couplets, first introduced by Davenant, provided the medium required to vent the passions of these heroes with grandeur and polish. Historical material was often explored to write these plays.

Sir William Davenant, who had received permission for a few private and public performances after the closing of the theatres, wrote *The Siege of Rhodes*, though a tragi-comedy, had all the features of heroic tragedy, like his later work *The Spaniards in Peru*. The Preface to *Gondibert*, written under the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher, was an interesting defence of heroic poems.

John Dryden was the most famous playwright of this genre. He collaborated with Sir Robert Howard, his brother-in-law, to write *The Indian Queen* (1664) set in Peru and Mexico and written on a grand scale showing invasion of one country by another. The scale of action is so extravagant in this and all the following ones that he ends up defending himself in the Preface to *The Conquest of Granada*. Soon a long list of heroic tragedies followed: *The Indian Emperor* (1665), *Tyrannick Love, or the Royal Martyr* (1669), *Almanzor and Almahide, or the Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards*, Part I & Part II (1669 or 1670), *Aureng-Zebe* (1675), *All for Love, or the World Well Lost* (1678), *Cleomenes, the Spartan Hero* (1692), *Love Triumphant, or Nature will Prevail* (1693) and *Troilus and Cressida, or Truth found too late* (1679).

Dryden collaborated with Nathaneil Lee who had less artistic control but was more frenzied and verbally violent. The joint works were *Oedipus* (1678), an adaptation of Sophocles' Oedipus and *The Duke of Guise* (1682). Other minor writers were Thomas Otway, Thomas D'Urfey, Elkanah Settle, Thomas Southerne and John Crowne. Otway's *Don Carlos, Prince of Spain* (1676) and *The Orphan* (1680) were considerably influenced by Fletcher in their use of blank verse. His *Venice Preserved* (1682) cannot be classed as heroic tragedy though it shared some of its features. Congreve's *Mourning Bride* (1697) was a heroic play that was sensational but also sentimental.

Activities:

Consult relevant books, articles and internet sources and write notes on:

(b) (a) Look up the works of French dramatist Pierre Cornielle for an understanding of his influence on Restoration drama. How did Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) affect later seventeenth century drama in England.

(c) Look up the emergence of Sentimental Comedy and Anti-sentimental comedy.

(d) Look up the works of Euripides to get an understanding of tragi-comedy.

3.9.9. Summing Up

After eighteen years of official silence during the Puritan rule, from the closing of the theatres to the restoration of the monarch, drama returned to England. However, these plays were remarkably different from those of the Elizabethan era and the early seventeenth century. The English thirst for the stage made them welcome the changes that came to theatre. They were watching a new morality and were surely lured by it, considering the popularity of the comedy of the age. The century had seen a great expansion of mercantile enterprise that was acquisitive and confronted with existing order of human relations. Personal aggrandizement has been the subject matter of the comedies as well as the tragedies. The flow of cash, due to trade, and the awful memories of the Civil Wars gave birth to a generation who wanted security and happiness and therefore, a strong government where everyone would get justice. It is natural that political thinkers like Hobbes and Locke wrote on the importance of strong governance and social contract for happiness depended on it. The establishment of The Bank of England in 1694 is not only an economic watershed but also one that shows the change in the structure of English society and its mentality which was also projected through its drama.

3.9.10. Self-assessment Questions

Long Questions:

1. What are the significant features of English Revenge Tragedy? Analyse some English Revenge tragedies.

2. What is the contribution of Ben Jonson towards English literature?

3. What is Citizen Comedy? Who were the major writers of Citizen Comedy?

4. Why was Restoration Comedy called comedy of 'Manners'? What development is noticeable between 1660 and 1700 in the genre of the Comedy of Manners?

Mid-length Questions:

1. What is the significance of the 'Bill of Rights' of 1689 and the Act of Settlement of 1701?

2. What is the meaning of the word 'Humours'? Analyse Ben Jonson's contribution to the Comedy of Humours.

3. What is Tragi-Comedy? Who were the major writers of seventeenth century tragi-comedy?

4. What are the features of Heroic tragedy of the seventeenth century? Who were the major writers of this genre?

Short Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the term 'Puritan'?

2. What is the meaning of the term 'Cavalier' in English history?

3. Which period of the seventeenth century is known as the Interregnum?

4. What do you mean by Glorious Revolution? When did it take place?

5. Who was Seneca?

6. Who was Thomas Kyd?

7. Write briefly on Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

8. Write a brief note on Mrs. Aphra Behn

9. Write short notes on the following :

   The Alchemist; Volpone; Every Man in His Humour; The Indian Queen; Le Misanthrope

3.9.11. Suggested Reading

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*, OUP, 2000.

Bush, Douglas. *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660* (Oxford History of English Literature) vol.7, Clarendon Press, 1945.

Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*, Volume I & II, Allied Publishers Ltd., 2019.

Sutherland, James. *Restoration Literature*, 1660-1700: Dryden, Bunyan and Pepys (Oxford History of English Literature) vol. 8, Clarendon Press, 1990.

Unit – 10 ❏ Eighteenth-Century British Literature: Poetry

Structure

3.10.1. Objectives

3.10.2. Introduction

3.10.3. Satire and Wit: Alexander Pope

3.10.4. 'Graveyard School' of Poetry

3.10.5. Transitional Poets

3.10.6. Women Poets

3.10.7. Summing-up

3.10.8. Self-assessment Questions

3.10.9. Suggested Readings

3.10.1. Objectives

The objective of the unit is to delve into the socio-political and intellectual environment of Great Britain during the eighteenth century which is considered to be the period of Enlightenment as well as the age of Reason. It seeks to examine the revival of Classicism in the genre of poetry written by Dryden, Pope and Swift and others. The poetry of this era grapples with ideas such as reason, nature, morality, and the role of individual in the society. It also traces the evolution of the transitional poets who shifted their focus from the representation of aristocratic society and materialistic life to that of pastoral and agrarian aspects of the society. The unit also deals with the "Graveyard School of Poetry" and takes into account some women poets who contributed to the development of the eighteenth-century poetry.

3.10.2. Introduction

The period from 1700 to 1750 is usually referred to as the Neo-Classical, Pseudo-Classical, or sometimes the Augustan Age. Writers like Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding were guided by the principles of reason, common sense, and wit, contrasting sharply with the imaginative nature of Romantic figures of the Elizabethan period. They prioritised order, discipline, and balance, valuing adherence to facts, reason, and intellect over imagination and fancy. They believed poetry should strictly follow the classical rules set by masters like Horace and Aristotle. This adherence led to a literature that, while polished and refined, often felt artificial and lacked true independence. The works of this period, influenced by their imitation of classical models, were considered pseudo-classical or neo-classical rather than genuinely classical. The essence of classical literature—a harmonious blend of form and content—was overshadowed by an emphasis on formality, resulting in works that were seen as cold and insipid. The term "Augustan Age" was first used by Oliver Goldsmith in 1759 to describe the reigns of William III (1689-1702) and Queen Anne (1702-1714). In the early twentieth century, Theodore Watts-Dunton, a notable English poet, critic and essayist, criticised Thomas Gray for being overly influenced by this style, and the term gained a negative connotation, implying a stilted and dull style of writing. Despite the criticism, the era was a highly productive time for English literature, featuring many distinguished authors whose works continue to influence readers. If we look at the poetic corpus of the entire eighteenth century, we will find some transitional poets appearing during the middle of the eighteenth century. They exhibited a fiercely individual spirit, disdaining certain codes of conduct, such as reason and wit as practised by Dryden and Pope in their poetry. The voices of the downtrodden and the representation of the beauty of Nature, which were eclipsed by the representation of artificiality of urban life and emphasis on wit and intelligence, were foregrounded by the Transitional Poets. They undoubtedly sowed the seeds of Romanticism. In this Unit, we shall concentrate on neoclassical poetry with special emphasis on Alexander Pope, Graveyard School of Poetry, Transitional poets, and a few women poets, and discuss their evolution as well as contributions to the eighteenth-century British poetry.

Activities:

1. There is a volume titled *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* edited by Tom Sorell (Cambridge UP, 1996) in which you will find how Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), an epitome of scientific spirit, left a deep impact on the Neoclassical poets in terms of handling of form, discipline and classical references. Consult relevant internet and printed materials to find more about Hobbes and his works.

2. Consult Michael J. C. William's book *The Neoclassical Period: From Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Routledge, 2005) in which you will come across the idea as to how Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) acted as an inspiration for the Neoclassical poets. Consult relevant materials for more details about Sidney's influence on the contemporary poets.

3.10.3. Satire and Wit: Alexander Pope

The eighteenth century, as you may have already perceived, saw a prominent focus on wit and reason in literary works, notably in Horatian and Juvenalian satires. These forms of satire, with their sharp observations and nimble critiques, highlighted the superficial absurdities and moral failings of the British society during the neoclassical period. Under the impact of the Enlightenment ideals of rationality, order, and knowledge, society was preoccupied with 'decorum,' a veneer of established customs and pretensions, as well as an inherent sense of moral and political superiority. Satirists of the time sought to expose societal flaws by mocking at prevailing norms, revealing the shortcomings and hypocrisy of the era. Many poets, including Alexander Pope, used the heroic couplet to deliver sharp satire and social critique. The form's tight structure allowed for clever wordplay and epigrams. Enlightenment figure like Alexander Pope employed different styles and targets in his satire to critique various facets of British society, shedding light on the pervasive moral decay looming large in his age.

Pope, celebrated for his insightful works, drew inspiration from classical rhetorical masters for his satirical models. *In The Rape of the Lock* (1712) Pope adopts a Horatian tone, gently mocking at the society with a refined and polished voice. It reflects the absurdities and vanities of the upper-class society. Instead of directly attacking the British aristocracy, Pope represents its pomp in a manner

that encourages readers to view the depicted actions as foolish and laughable. Although his mockery is subtle and lyrical, it effectively highlights the moral decline of society.

The Rape of the Lock adopts the grand form of a heroic epic but applies it satirically to a trivial dispute over a lock of hair. Inspired by epic poems like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Pope's work combines the serious and the trivial, creating a whimsical mock epic that highlights the frivolous nature of the conflict. This approach uses exaggerated and personified language to mock traditional epics and illustrate the poem's emphasis on the element of absurdity, such as when Belinda's lock is stolen in an exaggeratedly dramatic fashion.

Pope's characters in *The Rape of the* Lock symbolise eighteenth-century British aristocrats obsessed with decorum, and his mock epic serves as a critique of their vanity and superficiality. Pope aimed to provoke a humorous self-awareness among the aristocracy and inspire a cultural shift. Pope used his literary prowess to critique the contemporary society, aiming to push for social and political reform. His work, *The Rape of the Lock* sought to challenge and change the British mindset of the time, advocating for a more enlightened approach to social and political morality. Apart from *The Rape of the Lock, The Dunciad* (1728) is also a very significant satirical poem by Pope, unveiling his scathing attack on various contemporary writers and critics. Colley Cibber was one of them. Pope uses the term 'Dunce' which refers to uninspired and mediocre writers in an attempt to showcase how dullness threatens the integrity of literature. His main objective was to redeem the degradation of poetry.

Samuel Johnson is also an esteemed English writer of the eighteenth century who is well-known for his wit, erudition and moral sensibility. His *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) exemplifies the serious tone of Juvenalian satire. Johnson uses words like "anxious," "toil," "strife," "fear," and "hate" in the opening lines to convey this tone. He expresses anger at human behaviour, particularly excessive pride and vanity, which he views as futile. The term "vain" captures both the social issue of vanity and the pointlessness of such pursuits. Johnson argues that the quest for wealth and pride ultimately leads to failure and unhappiness, warning that "wealth heaped on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys" and that excessive desire brings danger and dissatisfaction.

John Gay and Jonathan Swift are the two significant figures in eighteenth-century poetry. John Gay in his poem "Trivia" (1716) employs wit and satire to critique the pursuit of knowledge and academic world. He humourously depicts the overtly serious nature of scholars and the absurdity of their rituals. He highlights how academic pursuit can become more about status than genuine understanding. In fact, Gay contrasts the ideal of wisdom with the folly of those who seek it superficially. Jonathan Swift likewise, hinging on his wit and satire, attacks the contemporary politics, society and human nature. His *The Battle of the Books* (1704) is the best example of this. Both of them along with others utilised poetry as a vehicle for social commentary and reform.

Activities:

1. Watch on the YouTube: "Alexander Pope as a Poet" (https://youtu.be/byBccv/9Nng? Si=f4iaIJ4MLN1-mGRq.

2. The drawing room poetry reveals the conversational and social nature of private gatherings. One can trace the impact of Coffee houses on the Drawing room poetry. One may consult Brain Cowan's book *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (Yale UP, 2005) for further details.

3. Consult relevant materials to write a brief note on the phrase 'Grub Street Poets.'

3.10.4. "Graveyard School" of Poetry

In the late eighteenth century, a group of English poets, known as the "Graveyard School" or "Churchyard School," emerged with a new poetic theme and style. This school focused on themes of death, the fleeting nature of life, and sorrow. Key poets associated with this movement included Thomas Parnell, Robert Blair, Edward Young, and Thomas Gray. They represented a reaction against the Augustan ideals of decorum, which shunned subjective, gloomy, or contemplative themes. The Graveyard poets explored death in all its aspects, including the physical horror, the grief of the bereaved, existential questions about the afterlife, and the transient nature of human existence. Thomas Gray's "An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard" (1751) epitomises the meditative and philosophical nature of their

work. Gray, for example, would visit graveyards at dusk to meditate and write his poetry. Their focus on personal reflection and emotional depth positioned them as precursors to Romanticism, and their explorations of death, graves, and the supernatural also laid the groundwork for Gothic literature.

Figure 1: Image of "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard"
Contributor: The Reading Room / Alamy Stock Photo
Source: https://www.alamy.com/elegy-written-in-a-country-church-yard-xke-perhaps-in-this-neglected-spot-is-laid-some-heart-once-pregnant-with-celestial-fire-hands-that-the-rod-of-empire-might-have-swaydor-wakd-to-ecstasy-the-living-lyre-xj33-but-knowledge-to-their-eyes-her-ample-page-rich-with-the-spoils-of-time-did-neer-unroll-chill-penury-repressd-their-noble-rage-and-froze-the-genial-current-of-the-soul-image339953560.html

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) is renowned for his poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (written in 1742 but published in 1751). He has to his credit an extensive body of works such as "Ode to Spring," "Ode to Adversity," "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," and the famous Sonnet "On the Death of Richard West."

The central theme of the poem is the inevitability of death. The speaker while seated in a graveyard at dusk reflects on this universal truth. As night falls, he contemplates that no amount of wealth, power, or fame can restrict one from death, and he observes that many individuals pass away with their dreams unfulfilled. The poem underscores that death is a fate shared by all, irrespective of social status, and even the narrator himself will eventually face it.

Gray's poem emphasises that while the graves of common people in the churchyard may lack elaborate memorials, their simplicity allows for a deep reflection on their lives. The narrator envisions their daily routines and struggles, honouring their lives with empathy and respect. He acknowledges that simple graves can evoke profound thoughts about death and mortality.

Gray's poem is the best known of the 'graveyard' poems of the period. It may have been influenced by other contemporary works in this genre, such as Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-45) and Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743). However, the poem has become so popular that one of its lines was even used as the title for Thomas Hardy's novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874).

Activities:

1. Do you find any connection between the Graveyard School of Poetry and the Gothic Romance? Both deploy the supernatural in an attempt to create a sense of horror and suspense. The atmosphere in Gothic Romance novels often mirrors the melancholic and eerie mood found in the poetry of Graveyard School. You may consult Margaret Russett's book *The Romantic Imagination and the Gothic* (U of Pennsylvania P, 1989) for further details.

2. Gray's elegy, its theme of rural melancholy, and human dignity have contributed to Thomas Hardy's approach to rural life and social commentary. Do you agree with the statement? You may look at Dale Kramer's *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge UP, 1999) for further details.

3. Prepare a list of eighteenth-century poets who have not been mentioned in this Unit and try to form an idea about them and their poetry.

3.10.5. Transitional Poets

In the eighteenth century, there are several poets such as Thomas Gray, William Cowper, Robert Burns, Oliver Goldsmith, William Blake who are considered transitional figures. They helped bridge the gap between the earlier Neoclassical style and the later Romantic movement.

The Transitional Poets are not at all free from the influence of Alexander Pope. Hence, they are not considered as full-fledged Romantics but only as transitional poets. From Gray onwards, we can perceive a transition in terms of theme and ideology of certain poets who emerged during the middle of the eighteenth century. They are more focussed on individual spirit, trying to shift their attention from the urban life. They seek to make the panegyric of Nature which neoclassical poetry did not do. Embracing the voices of the downtrodden people, the transitional poets showed a democratic spirit. Thus their poetry can hardly be considered as 'drawing room poetry.' They seemed to preach 'liberalism in literature' as proclaimed by Hugo in his preface to 'Cromwell' (1827). The preface is often seen as a manifesto for the Romantic movement, emphasising the need for literary freedom and the breaking away from traditional constraints.

The genuine heirs to Gray's type of poetry are found in Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770), William Cowper's "The Task" (1785), and George Crabbe's rural narrative poems, such as "The Village" (1783) and "The Borough" (1810). These works vary in form, from blank verse to heroic couplets and poetic letters, as they seek to portray the authentic experiences of the rural poor. This period, marked by the agrarian revolution, saw many individuals being compelled to leave their rural homes for the newly industrialised cities in search of employment. Goldsmith's poem, for instance, depicts this transformation by contrasting the once-idyllic 'loveliest village of the plain' with the stark and sombre reality of the present.

William Cowper's "The Task," a blank verse poem divided into six books, was one of the most enduringly popular works on nature and simple living, alongside Thomson's "The Seasons." Its well-known line, "God made the country, and man made the town," highlights the quest for peace amid a busy world. The poem suggests and looks forward to a deeper connection between humanity and nature. The passage from "The Task" titled 'Rural Sights and Sounds' prefigures Wordsworth's celebration of the countryside, conveying a strong sense of appreciation with just a hint of contemplation:

> Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
>> Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
>> The tone of languid nature.

Goldsmith has a stronger note, in "The Deserted Village", of regret, of something lost:

> How often have I blessed the coming day,
>> When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
>> And all the village train, from labour free,
> Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
>> While many a pastime circled in the shade,
>> The young contending as the old surveyed;
> And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
> And sleights of art and feasts of strength went round.

Goldsmith romanticised the idealised rural life of Auburn in his poem. In contrast, thirteen years later, Crabbe's "The Village" directly countered this view of a bygone golden age. Crabbe emphasised the harsh realities of life and rejected the Arcadian ideal that had been a part of poetry since Sir Philip Sidney's time two centuries earlier.

> Ye gentle souls, who dream of rural ease,
> Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please;

Crabbe took over twenty-five years to further his stark portrayal of rural life in "The Borough," which offers a detailed and accurate depiction of Aldeburgh in Suffolk, where he lived for most of his life. The poem aimed to depict country life "as Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not." This approach represents a significant counter to both the idealised and overly sentimental views of rural life often embraced by city trends.

Robert Burns, a Scottish poet whose work often bridges the gap between neoclassical and romantic ideals, is known for his unique blend of these styles. In "To a Mouse," the setting is rural, and the focus shifts from human concerns to the life of a modest mouse. Burns uses affectionate terms like "beaste" and "Mousie," which highlights the emotional attachment between human lives and that of the mouse. His public expression of empathy and the sobering insight that misfortune can befall anyone would have been unexpected for readers of pre-romantic poetry. A significant aspect of Burns's work is his use of Scottish dialect, which fosters a connection to ordinary people and adds authenticity to his poetry. This approach provides a more genuine and unrefined atmosphere compared to the ornate heroic couplets favoured by neoclassical poets.

William Blake is the most significant transitional poet. He broke away from the conventional expectations of "rationality and restraint" as suggested by G.T.Guth in his book *Rationality and Restraints: A History of Modern English Literary Theory*, opting instead to employ "bold, unusual symbols to explore the divine forces at play in the universe," as seen in his poem "The Tyger." This poem evokes a sense of awe and addresses profound, universal themes. Here, the tiger symbolises the malevolent aspects of humanity and the profound wisdom that comes with maturity. Blake's poetry also frequently used repetition and parallelism, sometimes creating a nursery rhyme effect that is gentle and sweet, as in "The Lamb" with its line, "Little Lamb God bless thee." At the same time, this technique highlights the rhetorical power of his iconic question, "What immortal hand or eye,/ Could frame thy [tiger's] fearful symmetry?" which frames both the beginning and end of *The Tyger*. Blake indeed preaches the theme of mysticism throughout his poetry. Apart from proffering mysticism, William Blake can certainly be considered a social reformer, and his poetry often reveals his critiques of society and his visions for a more just world. Here are a few ways in which Blake's work embodies social reformist ideas:

- Blake was deeply critical of the Industrial Revolution and its dehumanising effects. In poems like "London," he highlights the plight of the poor and the moral decay of society, lamenting how industrialisation leads to exploitation and suffering.

- Blake's poetry frequently addresses issues of social justice. In "The Chimney Sweeper" (from *Songs of Experience*), he critiques the exploitation of children and the moral hypocrisy of society, calling for empathy and change.

- Blake challenged organised religion, which he viewed as corrupt and oppressive. His works often advocate for personal spiritual experiences over institutionalised faith, promoting ideas of freedom and individual conscience.

- In poems like "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Blake envisions a world where human potential and creativity are embraced. He believed in the transformative power of imagination and sought to inspire readers to challenge societal norms.

- Blake's poems frequently give voice to marginalised figures—such as the poor, women, and children—reflecting his belief in the importance of social equity and compassion.

In fact, Blake's poetry not only critiques contemporary social issues but also envisions a more equitable and compassionate society, marking him as a significant social reformer in literary history. Hence, we can say that the transitional poets' works prove that the eighteenth century was characterised by rational thought, yet the influence of Romanticism continued to flow throughout the period.

Figure 2: "Urizen Penned in the Rock, from 'The Book of Urizen' by William Blake, 1794. English poet, painter and printmaker: 28 November 1757 — 12 August 1827. (Photo by Culture Club/Getty Images)".

Source : https://www.gettyimages.in/detail/news-photo/urizen-penned-in-the-rock-from-the-book-of-urizen-by-news-photo/173344317

Activities:

1. Besides being a poet, William Blake was an artist as well. Watch the following Youtube video: "William Blake: The Ancient of Days: Great Art Explained" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grxnTX9jm4E

2. Watch the following video to know more about how Blake invented a unique process of printing:
   "Discovering William Blake's Innovative Printing Process"
   https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=William+Blake%2C+lithograph#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:092f6a6e,vid:TGiVMj5Vm2g,st:0

3.10.6. Women Poets

It was a time for a better reception of female poets. Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn demonstrated that poetry was within the reach of middle-class women. Their work was celebrated in George Colman and Bonnell Thornton's *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755), which included Behn's twenty-seven poems and Philips' eleven poems. Behn was acclaimed as an exceptional poet, while Philips's works began to set a standard for women's poetry. Behn's poetry focused on female friendship and private circles, whereas Philips's addressed public debates and had limited discussion of personal relationships. Despite this, Behn's writing was notably distinguished and received praise from Daniel Defoe in *The Pacificator* (1700). Behn was invited to collaborate on commercial poetic projects by renowned figures like Dryden but chose to continue writing about friendship and pastoral themes. Philips, meanwhile, made her mark by publishing two plays in 1663 and 1664, becoming the first woman to have plays staged in Dublin and London. By the end of the seventeenth century, Philips was recognised as a poet on par with men, while Behn was on her way to similar acclaim.

As women became more engaged readers, they recognised the value of chastity versus transgression, leading many to appreciate Philips, whose poems often addressed friends, role models, or other female poets like Mary Astell, Elizabeth Montagu, and Queen Caroline. Behn's influence was significant, particularly for her outspoken views on public issues.

In the early eighteenth century, a group of poets emerged with access to libraries and leisure time to write. By mid-century, the number of female poets had increased,

including those from working-class backgrounds, with poetry often focusing on morality. Elizabeth Eger criticised this focus, stating, "It is perhaps difficult to realize the central significance of poetry within eighteenth-century culture in relation to a developing sense of morality" (41). In response, Behn integrated social and political commentary into her works. Behn's influence extended into the first half of the eighteenth century, shaping the styles of later poets such as Anne Finch, who adopted a style of lyrical poetry that influenced the next century. Other poets like Sarah Fyge Egerton, Mary Barber, Mary Jones, Clara Reeve, Mary Darwall, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld had varied styles but similar themes, using poetry as a platform to address both political and personal issues. Religion heavily influenced poetry, defining it in moral terms. Some poets, like Charlotte Smith and Anna Seward, explored themes of horror, violence, and societal insensitivity, reflecting a growing awareness of their rights and their role in national debates, including anti-slavery.

In the late eighteenth century, poets like Yearsley, Seward, Amelia Opie, and Hannah More addressed themes of war and abolition. Influenced by Charlotte Smith's success, these poets engaged with history and took on evaluative and prophetic roles, addressing radical social issues. Common themes included war, wilderness, catastrophes, and symbolic imagery such as the ocean. Balmire's works, for instance, depicted war and its impact on ordinary people, while foreign lands were often portrayed as distant and bleak. Anne Bannerman's volume of poetry *Genii* (1800) used the image of earthquakes to evoke a sense of dread.

It is apparent that in some women's writings, achieving social status through their poetry was seen as crucial. However, women's poetry often lacked the same sustained study and revision found in men's work. Unlike their male counterparts, women poets were not recognised for their unique styles or signature poems but rather seen as producers of conventional literary forms. For example, Anne Finch's poem "The Spleen" (1754), once widely reprinted, is now largely unreadable and out of favour with contemporary feminist readers, reflecting a shift in appreciation for the complex and metaphysical styles of earlier poets.

A shift can be traced in the poetry written in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It emphasised the poets' personal feelings and sentiments. Women poets began to break free from traditional constraints and explore new themes and styles previously unimagined by men. Despite the increasing number of female poets, their works were still relatively scarce compared to their male counterparts due

to societal disapproval of women's assertiveness and limited exposure in the printing world. This lack of wide visibility and critical review hindered their growth. To address this disparity, women poets began to respond, by contributing a flourishing corpus of women's poetry by the 1790s. Prominent literary figures from this period include Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Joanna Baillie, Susanna Blamire, Felicia Hemans, Mary Leapor, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Hannah More, and Mary Robinson.

3.10.7. Summing-up

The eighteenth century in Britain, with its complex blend of Enlightenment rationalism and burgeoning Romanticism, marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of poetry. The period's poetry, from Alexander Pope's satirical poems to William Blake's works of mystical visions, grappled with the tension between reason and imagination, tradition and innovation. This era of poetry not only reflects the transformative scenario of social and political changes of its time but also foreshadows the profound shifts in literary aesthetics that would come. As such, eighteenth-century British poetry stands as a testament to the dynamic interplay between the constraints of form and the freedom of expression, inviting us to ponder over how the search for meaning and beauty evolves in response to the ever-changing contours of human experience. This rich tapestry of poetic exploration underscores the fact that literature, in its many forms, remains a vital mirror to the complexities of its age and a beacon for the future's creative endeavours.

3.10.8. Self-assessment Questions

Long Answer-type Questions:

1. Examine the role of satire and wit in the poetry of Alexander Pope. How did his works reflect the contemporary socio-political conditions ? In what ways did he contribute to the tradition of satire in eighteenth-century British literature?

2. Discuss the characteristic features and thematic concerns of the 'Graveyard School' of poetry, with a focus on Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." How did this school of thought challenge the ideals of the Augustan Age and contribute to the development of Romanticism?

3. Analyse the nature of shift in eighteenth century poetry from the Augustan poetic tradition to that of Transitional Poetics. How did these transitional poets reflect the changing social and economic conditions of their time?

4. Evaluate the contributions of women poets of the eighteenth century to the literary landscape of the period? What challenges did they face in gaining recognition?

5. Critically assess the shift from the Augustan emphasis on order and formality to the more personal and emotional exploration in the poetry of the late eighteenth century. How did this transition reflect the broader cultural and intellectual changes of the period?

Mid-length Answer-type Questions:

1. How does the formal adherence to classical models in neoclassical poetry potentially limit the expression of individual creativity?

2. What is the significance of the use of heroic couplets in neoclassical poetry?

3. What role does irony play in neoclassical poetry, and how does it affect the reader's engagement with the text's underlying themes?

Short-answer type questions:

1. What social issue does Oliver Goldsmith address in "The Deserted Village"?

2. What does the term "Augustan Age" refer to in the context of eighteenth-century British literature?

3. Which poet associated with the "Graveyard School" is well-known for his poem "The Grave"?

4. How did Aphra Behn's poetry reflect her views on gender and society?

5. Which eighteenth-century female poet was known for her work as a social reformer and abolitionist?

6. Will you consider William Blake as a social reformer? Discuss. How did Anna Laetitia Barbauld's poetry differ from her male contemporaries?

7. Who was Katherine Philips, and what was notable about her poetry?

3.10.9. Suggested Readings

Albert, E. *History of English Literature*. Methuen, 1988.

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Kettle, Arnold. *Poetry and Society: The Influence of Classical Models on Neoclassical Poetry*. Routledge, 2004.

Lovejoy, A. O. *Essays in the History of Ideas*. Johns Hopkins UP,1948.

Mullan, John. *The Age of Satire: A Study of British Satirical Poetry from the Restoration to the Regency*. Routledge, 2018.

Pope, Alexander. *Alexander Pope: The Major Works*. Edited by Pat Rogers, Oxford UP, 2008.

Unit – 11 ❏ Eighteenth-Century British Literature: Drama

Structure

3.11.1. Objectives

The objectives of the unit are as follows:

● to introduce the students to the shifting trends in drama in eighteenth-century Britain;

● to identify how eighteenth-century drama differs from Restoration drama;

● to acquaint the students with the major dramatists of the period;

● to highlight the reasons behind the success or failure of sentimental comedies, tragedies and anti-sentimental comedies;

● to instil in students the capacity to critically appreciate the dramatic practices of the age.

3.11.2. Introduction

The 'Eighteenth Century' (in this unit 1690-1780 is accepted as a nomenclature for the period) historically followed the Restoration Age (1660-1690), which saw the reopening of theatres after their closure in 1642. The theatres were closed in 1642 when a civil war broke out between King Charles I's supporters and parliamentarians led by Oliver Cromwell. The theatres were then accused of promoting "lascivious mirth and levity" (Milling 440). During the Commonwealth Interregnum, Puritanic austere ways of life were enforced on the people of England. The Puritans despised all forms of merriment and entertainment, so they banned theatres indefinitely. The theatres remained closed until Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660. With King Charles II's restoration to the throne of England and the reopening of theatres, "eighteen years of official displeasure" (Sanders 296) came to an end. Though the theatres were yet to regain the glory of the Renaissance, they managed to draw audiences. However, although the Restoration drama faced scathing criticism for staging profanity, licentiousness, and debauchery, it gained popularity in the period. The eighteenth-century drama transitioned to address moral decay and emphasised the importance of moral values to maintain law and order in society. Also, the eighteenth-century drama focused on the behaviour of society, exposing the hypocrisy of the times.

The Enlightenment ideals of prioritising science, logical thinking, and empiricism contributed to the prevailing spirit of intellectualism at the time. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 reinstated the Protestant monarchs, William of Orange and Queen Mary, to the throne of England. The return of Protestant rulers eased tensions relating to the tolerance for Catholics during the reign of the Catholic King James II. This established relative security and political stability, creating the "unquestioned national identity of eighteenth-century England" (Holland and Patterson 256). The theatre was "less concerned with philosophy than with profits, and its profits depended on appeasing new social forces of bourgeois morality ..." (Holland and Patterson 256). It was felt that the theatres ought to present moral virtues by relinquishing the vice and vulgarity of the Restoration drama.

Activities:

● Recount the significant historical events of the Restoration Age and note the key characteristics of the era.

● Identify the philosophical differences between the Restoration Age and the Eighteenth Century.

● Read the chapter, "Eighteenth-Century Theatre" by Peter Holland and Michael Patterson from the book, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, edited by Russell Brown (2001).

3.11.3. The Age of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment ideology introduced secular and democratic thoughts. This European intellectual movement, which largely influenced eighteenth-century philosophy, emphasised the importance of knowledge gained through rationality and empiricism. The Enlightenment philosophy valued democratic political ideals of natural law, liberty, fraternity, progress, tolerance, constitutional governance, and the formal separation of church and state. The Enlightenment philosophy prioritised law and order in society, systems, and governance, and it believed that emphasis on reason and logic would result in a stable government and society. These ideas were mirrored in British values and literary practices of the century. The Enlightenment views caused a democratic turn in plays and other forms of literature during the eighteenth century. Thus, the Enlightenment philosophy served as the foundation for changes in social attitudes and the ability to look beyond specific sections of society. Furthermore, the Enlightenment ideology emphasised appropriateness, order, stability, and progress, all of which defined the eighteenth century. This enforced society's regulations and codes of conduct while emphasising the value of morality. The Enlightenment philosophy, which inspired many intellectuals and authors of the century, facilitated the introduction of sentimentality on stage. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the stage had already been condemned for exhibiting obscenity, leading early eighteenth-century dramatists to depict moral values and explicit sentiments on stage. Depiction of stringent moral norms and ethics, it was argued, would purge society of its vices and the representation of obscenities on the Restoration stage.

3.11.4. Rise of Sentimentality and Moral Awakening

Jeremy Collier (1650-1726), a clergyman, wrote *A Short View of the Immortality and Profaneness of the English Stage together with the Sense of Antiquity upon*

this Argument in 1698. There he attacked prominent contemporary playwrights such as William Wycherley, William Congreve, John Dryden, John Vanbrugh, and Thomas D'Urfey. He censored them for portraying indecency, profanity, abusing the clergy, sketching libertine characters who succeeded in their iniquity, and upholding social vices in their plays. Collier's book generated uproar during those times, and "he seemed important (and threatening) to contemporary playwrights" (Hume 481). Vanbrugh and Congreve responded to Collier with pamphlets defending the time's stage. But Collier's pamphlet had a considerable impact on the playwrights of the time. As Ronald Carter and John McRae noted "the effect of [Collier's] *Short View* was considerable: writers and actors were prosecuted and fined, and, despite many playwrights' strong defences of the drama, Collier contributed a deadly blow to theatrical writing. The immediate result was a royal order prohibiting 'the acting of anything contrary to religion and good manners.' Less than forty years later, censorship became official" (119). The Theatres Licensing Act was introduced in 1737, which empowered Lord Chamberlain, a government official, to "grant or refuse a license to any play on political, religious, or moral grounds" (Carter and McRae 123). This censorship Act silenced many political satires and censored plays showing sexual indecency. The Theatres Licensing Act remained effective until 1968. This was not the first instance of theatres being accused of licentiousness, back in 1642 the theatres were shut down for representing immorality.

Sentimentality being in vogue, plays used to display sentiments overtly on stage, for playwrights adhered to the idea that dramas should depict human values. With a shift in social powers from aristocrats to the middle-class, an "important segment of the society wished to see" the bourgeois morality "enshrined at the centre of public behaviour" (Holland and Patterson 256). The word 'sentimental' became fashionable in the eighteenth century, and it was "much in vogue among the polite" (Sanders 322). In the context of the eighteenth century, 'sentiment' "may be defined as a feeling," and "against the background of its many crudities and barbarities, there developed both in life and literature an increase of this power to feel" (Evans 181). The literature of the time aimed to be sentimental as "a literature that moved pity in its readers was viewed as morally instructive" (Sanders 322). Benevolence, regarded as a natural virtue, was mirrored in the literature of the time which had the ultimate goal of instilling tenderness and kindness in humanity. These emotions were arguably required for a more moral and compassionate society.

Richard Steele's treatise, *The Christian Hero: An Argument Proving that No Principles but Those of Religion are Sufficient to Make a Great Man* (1701), "steadily rejected stoicism in favour of Christian morality" (Sanders 300). It represented the cultural changes of the age for accepting a virtuous and sensible life, instead of surrendering to moral excesses. The moralistic tone of the treatise echoed the significance of sentimentality and Christian morality which were later reflected in Steele's sentimental plays. Steele wrote about the manners and virtues of society in *The Spectator*. He recommended truth, honour, and innocence as the "chief ornaments of life." Steele through *The Spectator* criticised the excesses of the Restoration stage and argued in favour of soberer values. In his *Apology for Himself and His Writings* (1714), Steele declared him as an 'admirer' of Collier's work and asserted that he would "write a Comedy in the Severity that he [Collier] requires" (qtd. in Nettleton 157). This indicated his inclination to write moral or Sentimental Comedies, that would cater to middle-class morality and would be sentimental enough to instil sober values among the people of the then society.

Activities:

● After reading this section take note of the primary reasons that led to the growth of sentimentality in the eighteenth century.

● Read the section on 'Sensibility, Sentimentality, Tears, and Graveyards' (pp. 322-327) from Andrew Sanders' *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (2005) to understand the background of the rise of sentimentality during the age.

● Write a short note on Jeremy Collier and the impact of his pamphlet on British theatre.

● When and why was the Theatre Licensing Act imposed? Relate it to the closure of theatres in 1642.

● Refer to a relevant book on the History of English Literature and find out when *The Spectator* was first printed and by whom.

● Attempt to study the sentimental tendencies of the eighteenth century compared to the extravagance of the preceding Restoration Age.

3.11.5. Sentimental Comedy

The early eighteenth-century dramas comprised Sentimental Comedies, written in response to the representational tendencies in Restoration dramas, which were accused of obscenity and moral degradation. Richard Steele (c.1671- 1729), one of the early exponents of Sentimental Comedies, was committed in his dramas to channelise "the great stream of sentiment" (Nettleton 157) and voiced fierce criticism against the indecent Restoration stage. His first play *The Funeral* (1701) has a didactic tone, quite similar to the moralistic tenor he maintained in his *The Christian Hero*. Though Steele's *The Funeral* had delightful passages, it was criticised as being downright farcical. It was also "badly sentimental in places" (Hare 9). His next dramatic venture with *The Lying Lover* (1703) had a serious undertone. The play's serious tone made it a proper sentimental comedy. It was highly moralistic in tone, which was already set by Steele's previous drama *The Funeral*. Steele's attempt to reform the stage with all his good intentions to banish 'improper entertainment' in comedies continued with his next sentimental play *The Tender Husband* (1705). Here, Steele opposed the trends of presenting licentious and unfaithful wives in Restoration Comedies. Steele sketched the character of a faithful wife and satirised the institution of marriage and love. His next play, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), was predominated by morality, manners, and virtues like honesty and providence. A reformation of rakish characters helped reach a happy ending in the play. However, Steele was not recognised as a skilful dramatist, and his comedies lacked adequate dramatic effect. M.E. Hare argues that Steele's "comic genius lacked the sustained vigour which is required by the stage" (16). For Steele, sentiment catered to humour, in contrast to the 'gross' laughter evoked by Restoration Comedies.

Another major exponent of Sentimental Comedies, Colley Cibber (1671-1757) conformed to "the soberer values advocated by Steele" (Sanders 301). In *An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber, Comedian* (1740), Cibber insisted, "'nothing is more liable to debase and corrupt the Minds of a People than a licentious Theatre'," which, according to Cibber, could be rectified "'under a just, and proper Establishment" of "School of Manners and of Virtue" (qtd. in Sanders 301). *Love's Last Shift* (1696) was one of Cibber's early sentimental plays, that moved away from the Restoration stage's wittiness and rakishness. The play was about Amanda,

a decent woman, who was pushed to a final "shift" or trick to reform her rakish husband Loveless. The character of a virtuous wife bent on reforming a reckless husband contradicted the licentious wives of the Restoration plays. Women upholding the virtue of a good and faithful wife reoccurred in many sentimental comedies. Sir John Vanbrugh, a playwright, paid tribute to Cibber's play with a sequel, *The Relapse: or, Virtue in Danger* in 1696. Cibber's notable plays included *Love Makes a Man* (1700), *She Would and She Would Not* (1702), and *The Careless Husband* (1704). In these plays, virtuous characters were contrasted with vicious characters, and the reformation of the latter led to the happy endings of the plays. Another notable Sentimental Comedy of the time was George Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* (1699). This play somewhat followed the tradition of the Restoration plays but with a sentimental overtone. The plot revolved around three rivals competing for the hand of the rich heiress Lady Lurewell, causing a series of comic misunderstandings.

Activities:

● Write down the basic features of the Restoration Comedy of Manners to understand the changes in the dramatic practices in eighteenth-century Britain.

● Prepare a short paper to present the "Differences between Restoration Comedy of Manners and Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Comedies." Read the preface to Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) to understand the aim of writing sentimental comedies and the importance of evoking tears. Click on the link: https://standardebooks.org/ebooks/richard-steele/the-conscious-lovers/text/preface.

3.11.6. Eighteenth-Century Tragedy and Ballad Opera

Tragedies existed alongside sentimental plays in the eighteenth century. The early eighteenth century tragedies followed the traditions of tragedies of the Restoration Age. Colley Cibber's *Xerxes* (1699) and *Caesar in Egypt* (1724), Joseph Addison's (1672-1719) notable tragedy, *Cato* (1713), and Nicholas Rowe's (1674-1718) *Tamerlane* (1701) were a few of the early tragedies produced in the eighteenth century. But later the tragedies resonated with the sentimentality of the age and responded to the morals and concerns of the middle class. The tragedies attempted

to be democratic, instead of focusing on aristocracy. The democratic traits of the tragedies, which centred on middle-class everyday life, led to their being referred to as domestic tragedies. George Lillo's (1691-1739) first dramatic venture, *Silvia, or The Country Burial* (1730) was a ballad opera, which blended "virtue and vice rather coarsely" (Nettleton 202). His next *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell* (1731) showcased a citizen's everyday life. The play exhibited how a fatal obsession could lead to one's downfall. A courtesan seduced George Barnwell to rob his employer and then murdered his uncle. The play upheld bourgeoise values through the character of the London merchant, Mr Thorowgood. Susanna Centlivre's comedies, *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) were other significant domestic tragedies of the time.

However, tragedies in the eighteenth century failed to attain the success of the preceding ages. Tragedies were unable to hold the audiences' interest for long. Theatres, in general, went through much censorship in this century, thereby restricting their scope. The restrictions imposed on theatres lessened their dramatic appeal. Also, the mood of tragedy was opposed to the goodwill and optimism of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the mood of 'sentimentality' during that era probably made the creation of true tragedy or comedy nearly impossible. The explicit presentation of moral values and restriction from showcasing anything that breached the moral codes of conduct of the time narrowed down the scope of a tragedy. Further, the dramatic merits of playwrights such as Addison, Rowe, and Lillo were questioned, as many critics believed that they were not "major creative talents of the period" and so it might be argued that "the plays were weak because genius was not engaged in the writing of plays. . ." (Hnatko 467).

Alongside comedies and tragedies, musicals and operas existed to entertain audiences in the eighteenth century. Ballad Opera emerged as a popular mode of dramatic entertainment. George Lillo had already experimented with ballad opera before. But the genre of opera became quite successful with John Gay's (1685-1732) *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728. Gay's first foray into theatres might be attributed to his closeness to "Swift and Pope in the informal grouping of the Scriblerus Club," (Sanders 303) a gathering of like-minded intellectuals, committed to "debunk pretensions to 'false tastes in learning'" (Sanders 303). Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* proved popular, primarily for its lending from English folk and use of ballad tunes.

This opera, called "Newgate Pastoral," explored the corrupt underworld of criminals and suggested parallels between the cunning and corrupt ways of politicians. Ballad operas gained popularity during the period and continued to captivate audiences for quite some time.

Activities:

● Note down the reasons for the failure of tragedy in the eighteenth century.

● List the members of the Scriblerus Club.

● Watch John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* on You Tube for an understanding of the way an opera is performed. Click on the link:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExD1QqUrHF4&list=PLakKZQsjgrg BbjYFrL0h21fuzGv_IqXBK&index=2.

3.11.7. Anti-sentimental Comedies or the 'Laughing Comedies'

The mid-eighteenth century saw a growing reaction against the exhibition of sentimentality on stage. The Sentimental Comedies allegedly were so high on emotions, that they verged on tragedies, evoking sympathetic tears instead of laughter. The purpose of comedy was to evoke satiric laughter and the sentimental comedies marred this spirit of comedies. After William Congreve's (1670-1729) brilliant comedy, *The Way of the World* (1700), the age saw a dearth of satiric comedies. Congreve's comedy allowed "both true wit and genuine feeling, for social satire and the establishment of marital alliances based on tenderness rather than convenience" (Sanders 273). The playwrights opposing the sentimental tendencies in drama, attempted to resurrect the satirical and witty aspects of comedies. Oliver Goldsmith (*c.* 1730-74), the major critic of Sentimental Comedies, belonged to the important "Literary Club," "first formed in 1764 at the suggestion of the painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds" (Sanders 333). It later expanded to include actor David Garrick (1717-79) (Sanders 333). Goldsmith sharply distinguished between the 'laughing comedies and sentimental comedies' in his "An Essay on the Theatre" (1773). Goldsmith reminded his readers that the objective of a comedy was to depict the follies and frailties of human nature rather than to highlight noble human traits. Comedies that portrayed human frailties were intended for a playwright's satirical insults, eventually eliciting laughter at such foibles. Goldsmith aimed to resurrect

the laughing comedies by satirising society's manners, which he believed was the true goal of comedy. Goldsmith's critical views in the "Essay" were likely to have been targeted against his contemporary Richard Cumberland's (1732-1811) sentimental comedies – *The West Indian* (1772) and *The Fashionable Lover* (1772). Goldsmith's first play, *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768), met moderate stage success. In the preface to the printed version of *The Good-Natur'd Man*, Goldsmith expressed his intention to venture into laughing comedies, instead of presenting 'genteel comedies.' He contended that higher comedies had banished humour from the stage, much as French comedies had exiled Moliere's humour from theatres. Goldsmith did not hesitate to express his disappointment with the moderate success of his comedy and the continued popularity of Sentimental Comedies. He attempted to bring humour and laughter back to the stage by presenting the 'new comedy of manners' or Anti-sentimental Comedies.

Goldsmith's next play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) proved to be a huge success, and with this play, the comedies of the eighteenth century took an anti-sentimental turn. The play presented Marlow, the hero of the play, as a bashful character, who could merely speak properly in the company of decent women. However, his behaviour was diametrically opposite when accompanied by women of lower ranks. This idiosyncrasy of Marlow's character led to the 'mistakes of the night.' Marlow mistook his father-in-law's residence for an inn and his prospective bride as the maid of the inn. The play's plot revolved around how Miss Kate Hardcastle pretended to stoop in rank to win over her future husband, Marlow. Reacting against the 'genteel comedy,' Goldsmith employed characters that caricatured the sentimental characters and their overtly sentimental behaviours. Though She *Stoops to Conquer* was criticised for employing farcical exaggerations, in a large sense it represented a "natural comedy" for it neither had the "artificial constraint of conventional comedy of manners" nor "the self-conscious dictum of sentimental comedy" (Nettleton 286). The comedy quite vividly demonstrated Goldsmith's vehement reaction against Sentimental Comedies.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), Goldsmith's fellow Irishman, extended the tradition of laughing comedies in the eighteenth century. The plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan revealed "a newly refined pleasure in the devices" and "the amatory intrigues" (Sanders 331). Sheridan's *The Critic* (1779) ridiculed the 'genteel comedy' for its conversion of theatre into a 'school of morality.' In *The Rivals* (1775) Sheridan

drew on the tropes of Restoration comedy, like the "booby squire and the father who requires 'absolute' obedience" (Sanders 332). Sheridan's witty dialogues and constructive plot perfected the art of writing a comedy in the eighteenth century. His play had a troubled couple facing the older generation's authority. The character of Mrs Malaprop was a caricature who constantly misquoted and used wrong proverbs. His next play, *A School for Scandal* (1777) was well-knit with a complex plot. The plot was based on two brothers – one was a sentimental villain and the other was a generous libertine. The comedy exposed the superficiality, disguises, and hypocrisy of society with its witty language. Sheridan's well-executed dramas unmasking the hypocrisies of the age presented the reality of the late eighteenth century.

Activities:

● Read the section on "Goldsmith and Sheridan: The New 'Comedy of Manners'" (pp. 329-333) from Andrew Sander's *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (2005).

● Prepare PPT presentations on the "Growth of Anti-sentimental Comedies;" "Goldsmith's Reaction Against the Sentimental Comedies;" "Differences between Sentimental Comedies and Anti-sentimental Comedies;" and "Revival of the 'New Comedy of Manners.'"

● Conduct quick research on French playwright Moliere and his influence on the British stage in the eighteenth century.

● Watch the TV adaptation of Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* on You Tube:http://bit.ly/Stoops-To-Conquer

● Watch the 1985 BBC adaptation of Richard Sheridan's *The Rivals* on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc6edQHwRII.

● Prepare a list of the eighteenth-century British playwrights discussed in this unit.

● Consult some relevant books on the History of English Literature and internet sources to prepare a list of eighteenth-century British playwrights who have NOT been discussed in this unit. Mention their lifetime and some of their plays.

3.11.8. Summing Up

This unit has focused on eighteenth century British drama and the developments that occurred on the British stage. The unit begins by introducing the learners to the most significant political events of the time. It then delves into the Enlightenment philosophy, which emerged as the dominant intellectual force of the era. The century saw a rise in sentimentality, contrasting with the Restoration Age's licentiousness and extra vagance. These opposing tendencies resulted in the development of Sentimental Comedy. Tragedies and ballad operas continued to exist alongside Sentimental Comedies, but tragedies failed to captivate audiences. The explicit display of emotions on stage marred the essence of comedies, leading to the emergence of anti-sentimental comedies. Irish playwrights Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan principally responded against Sentimental Comedies by reviving comedies of laughter on the British stage in the eighteenth century.

3.11.9. Self-Assessment Questions

Long Questions (10 marks):

1. How did Sentimental drama emerge during the eighteenth century ? Discuss the key influences that led to the development of Sentimental Drama.

2. Elaborate on the main exponents of Sentimental Comedies and their role in shaping the dramatic practices of the eighteenth century.

3. Elucidate the reasons that contributed to the decline of Sentimental Comedies and the rise of Anti-sentimental Comedies.

4. Write a note on the key figures of Anti-sentimental Comedies or 'Laughing Comedies'.

5. Elaborate on the main exponents of tragedy in eighteenth-century Britain.

Mid-length Questions (5 marks):

1. Write a short note on the ideology of Enlightenment.

2. What led to the reaction against the Restoration Comedy of Manners in the Eighteenth Century ?

3. Differentiate between Sentimental Comedies and Anti-sentimental Comedies.

4. Why are Anti-sentimental Comedies called the 'new comedy of manners'?

5. Write a short note on Domestic Tragedies.

6. Mention the key exponents of Ballad Opera and how the genre contributed to the eighteenth-century British stage.

7. Assess the reasons behind the failure of tragedy in the eighteenth century.

Short Questions (2 marks):

1. What is Glorious Revolution?

2. How did Jeremy Collier contribute to the development of sentimental comedy?

3. Why did Oliver Goldsmith want to revive the 'laughing comedy'?

4. Write on any one of the main plays written by Richard Sheridan.

5. In which prose works do Goldsmith and Sheridan critique the Sentimental Comedies?

6. Who are George Lillo and Susanna Centlivre?

7. What does *The Beggar's Opera* portray?

8. What is Scriblerus Club?

9. Write short notes on: *She Stoops to Conquer, The Rivals, A School for Scandal, The Tender Husband, The Beggar's Opera, The Way of the World, The Conscious Lovers*

3.11.10. Suggested Readings

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Unit – 12 ❑ Eighteenth-Century British Literature: Fictional and Non-fictional Prose

Structure

3.12.1. Objectives

This unit will primarily focus on the prose works of British literature written in the eighteenth century. The discussion will start with an attempt to understand the time scale of the period in terms of history and the literary trends that characterise eighteenth-century British literature. A brief study on the reasons behind the rise and development of English prose will include an analysis of ideas like 'Neo-classicism,' and terms such as 'Augustan Age' or the 'Age of Reason.' The unit intends to divide eighteenth-century English Literature into two parts — the age of Pope and the age of Dr Johnson. The study will cover an in-depth discussion of the significant prose writers, both fictional and non-fictional, under these sub-sections. Finally, it will discuss a few terms and ideas that would help us understand the characteristics of eighteenth-century British literature.

3.12.2. Introduction

Eighteenth century in the history of English literature is commonly called the Augustan Age, Neo-Classical Age, or the Age of Prose and Reason. These nomenclatures hint at the literary characteristics of this age and also point to the development of a particular literary type or genre. Generally, the eighteenth century refers to the years between 1701 and 1800. But from the literary point of view, the period covers the years between 1685 and 1815. This particular period witnessed massive social changes and revolutions including the French, American, and Haitian revolutions that brought radical changes to the social structures of the West. These social revolutions not only challenged the aristocratic system and endowed certain privileges to the common mass, but also tried to see and analyse society and life in the light of reason and logic. Precisely, the eighteenth century paved the way for modern life.

Against this social backdrop, the cultural and literary developments will undoubtedly be different from those of the previous ages. The eighteenth century was preceded by the Restoration Age with all its extravagance and libertinism. The restoration drama was a reaction against the Puritan ideologies that denied any kind of superfluity in literature. The eighteenth century was inaugurated with the Glorious Revolution (1688-89) which culminated in the dethroning of King Charles II and the accession of William and Mary. This change without any bloodshed put more faith in the Constitution and the role of Parliament. This inclination to political democracy sets the literary ethos of the age as the age of reason. For a better understanding of the rise, development, and history of eighteenth-century English literature, we can divide the age into two halves— the 1st half of the Age of Pope (1688-1744), and the 2nd half of the Age of Dr Johnson (1745-1798). Before going into the detailed discussion on the literary figures and their works of this age, it will be pertinent to browse through the literary characteristics of the eighteenth-century. This will help us to understand the trend and trajectory of the eighteenth-Century English literature.

The term "Long Eighteenth Century" refers to a natural historical period that extends beyond the traditional Calendar definition, which marks this era as occurring from 1700 to 1799 or 1701 to 1800. In contrast, the Long Eighteenth Century connects to a broader context of British and Western European history, spanning from the

Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Nine Years' War to the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815.

Sir John Robert Seeley, a notable liberal historian and political essayist, was one of the key proponents of the concept of the Long Eighteenth Century. His book, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (1914), supports this extended time frame. Additionally, a more social and global perspective of the Long Eighteenth Century encompasses an even broader range, extending from the Stuart Restoration in 1660 to the end of the Georgian era in 1837.

3.12.3. Literary Characteristics of the Age of Pope

- Eighteenth century experienced the domination of reason over emotion, focused on social convention rather than on individual beliefs, and gave more importance to form than content. All these characteristics remind us of Rome during the rule of Augustus Caesar when Rome was at the zenith of glory. The literary figures of eighteenth-century England like Pope, Addison, Burke, Swift, and Dr Johnson along with their works parallel that of Horace, Cicero, and Virgil, who took Roman literature to the peak of perfection. So, the eighteenth century in the history of English literature is often called the Augustan Age or the Neoclassical Age.

- It is noticeable from the literary trends of this period that rules and principles were more important for the writers, who were heavily influenced by the French literary figures like Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, often known simply as Boileau, and Nicolas Rapin who, in turn, found parallels in this insistence on the precise methods of writing poetry in the works of Aristotle and Horace.

- The period is also called the Age of Sense and Reason because the Age was more inclined to Boileau's ideal of good sense and enlightenment. The age was more focused on the dissemination of knowledge and enlightenment amongst the growing public. The advancement of the human mind was of supreme importance during the eighteenth century in England.

- Respectability and conformity were the ethos of the age. As there was no regard for overflowing imagination and boundless extravagance, the eighteenth-century philosophical outlook was rational, where there was least room for emotion and enthusiasm.

- The eighteenth-century English literature was highly indebted to French literature. Boileau, Rapin and their literary style were followed with utmost respect.

- Literature must follow nature— this was the basic philosophy of eighteenth--century literature. Pope was the main proponent of following Nature. But the idea of Nature in the Augustan Age was markedly different from that of Nature that was projected by the Romantics. The Augustans believed nature to be human nature ("The Proper study of mankind is man") and not the one that is found in the forest and meadows. Eighteenth century believed in the emulation of human nature and social manners in literature.

- Eighteenth-century literature emphasised the projection of the social follies and foibles. Literature became the interpretation of life in the context of its socio-political structure. Therefore, literature became more urbane and the coffee houses turned to the literary hubs of the society.

- All these literary characteristics point to the steady rise of prose in eighteenth-century English literature. Poetry of this period, in the words of Wordsworth, was gaudy, inane, lacked fine emotions and sensibilities, and was more inclined to deal with social and political issues. The supremacy of form over content, and the dominance of rules and principles were favourable for the prose form to flourish. Satire became the literary form of the time. As the literature of this age was inclined to deal with social follies and foibles, satire that intends to project and demean a social evil to correct it turns out to be the apt literary form of this age. Literary stalwarts of this age like Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift excelled in writing satires.

3.12.4. Literary Characteristics of the Age of Dr Johnson

The Age of Dr Johnson or the second half of the eighteenth century saw the transition from neo-classicism to romanticism that culminated with the publication of Thomson's *Seasons* in 1740. Therefore, the Age of Dr Johnson and the literary trends were experiencing certain changes which brought marked differences in the treatment of literature.

● The second half of the eighteenth century saw the minor renaissance that ultimately led to the revival of the Romantic Movement. The literature of this time focused on literary forms like Ballads and the practice of bringing out new editions of the older authors like Chaucer and Shakespeare were in vogue.

● There was the rise of the spirit of New Thinking, which was consummated in the works of Voltaire. This new spirit helped in the development of the Romantic Movement.

● The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed the rise of the historical literature. It developed in Scotland and was fostered by France. Edward Gibbon was the notable leader of this historical school.

● The greatest event of the eighteenth century was the rise of the novels which later became the most influential literary form of literature. Precisely, it can be said that the rise of the novel establishes the literary fact that the eighteenth century led the way to the modern period.

● The rise of the novel was closely associated with new realism. The novel as a literary form intended to draw a picture of domestic life. Novelists like Richardson and Fielding were more inclined to present a realistic picture of social life with touches of sympathy. This new ideal that combines the presentation of realistic pictures with humane perspectives was the exclusive gift of the second half of the eighteenth century to English literature.

Activities:

1. Consult any book on Literary Terms to have a clear idea of neoclassicism, the Augustan Age, long eighteenth century and the idea of nature.

2. Consult books on the history of English Literature to know the historical background and the social history of eighteenth-century England.

3.12.5. Prose Works of the Eighteenth Century I

In the previous section, we have seen that the eighteenth century experienced the steady rise of prose form—both fiction and non-fiction. This section will try to focus on the prose of the first half of the eighteenth century which is commonly

known as the age of the Pope. Though Alexander Pope was considered to be the literary leader of the period, we don't find any notable prose work written by him. The period witnessed some significant prose writers like Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, and John Bunyan, whose contributions took eighteenth-century fictional and non-fictional prose to its peak of glory. Steele and Addison also developed the periodical essays, one of the significant contributions of the century to the genre of Prose, which was later carried on by Dr Johnson through his *Ramblers* in the second half of this century.

Richard Steele (1672-729): Steele represented the transition from the Restoration Period to the Neo-classical Age and his work *The Christian Hero* (1701) is Augustan in all respects. Steele along with Joseph Addison brought into existence the Periodical Essays that later held the zeitgeist of the eighteenth century literature. In 1709 he started *The Tatler*, where he clearly states its purpose as "to expose the false art of life, to puff off the disgusts of cunning, variety and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our discourse and behaviour" (Herrig 138). Steele's tone in *The Tatler* is didactic and he desired to bring certain changes in human nature, which marks the true spirit of the century literature. Under the pseudonym of Issac Bickerstaff, Steele prescribed truth, honour, virtue, and innocence as the treasures of life. The Tatler had no political inclinations. After the publication of *The Tatler* was stopped, Steele along with Addison started *The Spectator*.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719): Addison's greatest contribution was the development of the periodical essays along with Richard Steele. Precisely, he took this particular genre to its perfection, which started with *The Tatler* and later on with *The Spectator* in 1711. The latter was different from the former in that *The Spectator* consisted of a single long essay, whereas *The Tatler* contained several essays. The principal objective of *The Spectator* was to present a true picture of contemporary society and to bring about social and moral reforms.

Addison was famous for his *Coverley Papers* in *The Spectator* which aimed at the portrayal of characters. It was this *Coverley Papers* that presented famous characters like Sir Roger de Coverley and Sir Andrew Freeport. These character sketches in periodical essays conceived the idea of the Novel that later dominated the literary space of eighteenth-century literature. Addison's style was neat, lucid, and conversational. It never became heavy with high-bound formalism, nor was

dilated with levity and license of common speech. Dr Johnson praised his style as an example of "middle style."

Jonathan Swift (1667-1731): Jonathan Swift was a notable literary figure of the Age of Pope and his fame mostly lies with his fictional works that were primarily satires. His prime literal motive was to satirise the follies and shortcomings of his style uniformly but differing in degree according to contents and situations. All his three great satires— *The Battle of Books*, published as part of the prolegomena to his *The Tale of a Tub* (1704), and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) have the same satirical tone, clarity, precision and conciseness. *The Battle of Books* compares the classical with the bees that collect sweetness and the modern with the spider that spins everything out of his inside. *The Tale of Tub* points at the excesses of the Catholics and the Puritans as seen from the perspective of the Anglican Church. His *Gulliver's Travels* is spread into four books and Swift's main motive in writing this has been expressed to Pope as "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man" (Sanders 285). The book tells the adventures of Gulliver to the land of Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and Houyhnhnmland. Gulliver's first two voyages satirise the manners and politics of Europe, the voyage to Laputa laughed at the philosophers, and the last voyage mocked the whole body of humanity.

Swift's prose style was characterised by clarity and precision, without any redundancy. He was not epigrammatic like the Pope and had the plasticity in form. He made no use of Latin words, for he was miles away from obscurity, but his vigour, directness, and conciseness made him the most powerful writer of his time.

John Arbuthnot (1667-1735): He was famous for his *The Art of Political Lying* (1712), where he followed Swift. His political work, *The History of John Bull* (1712) laughed at the war policy of the Whigs.

Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713): His real name was Anthony Ashley Cooper. His works show less interest in the politics of his time. He belonged to the aristocratic class and wanted to be a famous writer. His notable work is *Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times* (1711).

Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751): He was one of the greatest political figures of the Age of Pope and his works primarily reflected the Tory views. His significant works are *A Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism* (1736) and *The Idea of a Patriot King* (1738).

Activities:

1. Watch the animation movie *Gulliver's Travels* on YouTube.

2. Read essays by Addison and Steele to form an idea of the nature and content of the periodical essays.

3.12.6. Prose Works of the Eighteenth Century II

The second half of the eighteenth century which is commonly known as the Age of Transition points to the advent of changes in the treatment of poetry that was noticeable in the works of Thomson, Edward Young, Thomas Percy, Crabbe, Cowper or Gray, which culminated in the poetical works of William Blake. Drama in this period had a decline because of the introduction of lachrymose sentimental comedies. Later, dramatists like Goldsmith and Sheridan started the anti-sentimental school of drama, that somehow managed to revive the genre in this period. But this half of the eighteenth century saw the steady rise of prose works. If the rise of the novel can be marked as the most significant literary phenomenon of this period, mention has to be made of several other types of prose that contributed to a rich collection of 18th-century English prose work.

Types of prose works of this period:

Essay: The eighteenth century saw the practice of writing both periodical essays as well as personal essays. Steele and Addison were associated with periodical essays. On the other hand, Dr Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith wrote personal essays.

Critical prose: Dr Samuel Johnson was famous for his critical writings like *Lives of Poets* (1781) and *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765).

Biographical prose: James Boswell wrote the biography of Dr Samuel Johnson, who was considered the most prominent literary figure of this period.

Historical prose: Edward Gibbon, Hume and Robertson were the eighteenth-century prose writers who excelled in writing historical prose.

Letters and Memoirs: Letter writings and memoir writings came up as important segments of the eighteenth-century prose works. Horace Walpole, Lady Mary Montague, Earl of Chesterfield, and also Dr Johnson practised these forms of prose writing.

Political prose: Edmund Burke and Lord Bolingbroke were the prominent political writers of this period. Their prose works were rich in political insight and they presented contemporary political pictures.

Prose fiction: Prose fiction reaches the very peak of glory in the second half of the eighteenth century. The English novel got its very shape and form in the hands of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne— the four wheels of the English novel. On the other hand, writers like Anne Radcliffe, and Horace Walpole were writing gothic romances, which culminated in the works of Sir Walter Scott.

Some notable prose writers of this period:

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784): Popularly known as Dr. Johnson, he was undoubtedly the literary dictator of the eighteenth century. Precisely, the second half of the century is also known as the Age of Dr. Johnson. Despite having a very challenging childhood, Dr. Johnson was a voracious reader. Unfortunately, he had to leave Oxford University. He wrote poems, critical and personal essays, and a dictionary and also started two magazines—*The Rambler* and *The Idler*.

Dr. Johnson's magazines followed the tradition of *The Spectator* and dealt with a variety of relevant and serious issues of the time. His essays were didactic in tone and classical in spirit. These essays tried to bring the periodicals into relevance during the steady rise of the newspapers.

In 1749 Dr. Johnson started his *Dictionary of the English Language* and he took eight years to complete it. Though the work had many deficiencies, it seriously tried to maintain the purity of the English language from being carried away by Gallicized words.

Dr Johnson was successful in establishing himself as the literary critic of his time. He was from the judicial and dogmatic school of criticism that believed in giving verdicts according to one's understanding and perception. His critical works remind one of the neo-classical school of criticism. Two of Dr. Johnson's critical works deserve special mention—*The Lives of Poets*, and *Preface to Shakespeare*. *Lives of Poets* focuses on the lives and the poetical contributions of the English poets from Chaucer to Pope. In three volumes, Dr. Johnson discussed the life and works of fifty-two poets, where more emphasis was given to biography than criticism. His *Preface to Shakespeare* is, undoubtedly, a remarkable criticism of Shakespeare where he pointed out the obvious drawbacks of the author alongside

defending him against the charges that Shakespeare did not conform to the classical rules.

Dr. Johnson's prose style was lucid, virile and full of energy. Its greatest quality is individuality which probably characterises him as a transitional literary figure, who carries both the literary features of the eighteenth century as well as that of the Romantic period. His limitation as a critic was his prejudices. Johnson's prose style was often ridiculed as verbose and artificial which gave birth to the term 'Johnsonese.' The contribution of Dr. Johnson in the field of English literary prose is huge which makes him the literary leader of this period.

James Boswell (1740-1795): His name is well associated with the biography of Dr. Johnson. *Life of Dr. Johnson, LL.D* (1791) is considered the most notable biography in English literature. Published posthumously, the work sketches a complete picture of the most influential literary figure of the eighteenth century with all his faults and powers. The biography was full of conversations and anecdotes, which are generally not found in modern biographies.

The eighteenth Century has the contribution of two Scottish historians— David Hume and Robertson, and one English historian— Edward Gibbon.

David Hume (1711-1776): He was a notable historian and philosopher of the eighteenth century. His important works are *A Treatise of Human Nature: Essays, Moral and Political* (1739-40) and *The History of England* in six volumes. But he was not considered a trustworthy historian for his lack of exactitude. His primary objective was to go beyond the event, judge them and find out what they teach. His narrative style was swift and flowing which made him a popular literary historian of the time.

William Robertson (1721-1793): was a historian of greater merit than Hume. His precision and his pursuit of truth were his strengths as a historian. Robertson's main works are *The History of Scotland 1542-1603* (1759), *History of the Reign of Emperor Charles V* (1769), and *The History of America* (1777-1796). As a historian his outlook was philosophical.

Tobias Smollett (1721-1771): Though we know Tobias Smollett as a novelist, he also wrote *The History of England* (1758). His work is lively and penetrating which makes it interesting and gripping.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794): He is the greatest historian of England in the eighteenth century and his greatest contribution is *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1777) in six volumes. In this work, Gibbon presents the history of Rome from the second century to the end of the fifth and continues to cover the Byzantine Empire, until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Though the work captures the Roman history of a thousand years, in reality, it includes all the nations of Europe.

Edmund Burke (1729-177): History will remember this Irish orator, scholar, historian, and political writer for political and historical works. His philosophical writings include *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756) and *The Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). As a practical political thinker, his works were mainly concerned with the French and American Revolution and also Warren Hastings. Those works primarily focused on the contemporary socio-political issues. He was a great orator and he has some remarkable speeches to his credit which are considered as the gems of stateliness, political wisdom, and rhetorical power. His prose work was characterised by dignity, harmony, proportion, and logical structure. His rhetorical power was also forceful, declamatory, and amplified.

Though memoir literature was much more popular in France than in England, Horace Walpole's memoirs present a highly satirical picture of court life during the rule of George II. Letter writing was also in vogue during the eighteenth century. Lady Mary Maontgu, Horace Walpole, Robert Walpole and Philip Stanhope are prominent letter writers of the time. While Walpole's letters are marked by satirical elements, Stanhope's *Letters to His Son* (1774) contains his advice to his seven-year-old son, and is rich in his expression of personal views and the feelings of his heart.

3.12.7. Novel in the Eighteenth Century

The greatest literary phenomenon of the eighteenth century is undoubtedly the rise and development of novels, which later became the most prominent and powerful literary genre in all literatures across the world. The early instances of the novel can be traced back to medieval romances that tell fantastic stories of adventure and love. But romances were mainly written in verse. Boccaccio's *Decameron* is a collection of fine short stories in prose, which were known as

novels in Italian. *Don Quixote* by Cervantes also had qualities which later developed into the literary form of a novel. Malory's *Morte de Arthur* is the story of the legend of King Arthur and has certain qualities that later developed into the form of a novel. Some Elizabethan prose works of fiction have certain similarities with novels like Lyly's *Eupheus*, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*, or Sidney's *Arcadia*. The realistic elements that characterise the novel can be found in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* has certain elements that go with the literary form of a novel. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) can be considered the first English novel in the truest sense. It has certain similarities with the works of eighteenth-century novelists like Henry Fielding, which can be likened to the picaresque novels. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is also considered as a work of fiction.

The eighteenth century marked the steady rise and development of the novel for certain reasons which had its roots in the social, cultural, and political contexts of the time.

● The eighteenth century was the time for the decline of the aristocratic class and the subsequent rise of the bourgeoisie class. With the expansion of the British Empire, there was a flourish in business which resulted in the formation of a businessman or bourgeoisie class. Members of this class had wealth but lacked the social recognition like the aristocrats.

● Poetry and romance were meant for the finer taste of the courtly or the aristocratic class and the rising bourgeoisie couldn't identify with this genre. They understood the fact that without exposure to literature and culture, it is almost impossible to get social sanction. Naturally, they were in search of literary form.

● Moreover, most of them were not exposed to higher education; therefore, they wanted an easier literary form that would fit their life, living and culture. The loose and easy-going structure of the novel and the content of the early novels were easily identifiable by them. If Richardson is considered the first novelist of the eighteenth century, then his novel *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) has for its subject the story of a working-class girl and her struggle against the master class to gain social recognition. Precisely, almost all the early eighteenth-century novels deal with the struggle of the peripheral men and women to achieve social sanction and

recognition. All these made the new literary genre a favourite to the rising middle class.

Though novels in the eighteenth century started with the stories of struggle of the marginal men and women as in *Pamela or Clarissa Harlow* (1748), soon the protagonists of the novel turned out to be petty rogues or social outcasts. It was Fielding who not only parodied Richardson's *Pamela* in his *Joseph Andrews* (1742) but also gave the idea of the picaresque novel in his work *Tom Jones*, which later developed into *bildungsroman* or the developmental-autobiographical novel and subsequently into the development of an artist or the *kunstlerroman*. The history of the eighteenth century will remember the contribution of Laurence Sterne for his path-breaking work *Tristam Shandy* (1759), which is considered the forerunner in the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Tobias Smollett was famous for his novels dealing with the sea life. The Gothic novel, which was introduced in Germany, deals with horses and mystery. It was popularised in English by writers like Anne Radcliffe, and Horace Walpole. The history of novels in the eighteenth century remains incomplete without the mention of Oliver Goldsmith and his *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) who later became the model for writers of Victorian prose fiction. Dr Johnson also used the novelistic techniques in his *Rasselas* (1759). Fanny Burney marked the advent of the woman novelists in the eighteenth century with her *Evelina* in 1778.

The following section will discuss some notable novelists of the eighteenth century and their works.

Daniel Defoe (1661-1731): In the history of the English novel, the name Daniel Defoe will be ever remembered as the pathfinder, who gave the English novel its proper shape, and tone. His famous novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is held as the most popular work even today. The hero of the novel represents a wide range of ideas—ranging from adventure, and colonial imagination to the struggle of an outcast to get into the mainstream. Crusoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) is the story of social outcast, who struggles hard only to a mass wealth and social sanction. Interestingly, unlike the later protagonists of the picaresque novels, Moll is not just a social outcast, but a hardened criminal, who at the end manages to get a social recognition. This shift of character from a criminal to a marginal identity shows the development of the nature of picaresque novels in the eighteenth-century English literature.

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761): Samuel Richardson is considered to be the first novelist of the eighteenth century and his works primarily emphasise contemporary social life. His novels are free from romantic extravaganza and they aim to present the picture of middle-class life with sensibility and pathos. At times his narratives sound moralistic but that again fits with the egos of the rising middle class, who were his target readers. Richardson's notable works are *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753).

Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* is his first novel, written in the epistolary form. The novel is a series of letters that Pamela writes to her parents. It has for its protagonist, not a princess or a girl coming from a distinguished lineage, but a simple maidservant, who struggles and resists the attempts of seduction by the son of her mistress. It ends with the marriage proposal that comes from that person and she accepts it. Thus, the novel tells the story of a peripheral woman, who succeeds in getting social recognition and respect. Richardson's Pamela can be considered as the eighteenth-century picaresque novel written in the epistolary form.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754): His novels are marked by solid realism and plausible plots. Following the line of Richardson, he also presented the real picture of the contemporary time along with its follies and foibles. Most of his novels aim at reforming the social evils and their tone is moral. Irony, satire and ruthless criticism mark his narrative. Fielding's fame lies in his novels—*Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Jonathan Wilde* (1743), and *Tom Jones* (1749). A closer study of the characters and plots of his works will show that the protagonists of Fielding's novels shift from being hardened criminals to social outcasts, who aim to achieve social recognition and amass a smart wealth.

Tobias Smollett (1713-1768): His novels are marked by satire and caricatures and the characters are more or less waspish. The social picture presented in his novels is sarcastic and boisterous and is drawn towards evils and ugliness rather than goodness and faithfulness. Though his novels show his obsession with dirt and filth, they are marked by rich descriptive quality and narrative technique that give an unparallel picture of the sea life. Precisely, sea life has been dealt with singular expertise by Smollett that is almost rare in English literature. His fame as a novelist rests on *Roderick Random* (1748), *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot Greaves* (1762), and *Humphrey Clinker* (1771).

Laurence Sterne (1713-1768): He is probably the new and uncommon voice of the eighteenth century, who intended to give a new turn to the novel. Unlike his contemporaries, he rejected sentiment and sensation and resorted to reason and reflection. He introduced the impressionistic technique of storytelling in his novels which was later popularised and perfected by James Joyce in the Modern Age. Sterne's characters are humorous. His major works are *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent* (1767) and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768).

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774): Oliver Goldsmith introduced domestic life and the happy fireside as the subject of his novels. He wrote only one novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), a comedy of the domestic life. His works are characterised by idealised countryside and the narration of his novel is direct, simple where the principal character tells the story. Goldsmith's work induced pathetic veins in novels, with real-life characters, a little bit of satire, morality and reformative zeal.

3.12.8. Women Novelists

Any discussion on eighteenth-century novels remains incomplete without the mention of woman novelists like Jane Austen, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Aphra Behn, or Mary Wollstonecraft. Precisely, there were a considerable number of women novelists in the eighteenth century who contributed to the development of the genre. It is with them that the female cause or the women's issues became a prominent literary subject. Unlike the literature of the previous ages, where women appeared only through the male lens, the eighteenth-century women novelists brought to the fore their own stories in their language in the context of the social station where they are posited. This section will conclude with a brief browsing through some eighteenth-century women novelists along with their works.

Jane Austen (1775-1817): She is famous for her novels like *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) where she transcended the expectation of womanhood through her writing. Her novels give a true picture of the eighteenth-century social life seen through the female lens of her time.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797): She was more of a philosopher than a novelist. Along with eighteenth-century female thinkers like Mary Alcock and Priscilla Wakefield, she was a strong advocate for feminist causes. Apart from novels

Mary: A Fiction (1788) and *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), she also published treatises, history books, and children's books. *A Vindication for the Rights of Women* (1792) is her notable work, where she argues for women's rights and fights for equal status for both men and women.

Fanny Burney (1752-1840): Burney was one of the influential women writers of the eighteenth century. She wrote plays and novels, which were at times satirical in tone. Her satires later influenced writers like Jane Austen. Burney wrote several successful novels like *Evelina* (1778), *Cecelia* (1782), *Camilia* (1796) and *The Wanderer* (1814). Her works mainly present the aristocracy and the social structures of the English society of her times.

Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849): She was an Anglo-Irish writer and educator and probably the first realist writer in children's literature. Not only a novelist, she held critical views on various economic and social issues and had correspondence with the leading thinkers of her time like David Ricardo and Walter Scott. Her name is associated with her work *Castle Rackrant* (1800).

3.12.9. Concepts and Terms Associated with Eighteenth-Century Prose Writings

Now that we have discussed the important eighteenth-century English prose writers and their works, it would be helpful to know about some basic concepts and ideas related to English prose works of the period.

Neo-classicism:

It is a cultural trend that drew inspiration from the art and culture of classical antiquity. In the history of English literature, the eighteenth century is commonly known as the neo-classical or the Augustan Age (the name was given by Oliver Goldsmith), when most of the writers and artists intended to follow the classical tradition of the Roman Empire during the rule of Augustus Caesar. Therefore, the works of neo-classical writers and literary thinkers like Horace, Virgil, and Cicero were revived. Literature in this period was considered as an art, where form and structure were more important than emotion and expression of the content. Rules were emphasised upon more than inspiration. Thus, the literary artists of this period were more of a craftsman than an inspired artist. Neo-classicism believed in reason, judgement and decorum as the chief faculties of literature and art and its principal

aim is correctness. Alexander Pope was the chief proponent of neoclassicism in eighteenth-century England. Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and Oliver Goldsmith were some of the notable writers of this school. Dr Johnson was another neoclassical literary figure, who not only practised and matured neoclassicism in English literature but also ushered in the transition from the rigours of neo-classicism to the subjectivity of romanticism.

Nature:

Eighteenth-century English literature believed that 'nature' should be followed. Here, the concept of 'nature' is different from what it would be during the Romantic period. English literature of the period understood nature as the 'human nature' that is associated with the idea of surveying, discussing, and analysing human beings, their social locations, habits, practices, and behaviours in their variety and particularity. Alexander Pope thus writes, "The proper study of mankind is man."

Satire:

It is a composition in verse or prose that conveys a scathing attack or criticism of the human follies and frailties. The main objective of satire is correcting the follies both ethically and aesthetically. Satires are generally driven by a desire to reform. Eighteenth century literary works excelled in satire. Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele and other literary figures of this time were seriously engaged in writing satires. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is considered as the most mentionable of the satires in English literature of the period.

Epistolary Novel:

These novels are written in the form of letters. Epistolary novels were particularly popular in the eighteenth century. The novels written in the beginning were mostly epistolary. Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), and Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782) are some of the notable epistolary novels written in English and French. The plots of these novels are mostly episodic.

Picaresque Novels:

The term emerges from the Spanish word *picaro* which means a petty thief or a rogue. Picaresque novels tell the story of such a person or sometimes a servant

or a social outcast. The storyline of these novels tells how these peripheral men or women manage to get a respectable position in society and amass a considerable amount of wealth. Picaresque novels originated in sixteenth-century Spain. The earliest example of such a novel is the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1555). The two most famous Spanish authors of picaresque novels are Mateo Aleman, who wrote *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599-1604), and Francisco Quevedo, who is famous for his *La Vida del Buscon* (1626). In English literature, Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Fielding's *Jonathan Wilde* (1743), and Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) have picaresque elements. Thomas Mann's *Confessions of Felix Krull* (1954) is a recent example of a picaresque novel.

Bildungsroman:

It is a German word that means formation novel and is almost synonymous with the German word *Erziehungsroman* which means an 'upbringing' or an 'education' novel. Bildungsroman tells the story of a person from his/her childhood to maturity through various experiences and ups and downs of life. Therefore, it is a developmental autobiographical novel. Notable examples of English bildungsroman are Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816), Dicken's *David Copperfield* (1848-50), Meredith's *The Adventure of Henry Richmond* (1871) and Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903).

Kunstlerroman:

The German term generally means the artist's novel, where the artist is the central character and the novel intends to show how he/she develops into an artist from childhood to maturity. This kind of novel was very popular in Germany and it dates back to the end of the eighteenth century to the first half of the nineteenth century. In temperament, kunstlerroman goes with the romantic ethos where the subjective feeling of an artist is more important than the structures and form. In English literature, the most famous kunstleroman is James Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916).

3.12.10. Summing Up

This unit started with a discussion of the eighteenth century, its timeline and the important socio-historical events that helped to make the century a specific

period of literary history. The study moved on to the discussion and explanation of neo-classicism and its traits that characterise the literary trend of this period. A short discussion on the nomenclature 'Augustan Age' followed and the reasons behind such naming were discussed. As the primary objective of this unit was to focus on the literary prose works of the century, the whole study has been divided into two halves— the half or the Age of Pope, and the second half or the Age of Dr Johnson. The division has been based on two important literary figures of the two halves for the sake of understanding the literary traits and trends that characterise the literary works of these times.

The study of literary trends has been based on various ideas and concepts that were associated with the prose works of eighteenth-century England. The study of these concepts has been made in the context of the literary practices of this period. This section is followed by a detailed discussion of the literary figures and their works. The first half discusses the contribution of writers like Pope, Swift, Addison, and Steele, and also the minor writers like Shaftesbury, Arbuthnot, and Bolingbroke etc. Emphasis has been given to the study of periodical essays, satires, and historical writings. The study of the second half of the century starts with the classification of the various prose works practised in this period, followed by the discussion of the notable literary figures and their works. The list starts with Dr Johnson and moves on to writers like Burke and Edward Gibbon. The section ends with a detailed discussion on the rise and development of novels and an exhaustive study of the novelists of this period. There is a separate part on the women writers of the eighteenth century to show the rise of the feminist consciousness during this age of reason and rationality.

This section is followed by a study of the important ideas and concepts associated with eighteenth-century English prose like neo-classicism, satire, epistolary novels, bildungsroman, and kunstleroman. This brief discussion will help you to understand the tone and tenor of eighteenth-century English prose from all possible literary perspectives.

Activities:

1. Consult books on the History of English Literature and prepare a list of novelists, essayists and other prose writers of the period who have not been discussed in this unit.

2. Examine the term 'Augustan' in detail and consider the appropriateness of the term when applied to the eighteenth-century literature.

3. Read appropriate works to gather information about the classical writers who influenced the writers of the eighteenth century.

3.12.11. Self-Assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. What are the primary characteristics of eighteenth-century prose?

2. Assess the contribution of Alexander Pope to eighteenth-century prose.

3. Critically comment on the role of periodical essays in the development of eighteenth-century English prose.

4. Critically discuss the thematic aspects of eighteenth-century prose fiction.

5. Assess the contribution of Dr Johnson to English literature.

6. Critically discuss the rise the development of English novels in the eighteenth century.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. What do you understand by 'neo-classicism'?

2. Consider *Moll Flanders* as a picaresque novel of the early eighteenth century.

3. Comment on the contribution of Jonathan Swift as a satirist of the eighteenth century.

4. Critically assess the contribution of James Boswell as a biographer.

5. Write a short note on epistolary novel.

6. Assess the contribution of Mary Wollstonecraft.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Who called the eighteenth century the Augustan Age?

2. Name two important periodicals of the eighteenth-century England.

3. Name an important work by Dr Johnson. When was it published?

4. What is a 'bildungsroman'?

5. Name a kunstlerroman written in English.

6. Name two Spanish picaresque novels.

3.12.12. Suggested Readings

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Module – 4

British Literature in the Nineteenth Century

Unit – 13 ❑ The Romantic Age: Poetry

Structure

4.13.1. Objectives

This unit will introduce you to the British Romantic Poets and their works. The imaginative literature of the Age was a reaction to the preference for wit and rationality in the political and satirical writings of the Augustan or Neo-Classical Age., The Augustan Age was also known as the Age of Reason or the Age of Enlightenment. This unit will offer you some idea about how the romantic poets

moved away from the Neo-classical ideals and embraced a new poetics. This unit will give you a brief perspective of the socio-political changes that that took place during the Romantic Age. You will also be introduced to the Romantic poets and some of the significant genres of poetry that thrived during the era.

4.13.2. Introduction

The term 'Romanticism' has eluded rigid definitions. In fact, the word 'romantic' can be aptly associated with an individual's subjective feeling. Broadly, both terms 'Romanticism' and 'romantic' can refer to the writings that came after neoclassicism. Thus, Romanticism was a "new designation for poetry, opposed to the poetry of neoclassicism, and drawing its inspiration and models from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance" (Wellek 151-52). 'Romantic' gradually evolved as a term opposing 'classical,' and in Europe, August W. Schlegel and Madame de Stael were widely referred to as the propagators of this creed of thought (Wellek 151-52).

The critics, however, are not unanimous about when the period began and when it ended. Carter and Macrae observe, "Conventionally, the period begins in 1798, which saw the publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge of their *Lyrical Ballads*, and ends in 1832, a year which saw the death of Sir Walter Scott and the enactment by Parliament of the First Reform Bill" (217). But many critics believe that it started from 1789 when the French Revolution began and the Bastille was stormed. Sampson considers 1780-1830 to be the span of the literature of the Romantic Period.

However, most literary historians pinpoint 1798 as the beginning of the Romantic Age. In this unit we shall take this as the moment of the beginning of the Romantic Period. The year in fact saw the publication of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's collection of poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*. The poems delighted the readers with the familiar subjects that had long remained forgotten, expressed in overwhelmingly simple poetic language seldom found in a verse. The death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832 similarly marks the end of the era. By this time the contribution of the Romantic writers had dwindled, and the passing of the Reform Bill in the same year did away with the political inertia, exploitation and repression that England had experienced for so long. [Go to the introduction

of Module 4, Unit 4 (section 4.14.2) which lists some characteristic features of romanticism].

The Romantic Age is also known as the Age of Romantic Revival or the Return to Nature. The nomenclatures encourage a moment of introspection. We can rightly retrace our steps back to another significant period of English literary history – Elizabethan Age – when man's creative mind dared to thwart rules to attempt the unimaginable, as did the Romantics. To seek answers to some of the riddling queries, such as what made the Romantics do what they did or how their ideology differed from the writers of the preceding or succeeding ages, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the age spanning from 1798 to 1832.

Activities:

1. Recollect some of the major works of the Elizabethan writers that you have read. Try to find textual instances that might help you understand why the oeuvres are being called 'romantic'.

2. Look into the socio-political condition of England of the Neoclassical Age. How far were the conditions responsible for the ushering of the Romantic Age? Give Reasons.

4.13.3. Historical Background

Romanticism has its roots in the cultural movement and aesthetic practices in Germany around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Friedrich Schlegel, the chief proponent, fought for an artist's right to express his or her subjective feelings as opposed to the imitative style preferred by the French classicists, the enlightenment materialism of the French philosophers and the Universalist abstractions of the French rationalism.

Historians prefer to call it 'the Age of Revolution.' The American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the fall of Bastille (1789) were the two momentous events of the period. You may remember that the rage of the people against the British colonists in America and against the Bourbon dynasty in France caused the seismic events in the two countries. The world saw the rise of democracy and the demolition of autocratic rules. In 1790 Edmund Burke asserted, "Justa bella quibus necessaria" ("Wars are just to those to whom they are necessary") (28;

emphasis original). He claims revolution to be the only way to preserve the ancient, indisputable laws and liberties (28). Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) spoke of the intellectual cultures thriving in Paris before the revolution. However, simultaneously, it also anticipated that the republican spirit would take Europe by surge in the years to come. Although a revolution calls for a rapid and transformative socio-political change, the term may be broadly extended to include the social change seen in late eighteenth-century Britain. Industrialisation and agricultural modernisation brought a significant transformative change in the country's economic sphere.

René Wellek found that the literary writings associated with romanticism concentrate on three distinctive attributes – imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world and symbol and myth for poetic style (161). It is true that philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau influenced the new generation of writers. They distrusted reason and were eager to redefine the intellectual and political ideologies laid down by their predecessors. The Age became distinctive as the writers heard the mystic call beyond the mundane reality, spurred by their imagination, they looked towards Nature for inspiration, heard voices from the past (whether it is in Keats' Hellenism or Coleridge's Medievalism), and empathised with the miserable and the downtrodden. Inspired by humanism, poets such as Wordsworth and Shelley spoke about the peasants, reapers, leech gatherers, shepherds and labourers, in short about the ordinary people.

Now that we have briefly seen some of the notable features of English Romanticism, let me introduce you to some poets whose poems and philosophies would enrich your aesthetic experience.

Activities:

1. Attempt a brief reading of German and French Romanticism and relate it to the advent of English Romanticism.

2. Try to look into the changes in the living condition of the English people brought in by the Industrial Revolution. What was its impact on the writers of the Romantic Age?

3. Read a neoclassical poem and a romantic poem side by side. Make a table to note how one differs from the other in terms of their language, images, theme and philosophy.

4. Consult relevant sources to write brief notes on the following: (a) Friedrich Schlegel; (b) French classicists; (c) enlightenment materialism; (d) Voltaire; (e) Rousseau

4.13.4. The Romantic Poets

Romantic poetry, in many aspects, differed from neoclassical poetry. The shift from preferring one style of writing to another was relatively gradual rather than sudden; the stage was gradually prepared for the advent of the Romantic poets. This was facilitated by a group of poets who are often heralded as the Transitional or pre-Romantic poets or the precursors of Romanticism. To have a comprehensive understanding of the poetry of the period, let us roughly categorise the poets under four broad heads: the pre-romantics or the precursors of Romanticism;, the first wave of romantic poets or the senior poets or the lake poets; and finally, the second wave of romantic poets or the late romantic poets.

4.13.4.1. The Pre-Romantics or The Precursors of Romanticism

Although it was Alexander Pope who said that "the proper study of mankind is man," the sensitivity and sympathetic understanding of the human condition became pronounced in the writers such as James Thomson, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Percy, Thomas Chatterton, James Macpherson, Thomas Gray, William Collins, William Cowper, George Crabbe, Robert Burns and William Blake. They are also known as the Transitional poets. Whether we read Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770) or Gray's *Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard* (1751), the sense of dull melancholy evident in Collin's "Ode to Evening" (1757) sensitises us to the appalling reality of human existence in the late eighteenth century England. We can detect a subjective reflection on the part of the poets, and Nature becomes a pervading presence that indicates ruin, sadness, and destruction. Robert Burns is often referred to as the 'Heaven-taught plowman.' He chose the northern dialect of English spoken by Scottish peasants to write his poems. He brought in the elements of folk in literary writings and prepared the stage for the English lyric poets like William Wordsworth. While reading his poetry, one cannot help admiring how he proved that the language really spoken by the common man, as Wordsworth puts it in his "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*, can be a poetic diction. Apart from the works mentioned above, Thompson's *The Seasons* (1730), Burns' "To a Mouse"

(1785) and Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794) also made a significant contribution on the Romantic literature that was to come later.

4.13.4.2. The Early Romantic Poets

With the transitional poets the heroic couplets lost its glory and they experimented with other metrical verse forms. They emphasised individuality and democratic ideals, which was the spirit of the age. The senior poets are William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey. The beauty of lyrical poetry is intensely felt when one reads Wordsworth's glorification of Nature, portrayal of the pastoral space or of the ordinary village folks striving to earn their daily bread. Coleridge is best enjoyed for his representation of the strange and bizarre world of the supernatural. The backdrop is distinctly marked by an atmosphere of the remote medieval world or it introduces an imaginary, unexplainable realm in which the readers submerge readily, suspending their logic and belief in the rational. Southey was equally dedicated to penning picturesque details and creating exotic settings such as those of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Francis (later Lord) Jeffrey in *The Edinburgh Review*, published in August 1817 called William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey the poets of the 'Lake school' because they lived in the Lake District, which included Cumberland and Westmorland. Moreover, the landscape in Wordsworth's poems is that of the Lake District. Lord Byron had also previously called them 'Lakers.' Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" (1798), "The Solitary Reaper" (1807), and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1816) are some of the notable poems that we read even to this day.

4.13.4.3. The Late Romantic Poets

The second or younger generation includes John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, George Gordon Byron, and Leigh Hunt. The early poets were men of distinction. However, most of the poets who came later had a humble beginning. Keats, Hunt and Hazlitt had their origin in London, and they were often ignored or ridiculed as they struggled to establish themselves as poets. John Gibson Lockhart, who preferred to call himself 'the scorpion' and is popularly known for *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (1845), unsparingly attacked them in the

Blackwood's Magazine. He criticised their poems as 'the Cockney School of Poetry.' In the Preface to his parody *A Vision of Judgment* (1821), Robert Southey ridiculed Byron as an exponent of the 'satanic school' of poetry. The expression indicated that Byron was a 'rebel,' and that his followers were identified with the elements of rebellion. The character of Don Juan in his satirical epic poem "Don Juan" written between 1819 to 1824 is by far the best rebellious anti-hero that the poet had created. Shelley, for his revolutionary zeal, also came to be included as one of them. He symbolises the idyllic that man must aspire after. It would not be wrong to see Shelley fettered to the earth but decisively soars towards heaven (Scudder ix). The poems like "Ode to the West Wind" (1820), "To a Skylark" (1820) and the poetic drama *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama* (1820) fill the reader with the sense of power that Shelley intended to reveal through his poems. Matthew Arnold could not refrain from describing him as 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain' (203-4). Romanticism and classicism blended most perfectly in Keats' poems such as "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819), "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819), and "Ode to Autumn" (1820).

Activities:

1. Read a few poems by William Wordsworth where you find the backdrop of the Lake District and compare it with the pictures that you find of the Lake District in the late eighteenth century. Do you think that our poet was a Naturalistic or Symbolic painter using words instead of colours?

2. Satan was a rebel, and so also were the poets who were dubbed 'Satanic'. Briefly look into the lives, philosophies and writings of the poets and try to figure out if you think that they were a party to the Biblical Satan or Milton's Satan.

4.13.5. The Romantic Poetic Forms

Understanding of the poets can only be complete by looking into the poetic forms used by the poets and the poetic forms they used. Let us look into the poetic genres that thrived during the period.

If the Augustan Age was known for satire, the Romantic Age was the era when lyrical poetry thrived. The majority of the lyrical poems are short, although we do have some long lyrical poems attempted by the poets. Alongside the

spontaneity of the poetic diction, a listener cannot help but marvel at the intensity of emotions and feelings expressed by a poet lost deep in thought. The blending of perception, introspection and the spontaneity of emotion probably surpassed many of the lyrics previously written. We call them Nature poems. The poems portraying the surrounding landscapes slowly seep into the personal mindscape of the poets, and then widening into meditations on nature and human life. The poets generously use paradox and eulogise Nature, an ordinary shepherd, a child, a broken artefact, an insignificant songbird, a skylark in flight or the heartless mistress. Odes, sonnets, ballads, epics and romances are some of the popular poetic forms we will discuss to understand the poetic accomplishment of this period.

4.13.5.1. Ode

The Romantic Age is known for its exceptional odes. The etymology of 'ode' has its origin in Greece, denoting a song, a poem or a narrative sung by the minstrels. English odes followed the Horatian or the Pindaric tradition, but the Romantics did away with the triadic structure of the latter. Lines within a stanza, rhyme patterns and transitions from one stanza to another were innovated to suit their purpose. Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimation of Immortality" (1807), Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" (1820) and Shelley's "Ode to a West Wind" (1820) are a few well-known odes. Shelley makes a curious blending of a sonnet and an ode, with each fourteen-line stanza spreading across five sections. The energy of the wind swiftly shifts as images are unveiled in quick succession as one moves from one stanza to the next. In the odes, the poet addresses someone, be it an inanimate object of nature such as trees stars or flowers, natural phenomena, a supernatural entity or an abstraction. The poets often use apostrophes, shifting their focus from the listeners to the poem's persona or subject. Inanimate objects and abstract qualities are thus personified, and insignificant entities such as the little nightingale ("Ode to a Nightingale") or a broken Urn ("Ode on a Grecian Urn") move to the level of the symbolic. Paradoxes and enigmas enhance the subjectivity of the odes. The mind is baffled as it tries to grasp the crux hidden in Wordsworth, finding the evening a 'holy time is quiet as a Nun/ Breathless with adoration' ("It is a beauteous evening, calm and free" 359) or Keats hearing the unspoken voice of the urn 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, —that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know' ("Ode on a Grecian Urn" 222).

4.13.5.2. Sonnet

During the period the patterns of Petrarchan and the Shakespearean sonnets were adhered to, but not strictly. The romantic poets experimented with the forms, often innovating the rhyme schemes. One such instance is Wordsworth's River sonnets, which are thirty-three in number. The series of sonnets on "The River Duddon" (1829) may be taken together and read as a single poem. The river is symbolic, marking the passing of time. In "Ozymandias" (1818), Shelley fuses the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean sonnet form. The themes of the sonnets were also varied.

Issues such as politics, religion, technology, and pensive reflections became the subject of the sonnet. In "London, 1802," Wordsworth comments on the political condition of England; his poem "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways" (1833) points to the disruption of the natural beauty by modern inventions but sees technology as a progression required by the human civilisation and become a symbol of man's unquenchable thirst for innovation and discovery. Southey had also composed around six sonnets condemning the slave trade. A visit to the British museum inspired Shelley's "Ozymandias" (1818), and Keats' delight in reading Homer finds expression in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (1816).

4.13.5.3. Ballad

Comparatively, there were fewer ballads, but we must recognise the handful of ballads that were written during this time. Traditional folk or provincial ballads with their stories, songs, and dances have always been the favourite with the illiterate masses. The chorus sang the oral ballads, and musicality was enhanced through the refrain. The popular form contributed to the ballad stanza having alternating four and three-beat lines in a four-line stanza rhyming abab or abcb. In the late eighteenth century, there was a revival of interest in the ballads; the existing ones were collected in anthologies such as Thomas Percy's *Reliques of the Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802). However, literary ballads in the hands of Wordsworth and Coleridge received a new dimension. Philosophical introspection, feelings and emotions rather than the element of drama that was important in the traditional ballads were prioritised. The protagonists, such as the old Mariner in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," also reveal the movements of their thoughts. The ballad has its story

intact but becomes more of a lyrical poetry. Wordsworth's "Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman," Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," published in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), and Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819) are some of the significant ballads of the century.

4.13.5.4. Epic

Epics were attempted during the period, but those written were either unfinished or far below the standard of the magnanimous epic written by John Milton. Joseph Cottle's *Alfred* (1800) and John Thelwall's *The Hope of Albion or Edwin of Northumbria* (1801) take the readers back to the Anglo-Saxon Age. Wordsworth attempted *The Recluse* (1806) but left it unfinished; *The Excursion* (1814) spread across nine books containing philosophical dialogues written in blank verse and *The Prelude* (1850) tilted towards the poet's autobiographical reflection written in blank verse. Long pieces were attempted, but they could not burgeon into the grand narrative that an epic calls for. *The Fall of Jerusalem* had interested Coleridge. However, its only reminder is found as a reference in the fragmentary poem "Kubla Khan" (1816). We have fragments of Keats' *Fall of Hyperion, A Dream* (1856). Byron's *Don Juan* (1819) became a mock epic.

4.13.5.5. Romance

The Medieval Romances were well-known, and the Middle Ages became the backdrop for those written during that time. Wordsworth attempted *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1807), and Coleridge's fragmentary romance is Christabel (1797-1800). Keats was more successful in *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1820). Walter Scott wrote *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* (1808), the latter receiving more significant acclaim. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt* (1812) was the most popular among all the romances.

Some of the epics that were attempted also turned out to be romances. Shelley's *Laon and Cynthia* (1818) and Keats' *Endymion* (1818) may be mentioned. Shelley later renamed his work *The Revolt of Islam*. While with Keats, we journey to the classical world of the Greek gods and the nymphs, with Shelley we glimpse Greece under the reign of the Ottoman Empire.

Activities:

1. Search for the meaning of the word "Byronic hero." Would you call him an anti-hero? Support with relevant instances from the texts where you come across such characters.

2. The Romantics miserably failed in writing the Epics. Think of some of the reasons that might be responsible for their failure.
   Watch a ballad performance and try reading an English ballad.

4.13.6. Relevance of the Romantic Poetry in Contemporary Times

Romantic poetry and the poetics upheld by the poets have often influenced the poets of succeeding generations. Ordinary language, or the language 'really used by men,' as Wordsworth puts it in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, has become the norm of contemporary poems. The dominance of natural landscape in the Romantic poems helps the listeners to retire and find solace from the smoky industrial outrage and the surge of urbanisation in England and elsewhere. The poets have often been called escapists, but ecocritics find in their poems the representation of how Nature is ransacked, exploited and destroyed to serve the greed of the capitalist economy. The poems egg on contemporary writers to search for inspiration; they provide an alternative space when social conditions are deplorable and depressing. The flights of imagination and the heights of the sublime in the poems are a touchstone to determining the excellence that poetry can attain.

In "On Westminster Bridge" (1963), Hughes de-pastoralises Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802". T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* (1922) refers to the game of dice played between Death and Life-in-Death on the board of the skeleton ship in Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Bob Perelman's "Fake Dream: The Library" (1998) also brings in Wordsworth's oeuvres in a library where the protagonist and his beloved are lost among dusty book stacks while searching for a quiet retreat to enjoy each other's company. Tom Clark's *Junkets on a Sad Planet: Scenes from the Life of John Keats* (1994) is a biography in blank verse or may be called a poetic novel exploring the suffering of Keats and his struggles to gain acceptance as a poet. A cluster of fictional letters is added to remind the reader of the haunting beauty of Keats' language. Amy Clampitt's poem "Voyages: A Homage to John Keats" (1985) and Andrew Motion's

poetic journal "Sailing to Italy" (1997) also directly evoke the life and writings of the poet. John Clare looms in the background of Derek Walcott's "The Bounty" (1997), an elegy written in memory of his mother. Among one of the multiple connotations associated with 'bounty', one refers to the intensity and vibrancy of Clare's poetic language that had inspired the Caribbean poet. Poetry apart, Christopher Ian Smith's short fantasy film *Arterial* (2013) and Michael Groom's *The Merciless Beauty* (2016) are two adaptations of Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Smith could not escape the power of Nature evoked by the poet and the allure of the archetypal mystery woman who is invoked in the poem (Grogan par. 9 and par.16). The latter also preferred Lake District as the backdrop to keep the spirit of Keats' poem.

Activities:

1. Read Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and watch adaptation of the poem in two films, links of which have been given below:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za8I78YkzqY and
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xza6Xx73Gvc
Prepare a list of similarities and differences between the original text and the screen text.

2. Listen to the reading of T. S. Eliot's Wasteland. Concentrate specifically on Section II, "A Game of Chess." List how Eliot uses intertextual elements in the poem. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLrk3ND0d48]

3. The delight in reading a poem, story or novel is different from the experience of watching somebody reading it. Do you feel that each of them is an experience of its kind, or do you feel one of them supersedes another in ways more than one? Write down your arguments.

4.13.7. Summing Up

Our discussion of Romantic poetry confirms that despite following some basic norms the poets practised the craft of writing poems in their own unique ways. We cannot generalise that the poems are all deification of Nature. This unit first provides you the historical background of the period and contextualised the Romantic poets and their poems. The Romantic poets have been divided into three categories–(a) Pre-Romantic Poets; (b) Early Romantic Poets; and (c) Later

Romantic Poets. The Unit thereafter proceeds to discuss the poetic forms/ genres in which the poets preferred to express their feelings. The corpus of poetry the poets of the period produced has enduring appeal. This has been discussed in a sub-unit. We hope that you have by now formed a concrete idea about the the Romantic Age as a whole.

4.13.8. Self-assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the characteristics of the Romantic Age.

2. Attempt a short note on the different genres of poems popular in the Romantic Age.

3. The Romantic period is the age of lyrical poetry. Give your argument in favour or against the statement.

4. Briefly discuss the significance of Romantic poetry in contemporary times.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. Distinguish between Neoclassicism and Romanticism.

2. Explain the concept of 'Return to Nature' and its relevance, associating it with the Romantic Age.

3. What is the difference between the early and younger Romantic poets?

4. Distinguish between a Ballad and an ode, substantiating it with appropriate examples.

5. How do the Romantic poems inspire creative artists in the contemporary world?

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Define Romanticism.

2. What is poetic diction?

3. Why is the Romantic Age also called the Age of Romantic Revival?

4. Mention Edward Gibbon's book on the Roman Empire? Why is it significant?

5. Who were the Lake Poets? Why were they called so?

6. Who wrote the *Life of Sir Walter Scott?*

7. What is a parody?

8. What is a lyric?

9. What derogatory affiliations were used to describe the younger generation of Romantic poets?

10. Who are the contemporary poets inspired by Romantic poetry?

4.13.9. Suggested Readings

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Unit – 14 ❑ The Romantic Age: Fictional and Non-fictional Prose

Structure

4.14.1. Objectives

The objective of this unit is to provide you with a brief background on the prose writing of the Romantic Period in British literature. It will discuss not only the characteristic features of the prose writings of this period but also introduce you to the major fictional and non-fictional writers of this age. In this unit, we shall also explore the nature of their works and the style of their writing.

4.14.2. Introduction

The Romantic Age (1798-1837) began in the last decade of the eighteenth century which ushered in revolutionary changes everywhere in Europe due to French

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Revolution. After the Italian Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, French Revolution was perhaps the biggest event that conveyed messages of liberty, equality and fraternity. The ultimate message was that of humanism.

> This period of Romantic Triumph, or of the lives of its authors, coincides in time not by mere accident, with the period of the success of the French Revolution, the prolonged struggle of England and all Europe against Napoleon ..., and the subsequent years when in Continental Europe despotic government reasserted itself and sternly suppressed liberal hopes and uprising, while in England liberalism and democracy steadily doggedly gathered force until by the Reform Bll of 1832 political power was largely transferred from the former small governing oligarchy to the middle class. (Fletcher 223)

The first impact of the revolution was felt directly in the beginning of Romantic Revival. For the romantics, civilisation was an artificial and mechanical apartheid from which man has to break free. We can classify romanticism as the spontaneous outbreak of spiritual exercise. The Romantics were the children of revolution. They were blessed with the idea of "Egalitarian Socialism" which refers to a movement "of the people, by the people and for the people."

Romantic age brought social, cultural, political and literary changes in Europe and it was partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and partly to the ideology of neo-classicism. It put emphasis on emotion, imagination and spontaneity. Although poetry of the Romantic Age is characterized mainly by subjectivity and visionary qualities, the prose of this age emphasises more on "egotism and enthusiasm" (Sinha 492). Romantic prose writers rejected the style of abstract prose writings of the eighteenth century and "searched after singularity and individuality in style" (Sinha 492). Although their approaches were against the sole emphasis on rationality and reason, they often look back to the history of the medieval times. Some of the characteristics of the Romantic Literature are :

1. Return to Nature

2. Emphasis on Imagination

3. Celebration of Individualism

4. Emphasis on liberty, equality and fraternity

5. Use of supernatural and spiritual elements

6. Emphasis on emotion over reason

7. Medievalism

8. Renascence of wonder

Activities:

1. To know more about Romanticism as a literary movement and the context of Romantic period, you are advised to consult the book entitled *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History* (2016) written by Carmen Casaliggi and Porscha Fermanis. It will help you understand both the literary and cultural history of romantic period.

2. Watch on the You Tube: "The Romantic Prose" (https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=eLaH5MZbGB4)

3. In addition, also flip through the book entitled *English Prose of the Romantic Period* by Carlyle Ferren MacIntyre (Hassell Street Press, 2011).

4. To know more about the context of Romantic Age, you can read the book *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* by Michael Ferber (2010, Oxford UP).

4.14.3. Essays and Essayists: Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincey

Besides poetry, the early nineteenth century is also remarkable for essays. The Romantic essays are completely different from those of the Augustan. Major characteristic features of romantic essays include autobiographical elements, individualism, flights of imagination, celebration of nature and spirituality. The essays criticised emphasis on rationalism and the impact of industrialisation on the human world. These essays are philosophical and reflective in nature. Symbols and images used in the essays make them unique. Use of humor, irony, pathos, and satire produce an exceptional effect on the readers. "The growth of the familiar essay, with its highly personal, often whimsical flaunting of the writer's tastes, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies, represents another aspect of the Romantic exploitation of personality" (Daiches 936).

Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

Charles Lamb was born in London in the year 1775. His father, John Lamb was an employ of a Bencher of the Inner Temple. He completed his initial education from the charity boarding school of Christ's Hospital where he met his lifelong friend S.T. Coleridge. Lamb worked as a clerk in the South Sea House and later joined the India House where he spent the rest of his working life. His sister Mary went mad and killed his mother. Lamb devoted his whole life to the wellbeing of his sister.

Lamb wrote essays under the pseudonym "Elia." Some of his essays appeared in *The London Magazine*. Lamb is famous for *Essays of Elia* (1823), *Last Essays of Elia* (1833) and *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) which he co-authored with his sister Mary Lamb. His essays are deeply personal and autobiographical in nature. Through his essays Lamb expresses his self and unlocks his heart.

> He is not the cultivated gentleman of leisure relaxing in easy chat; the circumstances of his personal life were harsh and even tragic; he was in large measure self-educated; his views on life and letters were worked out with an almost desperate geniality in order to preserve and develop a relish for the color and individuality of experience which for him was the only alternative to despair. (Daiches 936)

As a personal essayist Lamb employs several stylistic tools to represent his past and present, and tastes and temperament. Wit, humor, pathos, irony, and satire are some of the striking features of his essays. Lamb's art of characterisation is vivid. Some of his famous essays are "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," "Dream Children," "The Superannuated Man," "The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers," "A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig" and so on. In "Dream Children," Lamb is reminiscent in mood, recollecting his memories and sentiments associated with them through lyrical utterance. It provides us an outline sketch of Lamb's life but it is filled in with fictitious details. The unique quality of its style makes this essay appealing to the readers of all ages.

William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

William Hazlitt was born on 10th April 1778 in Maidstone, Kent in England. As an essayist, philosopher and critic, Hazlitt has placed himself in a remarkable

position in the history of English literature and language. His notable works include *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk or Original Essays on Men and Manners* (1821) and *The Spirit of the Age or Contemporary Portraits* (1824). He was both an artist and a critic who made a significant contribution to the field of literary criticism and essays. Hazlitt's essays are characterised by wit, humour, clarity of thought and keen observation. He "is a more vigorous and less mannered essayist than Lamb, an independent spirit who maintained his radicalism throughout his life, long after all the other eminent men of letters who had rejoiced in their youth in the French Revolution has modified or repudiated their early political idealism" (Daiches 938).

In his writing *The Spirit of the Age*, a collection of character sketches, he has talked about the persons with whom he was once acquainted. In his essays, he criticised some of the contemporary social reformers, thinkers, poets, essayists and politicians. The persons include S.T. Coleridge, Jereme Bentham, William Godwin, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and so on. His *Table Talk* is a collection of essays reflecting on multiple aspects of life. These essays are famous for their philosophical depth and style. *The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* analyses Shakespearean characters by highlighting their psychological depth and complexity. *The Round Table* is a collection of essays which Hazlitt co-authored with Legh Hunt. Besides essays, Hazlitt contributed several articles to *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Times* and *The London Magazine*.

> The range of subjects in Hazlitt's essays is greater than in Lamb's; he could write on painting as well as literature, on a prize-fight, on natural landscape, on going a journey, on "coffee-house politicians," as well as on more formal topics such as Milton's sonnets, Sir Joshua Reynold's Discourses, and the fear of death. He shared Lamb's interest in oddities of character but not Lamb's relish of oddity for its own sake. (Daiches 938)

Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)

Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859) who was a crucial figure in the Romantic movement, was born at Manchester, Lancashire in 1785. His essays "include highly imaginative reconstructions of historical scenes or incidents" (Daiches 941). He was famous for his autobiographical work *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* which

was published in 1821. In this particular work, he shares his own experiences of opium addiction. It also explores how such addiction deeply affects human psyche and the creative process. His style of writing is rich in details. His narratives are invested with philosophical ideas. "Thomas De Quincey (1785- 1859) spun literature out of his own life and emotions with little of Lamb's cultivated oddity or of Hazlitt's boisterous energy" (Daiches 940). His other important works include "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*" (1823), *The Avenger* (1830), *Recollections of the Lake Poets* (1834), *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845), and "The English Mail-Coach" (1849).

4.14.4. Literary Criticism and Critics: Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley

The corpus of literary criticism emerged as a response to neoclassical discursive positions and poetic practices. The French Revolution too moulded their poetic sensibilities. Their theoretical approaches were primarily based on their conviction in spontaneity of emotion, flights of imagination and love for nature.

William Wordsworth's *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800) is the first Romantic manifesto that paved the path of Romantic criticism. To Wordsworth, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings . . . recollected in tranquility" (57). He puts emphasis on the rustic characters and describes that the language of poetry should be the language of common men. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is another example of critical works where he describes the creative process of any literary work. He distinguishes 'fancy' from 'imagination.' He divides imagination into two categories – 'primary imagination' and 'secondary imagination.' He asserts that 'primary imagination' is possessed by all but 'secondary imagination' is only possessed by an artist. He further talks about differences between prose and poetry, and defines the 'esemplastic power of imagination' as one that sees the Whole behind the parts, the One behind the many; it moulds and unites many into One.

P.B. Shelley's essay "A Defence of Poetry" was published in the year 1821. It was written as a reaction to Thomas Love Peacock's "Four Ages of Poetry" (1820) where Peacock criticised both poetry and poets. Shelley puts emphasis on the importance of poetry and functions of poets in the society. He says, "Poets

are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (46). He further interprets two important functions of poetry – 'to teach' and 'to delight.' He also discusses how poetry acts in a divine manner.

Activities:

1. Watch on the YouTube: "Prose and Criticism in Romantic Period: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley (ENG)" by Vidya Mitra. (https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=vc3fZjcJ0Lk)

2. To know more about the context of Romantic Literary Criticism, you can read the book *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* edited by Stuart Curran (Cambridge University Press, 2011). You can particularly read the chapter entitled "Romanticism and the 'schools' of criticism and theory" by Jerrold E. Hogle.

4.14.5. Reviews and Magazines

Reviews and magazines, played a crucial role in creating discourses among the readers regarding the politics, history and literature of that period. "The business of the review was to discuss literary works of literature, art and science, to consider national policy and public events, to enlighten the readers upon these subjects and to praise or censure authors and statesmen" (Sinha 511). Some of the important review periodicals of this era are *The Edinburgh Review* (1802) and *The Quarterly Review* (1809). *The Edinburgh Review* was founded by Francis Jeffrey, Sidney Smith, Henry Brougham and Francis Horner. It supported Whig party and practised liberalism. *The Quarterly Review* "was started as Tory Counterblast" and its founding editor was William Gifford.

> These reviews provided much of the best practical criticism of the period; and if they sometimes showed themselves insensitive to literary values which later generations have come to take for granted (as in attacks on the Lake poets in both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*) they were for the most part committed to the view that literature was not an optional culture game but an integral part of civilization with a relation to life and an implication in moral ideas that you were paramount. (Daiches 943)

These two reviews were followed by three significant magazines of this period – *Blackwood's Edinburgh's Magazine, The London Magazine* and *Fraser's Magazine*. "The magazine . . . was a miscellany. Though it contained reviews and criticism of books, it did not confine itself to reviewing. The authors and poets sent original contributions to it. Its aim was the entertainment of its readers rather than the advocacy of views" (Sinha 511).

Blackwood's Edinburgh's Magazine was a monthly magazine, founded by Willam Blackwood in the year 1817. It was a rival to the Whig supported reviews and supported the Tory. These reviews and magazines helped refashioning the prose of the period to some extent.

Activities:

1. You can read the book *Romantic Prose Fiction* (2007) edited by Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel and Bernard Dieterle, and published by John Benjamins Publishing Company.

2. Watch on the You Tube "Fiction of the Romantic Period" by Promod K. Nayar, published by NPTEL-NOC IITM(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xqAF6W1bCg)

4.14.6. The Early Nineteenth-Century Novels

Three distinct types of novels emerged in the early part of the nineteenth century – the romantic novels, the novel of manners and the social novels. The notable novelists of this period include Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh. He completed his education from the High School of Edinburgh and later from the University of Edinburgh. Scott moved to novel-writing when he was at the peak of his fame as a narrative poet. In "1814 - Sir Walter Scott's Waverley" (https://digital.nls.uk) we find the following lines about his first novel *Waverely* (1814) written in three volumes :

> Scott helped to create a new national identity for Scotland through his poems and novels, and was a major figure in the international Romantic movement. This is his manuscript for *Waverley*, his first novel and

arguably the first ever historical novel when it was published in 1814. *Waverley* deals with themes that greatly interested and affected Scott's contemporaries and which continue to fascinate today: the lost cause of Jacobitism, the romance of the '45 Rebellion, and the depiction of societies (both Highland and Lowland) in the course of profound change. In addition to the importance of the novel as an interpretation of a historical process there was also its essential 'Scottishness', a fact that did much to make Scotland the popular theme in life, art, travel and fashion that it became in the Victorian age. Lord Cockburn recalled how the appearance of Waverley struck Edinburgh 'with an electric shock of delight'. Jane Austen, sensing her territory invaded by a new kind of writer, protested: 'Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones. It is not fair'. (Adv. MS. 1.1.0; https://digital.nls.uk/scotlandspages/timeline/1814.html)

His other novels include *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Black Dwarf and Old Morality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) and *The Legend of Montrose* (1819). All these novels primarily focus on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scotland. *The Waverly* novels brought Scott much fame. The novels like *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *Kenilworth* (1821) are his best-known works. In *Ivanhoe* Scott gives a vivid picture of medieval life in England. The novel is set against the backdrop of the twelve-century Anglo-Norman aggression. It portrays the legendary figures like Richard Coeur de Lion and Robinhood. His other novels include *The Monastery* (1820), *The Abbot* (1820), *The Pirate* (1822) and *The Talisman* (1825).

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

Jane Austen was the daughter of a Hampshire rector. She was born at Steventon in 1775. She was one of the renowned women novelists of the Romantic age. *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) was her first novel but it was published much later. It portrays the lives of middle and upper middle-class people. It is the most popular novel of Jane Austen. Elizabeth Bennet, the witty and charming heroine of the novel is prejudiced against the hero Darcy and has a pride of her rank and wealth. Her prejudice ultimately disappears and she married Darcy. *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) is the story of two sisters named Elinor and Marianne. In this novel she mocked

the sentimentalists of her age. Her other major works include *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and *Persuasion* (1818). Jane Austen's novels are remarkable for her outstanding art of characterisation. She introduced ordinary characters but they were convincingly alive. The characters were developed with minuteness and were sharply differentiated.

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849)

Miss Maria Edgeworth's novels are the perfect examples of the nineteenth-century Novels of Manners. Most of her novels were commonly set in Ireland. Her most well-known novels are *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Belinda* (1801) and *The Absentee* (1812). Her other novels include *Patronage* (1814), *Harrington* (1817) and *Ormond* (1817).

John Galt

John Galt who was born in Ayreshire spent most of his life as a businessman in London. He started producing a large amount of literary works after he settled in Scotland. Some of his novels are *The Ayshire Legatees or the Pringle Family* (1821), *The Annals of the Parish* (1821), *The Provost* (1822) and *The Entail or the Lairds of Grippy* (1823). The *Annals of the Parish* is his masterpiece. Galt's novels have a vigorous style with a mixture of humor and sympathy.

William Harrison Ainsworth

Ainsworth was born at Manchester where he completed his schooling. Some of his major works include *Sir John Chiverton* (1826), *Jack Sheppard* (1839), *The Tower of London* (1840), *Old St Paul's* (1841), *Winsor Castle* (1843), *The Constable of the Tower* (1816) etc. *Old St Paul's* portrays a faithful picture of London in the days of the Plague and the Great Fire.

Thomas Love Peacock

The son of a London businessman, Thomas Love Peacock was born at Weymouth. Peacock was an efficient employee of the East India Company which he joined in the year 1819. He acquired fame for his verse. Some of his famous novels are *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Melincourt* (1817), *the Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829), *Crotchet Castle* (1831) and the others.

Fanny Burney

Frances Burney who is known as Fanny Burney was born in Lynn Regis, England in 1752. Her notable works include *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782), *Camilia* (1798) and *The Wanderer* (1814). She is famous for using satire as a tool to express her ideas. Evelina is written in an epistolary form that satirises the contemporary society. It is one of the well-known and successful novels written by her. Her Cecilia is an excellent example of the novel of manners.

Gothic Fictions: Mary Shelley and Ann Radcliffe

Gothic novels create a unique genre in the Romantic Age. It blends various elements like supernaturalism, violence, horror, death, psychological conflicts, romance and the like. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) is considered as a pioneer of Gothic novel. She influences many Gothic writers including Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Walter Scott. Her famous works include *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Among these works, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* enjoys popular appreciation even today. Set against the background of sixteenth century Italy, the novel tells the story of Emily St. Aubert, the persecuted heroine, who encountered strange happenings.

Mary Shelley was born in London in the year 1797. She is famous for her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). It is written in an epistolary form. It is a gothic novel and also a great example of science fiction. The novel revolves around the story of Victor Frankenstein who is involved in scientific experimentation and creates a terrifying human-like creature that turns out to be a monster who torments him most.

4.14.7. The Early Nineteenth-Century Drama

Unlike poetry, the position of drama, in the early nineteenth century, was very neglected. Although most of the famous romantic writers tried to write drama, they failed to project the dramatic spirit and technical finesse. Drama was produced as a form of literary exercise and a new form of drama called 'closet drama' appeared.

Some of the noteworthy plays of this period are Southey's *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794), written collaboratively with S.T. Coleridge; Coleridge's *Remorse*

(1813) and Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (1842). Charls Lamb wrote a tragedy called *John Woodvil* (1802). Sir Walter Scott wrote *The House of Aspen* (1829) and *The Doom of Devorgoil* (1830). The Romantic poets like Shelley and Keats tried their hands at drama. Keats wrote *Otho the Great* (1819) and Shelley wrote *The Cenci* (1820) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). The Cenci narrates the story of sadistic Count Francesco Cenci who possessed an incestuous lust for his daughter named Beatrice. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is regarded as a dramatic lyric. The story of the play revolves around the conflict between Prometheus and Jupiter. The plays written by Lord Byron possess true literary genius. *Manfred* (1817), *The Two Foscari* (1821), *Cain* (1821), *Sardanapalus* (1821) are some of the plays written by him. His *Manfred* is the most renowned and successful play. The plays written by Thomas Lovell Beddoes are the examples of closet drama. His major works include *The Bride's Tragedy* (1822) and *Death's Jest Book*.

4.14.8. Other Prose Writers

Willam Godwin (1756-1836) was born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England. He was very much involved in political writings. He believed and practiced philosophy of three important schools: utilitarianism, anarchism and radicalism. His important works on political issues include *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793), *The Pantheon: Or, Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome* (1814) and the like. *Things as They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) is one of the finest novels he wrote.

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was born in Southgate, London, England. He was the co-founder of the journal *The Examiner*, editor of a quarterly magazine *The Reflector*, and also the editors of the two periodicals: *The Indicator* and *The Companion*.

William Savage Landor was born in Warwickshire, England. He is famous for his *Imaginary Conversations* (1824) which is an example of poetic prose.

Sydney Smith who was born in Essex helped in launching of *The Edinburgh Review*. His works include *Letters on the Subject of the Catholics, to my Brother Abraham, who Lives in the Country, by Peter Plymley* (1807-8) and *Wit and Wisdom* (1860). Francis Jeffrey who was born in Edinburgh also played an important role

as one of the founders of *The Edinburgh Review*. John G. Lockhart was an editor of *The Quarterly Review*. His best-known novels are *Valerius* (1821) and *Adam Blair* (1822), *The Trails of Margaret Lyndsay* (1823). He was the member of the Scottish Bar.

Some of the important historians belonging to this period are Henry Hallam, Henry Hart Milman and George Grote. Grote's *A History of Greece* (1846-56), Milman's *The History of the Jews* (1829) and *The History of Latin Christianity* (1854-55) are some of the significant historical writings.

4.14.9. Summing Up

It is quite evident from the above discussion that Romantic Prose contributed a lot to the history of English literature. The themes, characteristics and styles of the Romantic prose writers were unique and innovative. Although the British Romantic Age is known mainly for its poetry, novels and other forms of prose writings made their presence felt. Scott, as you have already read, broke new grounds by writing historical novels and projecting the Scottish presence prominently in the history of the British literature. Similarly, Jane Austen invoked the everyday lives of the ordinary British people and made the presence of strong women characters a notable feature of her works. Another striking phenomenon of the age is the emergence of critical writings explaining the theoretical dimensions of romantic writings. Essays of the Romantic period are no less spectacular. If you now read this unit along with the other units on Romantic Literature, you will have a comprehensive idea of the British Romantic Literature as a whole.

4.14.10. Self-assessment Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of the literature of the Romantic Period?

2. Discuss the main characteristics of literary criticism in the early part of nineteenth century.

3. Write a note on the impact of French Revolution on the literature of the early nineteenth century.

4. Critically comment on Charls Lamb's contribution to the prose literature of the eighteenth century.

5. Write an essay on the essayists of the Romantic Period.

6. Write a critical essay on the novels of the Romantic Period.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. Write a brief note on the early nineteenth-century Drama

2. Write a brief note on Walter Scott's portrayal of medieval life in England and Scotland in his novels.

3. Critically discuss Charls Lamb's essays.

4. Briefly comment on Jane Austen's novels.

5. Comment on the contribution of Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt's to the genre of romantic essay.

6. Critically evaluate the role of reviews and magazines and relate it to the growth of the romantic prose writing.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. How does Samuel Taylor Coleridge differentiate between primary imagination and secondary imagination in *Biographia Literaria*?

2. What does Wordsworth mean by "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings?"

3. Name some of the significant contributors of *The London Magazine*.

4. In which year was *The Quarterly Review* first published and who was its first editor?

5. "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" – what does Shelley mean by this in his *A Defence of Poetry*?

6. What does Coleridge mean by the term "esemplastic power of imagination"?

7. Write short notes on the following:
   Charles Lamb; William Hazlitt; Fanny Burney; Mary Shelley; Thomas De Quincey

4.14.11. Suggested Readings

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford UP, 1923.

Carter, Roland and John McRae. *The Penguin Guide to English Literature: Britain and Ireland*. Penguin Books, 1995.

-- -- --. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. Routledge, 1997.

Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Supernova Publishers, 1960.

Fletcher, Robert Huntington. *A History of English Literature*. R. G. Badger, 1916. Accessed on 12 September 2024. https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7201

Hudson, William Henry. *An Outline History of English Literature*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1999.

Long, J William. *English Literature Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English-Speaking World*. Megali, 1909.

Neill, S. Diana. *A Short History of the English Novel*. Jarrolds. 1951.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford UP, 2005.

Sinha, Manindra Nath. *An Introduction to the History of English Literature*. Shreedhar Prakashani, 2009.

Unit – 15 ❑ Victorian Age: Poetry

Structure

4.15.1. Objectives

This unit will explore the rich poetic corpus of Victorian poetry, spanning from 1837 to 1901. The poetry of the period which was marked by a rich interplay of themes and stylistic features was greatly influenced by contemporary socio-political landscape. This period was marked by rapid industrialisation, social change, and scientific advancements. The unit will try to provide a picture of the changing socio-cultural background against which the poets contributed their works. It will try to account for the emergence of a new school of poetry called Pre-Raphaelite Poetry and a new poetic genre known as 'dramatic monologue' and examine the poetic corpus of women poets. In short, it will try to offer insights into the rich complexities of the human experience vis-à-vis the socio-cultural changes that we come across in the wide canvas of Victorian poetry.

4.15.2. Introduction

Victorian poetry reflects a rich blend of Romanticism's lingering influence and a response to the rapid social, industrial, and scientific changes of the time. One of the key features of Victorian poetry is its preoccupation with morality and social issues. Poets such as Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, D.G. Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning frequently explored themes of duty, honour, and the struggle between good and evil. Critics of Victorian poetry often argue that it is overly sentimental and moralistic, lacking the complexity and ambiguity of later literary movements such as Modernism. By grappling with questions of morality and social responsibility, Victorian poets were able to engage with the pressing issues of their time in a way that still resonates with readers today. Furthermore, Victorian poetry is not limited to moralistic themes; it also explores the complexities of human emotion and experience. It offers valuable insights into the complexities of the human experience, grappling with questions of morality, social responsibility, and the depths of human emotion.

4.15.3. Victorian Poetry: Characteristic Features

The Victorian poet Robert Browning, the great 'champion of individualism' (Johnson 99), generally excelled in presenting the depraved psyche of human beings through the typification of individuals–such as the stereotypical lover in "Porphyria's Lover" or the betrayed wife in "The Laboratory" or the painter in "Andrea del Sarto." The speaker in "My Last Duchess," the Duke of Ferrara, is another strangely depraved character whose "wickedness is his immense attractiveness" (Langbaum 131). The famous literary critic Kirstie Blair in the book titled *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of Heart* (2006) observes: "The heart in the 19th century was often troped as feminine simply because of its associations with intense personal emotion and feeling rather than will or reason." (103) Blair in the book further observes that the Victorian poetry "constantly and self-consciously plays with metaphors of the heart" (4) and it

> evidently relies upon the earlier uses of the heart in literature, but it also presents a renewed concentration of interest in heart-centered imagery and, crucially, a shift in focus towards the pathological. Romantic poets had ensured that poetry would be the discourse most

associated with the sympathetic heart, written from the poet's heart to speak directly to that of the reader, based on principles of affect and communication. (6)

Consequently, there is a large gap in the formative meaning of Heart when one utters "My heart aches" from John Keats ("Ode to a Nightingale") and "She has a heart" from Robert Browning. As far as the cultural tapestry is concerned, the Victorian poetry lacks the freshness of the Romantics as well as the amorous sweetness of the Elizabethans. In a sense, one can anticipate that the 'waste land' is no longer a distant reality. If literature is considered to be a mirror of a society, the Victorian poetry reflects the uncertainties and paradoxes vis-à-vis the social, political and economic standpoint of the country. A subdued melancholic tone is prevalent in Alfred Tennyson's poetic pieces like "Ulysses," *In Memorium* (1850), "The Lady of Shallot" and "Tithonus;" there is always a sense of regret, loss and anxiety:

O SORROW, cruel fellowship,
> O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
> O sweet and bitter in a breath,
What whispers from thy lying lip! (*In Memorium*, III, 77)

Dealing with the imperial theme, "Ulysses" offers a cartography of the spirit of adventure, expansiveness of knowledge and experience. The spirit of the poem ("to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield") is crystalised in the line: "I cannot rest from travel" (70). "The Lady of Shallot" poeticises the Victorian notion of the confinement of women, indicating the social interplay of the 'private' space for women and the 'public' space of men. The question of identities of women becomes crucial in the masterpieces of the age – Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot;" Robert Browning's women characters, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's novel in verse *Aurora Leigh* (1857), the first female prelude which starts questioning the stereotypical gender roles. In Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott," for example, the protagonist is punished for her curiosity and desire for freedom, highlighting the restrictive social norms of the time. In Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market", the economic power through the ability to 'sell' has been invested upon the women through the formation of sisterhood who are put in the public life: "For there is no friend like a sister." (130) In the poem, the protagonist's temptation and redemption are depicted with vivid imagery and emotional depth. The poem explores the world of desire, temptation, and redemption. The text focuses on issues like

capitalism, commodity, marketability, exchange value and cultural materialism vis-à-vis the gendered space controlled by the typical patriarchal ideology of that time: "Man with the head and woman with the heart: / Man to command and woman to obey" (Tennyson, *The Princess* 439). The sense of nationalism is invoked in poems like *Idylls of the King.*

Robert Browning introduced the exploration of the "abnormal psychology" (Devane 126) of the poetic personae in his dramatic monologues. The dramatic monologue is a literary technique which reveals the speaker's self. The artist and his revelation with his surrounding world in "Fra Lippo Lippi" invites the readers to have a realisation of an artist's inherent aim to improve on nature:

> we're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
> And so they are better, painted – better to us,
> Which is the same thing. Art was given for that; (100)

Browning excels in the "psychological poetry" (Devane 38) where he represents reciprocal relationships between 'men' and 'women.' His monologues essentially reveal power play and captures diverse issues such as the charge against church (in "Fra Lippo Lippi"), the issue of gender politics, the unfaithful wife in "Andrea Del Sartro" and the suppressed wife in "Porphyria's Lover," and the revelation of the socio-pathetic psyche in "My Last Duchess."

Mysticism, latent sadism, intermixing of sensuality and spirituality, eroticism, clarity and moral seriousness were all there in the making of the Pre-Raphaelite poetry. Though it is part of Victorian age but it is far removed from the mainstream Victorian poetry of Tennyson, Browning and Hopkins. This so-called 'Fleshly School of Poetry' is basically built on symbolism and visual impressions carried through the medium of language:

> The blessed damozel leaned out
>   From the gold bar of heaven;
> Her eyes were deeper than the depth
>   Of waters stilled at even;
> She had three lilies in her hand,
> And the stars in her hair were seven.

(D.G. Rossetti, "The Blessed Damozel", 195)

In this way, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood can be seen as a precursor to the modernist revolution in art that would come later. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a revolutionary movement in art that challenged the conventions of the art world and created a new style that was both innovative and meaningful. Through their rejection of academic standards, their use of symbolism and allegory, and their emphasis on emotional expression, the Brotherhood paved the way for the development of modern poetry as well as art and had a lasting impact on the course of art history.

Activities:

Students are advised to watch the following and prepare brief notes on them:

1. "Victorian Poetry in English Literature: Characteristics & Themes." https:/ /www.ewriter29.com/english-literature/victorian-poetry/

2. "Characteristics of Victorian Poetry." https://www.englishfresher.com/2023/ 06/aspects-of-victorian-poetry/

3. "Some Features of Victorian Poetry: | Professor Florence S. Boos." https:/ /victorianfboos.studio.uiowa.edu/some-features-victorian-poetry

4. "Characteristics of Victorian Poetry." https://www.studocu.com/ca-es/ document/universitat-de-les-illes-balears/english-literature-ii-romantics-and-victorians/characteristics-of-victorian-poetry/41983434

5. "Victorian Poetry." https://www.lntcollege.ac.in/studymaterial/1707568881. pdf

6. "Victorian Poetry and Its Characteristics: Research Paper." https://ivypanda. com/essays/victorian-poetry-and-its-characteristics/

4.15.4. Major Victorian Poets

In this unit we will primarily discuss the contribution of the Victorian male poets as the there is a different Unit (4.15.5) entirely dedicated to the discussion on the contribution of the Victorian women poets.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) is often regarded as one of the most prominent Victorian poets, whose works reflect the values and concerns of the era. One of the key characteristics of Tennyson's poetry is his deep engagement with

nature. In poems such as "The Lotus Eaters" and "The Lady of Shalott," Tennyson portrays nature as a powerful and mysterious force that both inspires and terrifies. This reflects the Victorian fascination for the natural world, as well as the growing concern over the impact of industrialisation on the environment. Tennyson's vivid descriptions of landscapes and natural phenomena evoke a sense of awe and wonder, capturing the sublime beauty of the natural world. Furthermore, Tennyson's poetry often grapples with questions of faith and doubt, reflecting the religious uncertainties of the Victorian era. In poems like In *Memoriam* and "The Holy Grail," Tennyson explores the complexities of belief and the search for spiritual meaning in a rapidly changing world through the "literary trope of brokenheartedness" (Blair 80). His poems reflect the tension between traditional religious beliefs and the emerging scientific and philosophical ideas of the time, as well as the personal struggles of individuals trying to make sense of their place in the universe. Tennyson's poetry also reflects the Victorian preoccupation with the individual's role in society. In poems such as: Ulysses" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," Tennyson celebrates the heroism and courage of individuals who defy societal norms and expectations. These poems highlight the Victorian ideal of the self-made man, who rises above adversity and challenges to achieve greatness. Tennyson's portrayal of individual agency and autonomy resonated with the Victorian belief in progress and self-improvement, as well as the emphasis on individual responsibility and moral integrity.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) is often regarded as one of the most significant Victorian poets, known for his insightful and critical views on society and culture. His works, such as "Dover Beach" and "The Scholar Gipsy," reflect his concerns about the moral and spiritual decline of his time. One of the key aspects of Arnold's poetry is his exploration of the tension between tradition and modernity. In "Dover Beach," Arnold laments the loss of faith and the erosion of traditional values in the face of scientific and technological progress:

> The Sea of Faith
> Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
> Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
> But now I only hear
> Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar. (192)

This passage reflects the poet's belief that the modern world has lost its spiritual

moorings and is adrift in a sea of uncertainty. Arnold who considered poetry as 'a criticism of life' (61), captures the explicit sense of doubts, aridity, suffering, and the perpetual sadness in "Dover Beach": "And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night." (192) As the 'Sea of Faith' is no longer visible, Arnold proclaims in the poem, "Ah, love, let us be true/To one another!" Arnolds poetry also reflects his concern with the role of the individual in society. In "The Scholar Gipsy," he tells the story of a young scholar who abandons his studies to live a simple and contemplative life in the countryside. The poem celebrates the scholar's rejection of materialism and his quest for spiritual fulfillment, suggesting that true wisdom lies in communion with nature and the pursuit of higher ideals. In "The Buried Life," for example, Arnold explores the theme of inner conflict and the search for self-knowledge through a series of symbolic images and philosophical reflections. Through his exploration of tradition and modernity, the individual and the society, and the complexities of the human experience, Arnold's poetry continues to resonate with readers today.

Robert Browning (1812-1889) is widely regarded as one of the most prominent Victorian poets, known for his innovative use of dramatic monologues and exploration of complex psychological themes. One of the defining features of Victorian literature is its preoccupation with the individual's inner life and moral dilemmas. Browning's poetry exemplifies this focus, as he delves into the minds of his characters to explore their motivations, desires, and conflicts. In poems such as "My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover," Browning presents unreliable narrators who reveal their dark and twisted thoughts, challenging the reader to confront the complexities of human nature. Through his use of dramatic monologues, Browning creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy, allowing the reader to experience the inner turmoil of his characters first hand. In poems like "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church" and "The Laboratory," Browning critiques the hypocrisy and corruption of the ruling class, highlighting the injustices and inequalities of the Victorian society. By giving voice to marginalised or oppressed characters, Browning challenges the prevailing norms and values of his time, advocating for social change and reform. His use of intricate language, rich imagery, and subtle symbolism invites readers to engage with his work on multiple levels, uncovering new meanings and interpretations with each reading.

    Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) is often considered one of the most innovative and influential poets of the Victorian era. His unique style and use of language set him apart from his contemporaries, and his work continues to be studied and admired by scholars and readers alike. One of the defining features of Victorian poetry is its focus on nature and the natural world. Many Victorian poets, such as Lord Tennyson and Christina Rossetti, used nature as a source of inspiration and a way to explore themes of beauty, mortality, and spirituality. Hopkins, too, was deeply influenced by nature, but his approach to the natural world was unique. In his poetry, Hopkins sought to capture the essence of nature in all its complexity and diversity, using vivid imagery and innovative language to convey his vision. One of the ways in which Hopkins' poetry differs from that of his Victorian contemporaries is his use of what he called "sprung rhythm." Hopkins was a master of wordplay and alliteration, using sound and texture to create a sense of musicality in his verse. His poems are filled with striking images of the natural world, from the "dappled things" of "Pied Beauty" to the "blue-bleak embers" of "The Windhover". Through his use of language, Hopkins is able to evoke the beauty and wonder of the world around him, while also exploring deeper themes of faith, doubt, and the divine. By exploring the natural world in all its complexity and diversity, Hopkins invites readers to see the world in a new light and to appreciate the beauty and wonder that surrounds the reader.

> **Sprung rhythm** is a metrical system in which the number of stressed syllables in a line is fixed, but the number of unstressed syllables can vary. This creates a sense of energy and movement in Hopkins' poetry, as the rhythm mimics the natural cadences of speech and allows for a greater flexibility in line length and structure. This innovative use of rhythm and meter sets Hopkins apart from other Victorian poets and demonstrates his willingness to experiment with form and language.

    Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), through his adept use of symbol and allegory, drew on themes from medieval literature and mythology, using these sources to explore complex emotions and ideas. For example, in his poem "The Blessed Damozel," Rossetti uses the image of a woman waiting in heaven for her lover to explore themes of love, loss, and longing. This use of symbolism adds depth and richness to Rossetti's work, inviting readers to engage with his poetry on multiple levels. As a painter, Rossetti was known for his meticulous approach to composition and colour, creating works that are both visually stunning and

intellectually engaging. This commitment to craftsmanship is evident in his poetry as well, with Rossetti carefully selecting words and images to create poems that are both beautiful and thought-provoking. Despite his contributions to the art world, Rossetti's work has not been without controversy. Some critics have accused him of being overly sentimental or melodramatic, while others have questioned the sincerity of his religious beliefs. However, it is important to remember that Rossetti was working in a time of great social and cultural change, and his work reflects the anxieties and uncertainties of the Victorian era.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is often regarded as one of the most prominent Victorian poets, known for his exploration of themes such as nature, love, and the human condition. In many of his poems, Hardy portrays nature as a powerful and often indifferent force, reflecting the impact of growing industrialisation and urbanisation of the time. For example, in his poem "The Darkling Thrush," Hardy describes a bleak winter landscape that mirrors the sense of disillusionment and uncertainty felt by many Victorians in the face of rapid social changes. In poems like "Neutral Tones" and "The Ruined Maid," Hardy examines the complexities of romantic relationships, often highlighting the constraints and expectations placed on individuals by society. These themes of love and loss resonate with the Victorian preoccupation with morality and propriety, making Hardy's poetry a reflection of the social mores of his time. In poems like "Hap" and "The Convergence of the Twain," Hardy grapples with questions of fate, mortality, and the inevitability of suffering. These existential themes were prevalent in Victorian literature, reflecting the era's preoccupation with the fragility of human existence and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), a renowned British writer and poet, is often associated with the Victorian era due to his works that reflect the values and beliefs of the time. Kipling's poetry, in particular, embodies the characteristics of Victorian literature, such as a focus on morality, patriotism, and the exploration of the human condition. In works such as "If—" and "The White Man's Burden," Kipling grapples with questions of duty, honour, and responsibility, echoing the moral concerns of Victorian society. For example, in "If—," Kipling presents a series of moral imperatives that reflect the Victorian emphasis on self-discipline and stoicism. The poem's advice to "keep your head when all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you" resonates with the Victorian belief in the importance of maintaining

composure and moral integrity in the face of adversity. Kipling's language is often formal and elevated, reminiscent of the ornate and elaborate style characteristic of Victorian literature. For instance, in "The Ballad of East and West," Kipling employs a lyrical and rhythmic language that evokes the grandeur and melodrama of Victorian poetry. As a product of British imperialism, Kipling's works often reflect the imperialist attitudes prevalent in Victorian society. In poems such as "The White Man's Burden," Kipling espouses the idea of the "civilizing mission" of the British Empire, portraying the colonised peoples as in need of guidance and enlightenment from their European rulers. This imperialist ideology was a central tenet of Victorian thought, and Kipling's poetry serves as a reflection of the prevailing attitudes of the time.

Activities:

1. Consider how poets like Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Matthew Arnold address issues such as class inequality, the plight of the working class, the condition of women, and the impact of imperialism and industrialisation.

2. The rise of Darwinism and other scientific developments challenged traditional religious beliefs. How do poems such as Arnold's "Dover Beach" reflect the tension between faith and doubt in this era?

4.15.5. Emergence of Victorian Women Poets

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894) is widely regarded as one of the most important poets of the Victorian era. One of the key themes in Rossetti's poetry is the exploration of love and loss. In many of her poems, she grapples with the complexities of romantic relationships, often depicting love as a source of both joy and pain: "Remember me when I am gone away, /Gone far away into the silent land" ("Remember", 67). This poignant meditation on mortality and separation reflects the Victorian preoccupation with death and the afterlife. Rossetti's poetry often explores the role of women in society. As a female poet writing in a male-dominated literary world, Rossetti faced many challenges and obstacles. However, she used her poetry as a means of expressing her thoughts and feelings on issues such as gender inequality and the limitations placed on women in Victorian society. In her poem "Goblin Market," as we have seen earlier, Rossetti challenges

traditional gender roles by depicting women as strong and independent figures who are capable of resisting temptation and asserting their own agency. In addition to her exploration of love and gender, Rossetti's poetry also reflects the religious and moral concerns of the Victorian period. Many of her poems contain religious imagery and themes of sin, redemption, and salvation. In "In the Bleak Midwinter," Rossetti reflects on the birth of Christ and the significance of his sacrifice for humanity. This poem, like many of her other poems, demonstrates Rossetti's belief in the power of faith and the importance of living a moral and virtuous life.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) is often regarded as one of the most prominent Victorian poets, known for her powerful and emotional poetry that addressed themes of love, social justice, and spirituality. One of the key aspects of Browning's poetry that sets her apart from her contemporaries is her exploration of the complexities of love and relationships. In her famous collection *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Browning delves into the depths of romantic love, expressing both the ecstasy and agony that come with it. Through her use of vivid imagery and emotional language, Browning captures the intensity of human emotions in a way that is both relatable and timeless. In her poem "The Cry of the Children," Browning sheds light on the harsh realities faced by child labourers, calling attention to the need for social reform and compassion. By using her platform as a poet to advocate for social change, Browning demonstrated her commitment to using her art for a greater purpose. Browning's exploration of spirituality and faith in her poetry further showcases her depth as a poet. In works such as *Aurora Leigh*, Browning deals with questions of morality, redemption, and the divine, offering readers a glimpse into her own spiritual journey. Through her nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of these themes, Browning invites readers to reflect on their own beliefs and values, making her poetry both engaging and intellectually stimulating.

Emily Bronte (1818-1848) contributed significantly to the Victorian literary landscape. Despite her relatively small body of work, Bronte's poetry showcases her unique voice and perspective on the world around her. Bronte incorporates nature into her poetry, but in a more raw and untamed way. In her poem "The Night-Wind," Bronte describes the wind as a powerful force that cannot be controlled or tamed, reflecting the wild and unpredictable nature of the moors where she lived. This portrayal of nature as a force to be reckoned with is a departure from the more romanticised depictions found in other Victorian poetry. In her poem

"Remembrance," Bronte expresses the pain of losing a loved one and the enduring grief that follows; the poem's melancholic tone and vivid imagery evoke a sense of longing and nostalgia, capturing the intense emotions that were prevalent in Victorian society. Despite her adherence to certain Victorian conventions, Bronte also challenges traditional notions of femininity and domesticity in her poetry. In her poem "No Coward Soul is Mine," Bronte asserts her strength and independence, rejecting the idea that women should be passive and submissive. This defiance of gender norms was radical for the time and reflects Bronte's own rebellious spirit. By asserting her own agency and autonomy in her poetry, Bronte contests the restrictive gender roles that were prevalent in Victorian society. Through her exploration of nature, love, and loss, Bronte captures the essence of the Victorian era while also asserting her own unique voice and perspective.

4.15.6. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of young artists formed in 1848 in London, sought to challenge the conventions of the art world and create a new style that was both innovative and meaningful. Led by artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, and William Holman Hunt, the Brotherhood rejected the academic standards of the Royal Academy and instead looked to the art of the early Renaissance for inspiration. One of the key principles of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a rejection of the academic standards of the Royal Academy. The Brotherhood believed that the art of their time had become stale and formulaic, lacking the emotional depth and sincerity of earlier periods. In their manifesto, the Brotherhood declared that they aimed to "go back to the beginning" and create art that was true to nature and free from the constraints of tradition. Another important aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was their use of symbolism and allegory in their work. The Brotherhood believed that art should have a deeper meaning beyond mere representation, and they often used symbols and allegorical figures to convey complex ideas and emotions. For example, in Millais' painting "Ophelia," the figure of Ophelia floating in a river is a symbol of death and rebirth, while in Rossetti's painting "Beata Beatrix," the figure of Beatrice is a symbol of divine love and inspiration. This use of symbolism and allegory was a departure from the more literal and straightforward approach of academic art, and it helped to give the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's work a sense of depth and complexity.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood also had a significant impact on the development of modern art. Their rejection of academic standards and their use of symbolism and allegory paved the way for the development of new artistic movements such as Symbolism and Art Nouveau. The Brotherhood's emphasis on emotional expression and sincerity also foreshadowed the rise of Expressionism and other modernist movements in the early twentieth century.

Activities:

1. Go through this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYPArIpMRV4.

2. The Pre-Raphaelite poets used pen for pencil and pencil for pen. Do you agree to this critical standpoint? Make your own observation.

4.15.7. Dramatic Monologues

Dramatic monologue is a powerful form of poetry that allows for a deep exploration of character, emotion, and theme. It was initiated by John Donne, later Browning developed it and T.S. Eliot excelled it to perfection. One of the key strengths of dramatic monologue is its ability to give voice to a single character, allowing for a deep exploration of their thoughts, feelings, and motivations. By presenting a character's inner monologue in a dramatic form, poets can create a sense of intimacy and immediacy that draws readers in and allows them to empathise with the speaker. Essentially, a dramatic monologue is a speech without context, a narrative without explicit details, a character without a plot; all these represent an elliptic approach, strangely modern. Robert Longbaum in the essay "Sympathy versus Judgment" observes that Browning and Tennyson 'conceived' dramatic monologues as a "reaction against the romantic confessional style" (qtd. in Watson 127). By giving voice to a single character and exploring their inner thoughts and feelings in a dramatic form, poets can create a sense of intimacy and immediacy that draws readers in and allows them to empathise with the speaker. David Amigoni in *Victorian Literature* (2011) observes that in the corpus of Victorian literature the dramatic monologue became "an important space for 'giving voice' to subjectivities marginalized by the ascriptions of agency and power distributed by Victorian culture" (131). Alexander Smith's dramatic poem "A Life Drama" (1892) may be cited as an example. Moreover, Maureen Moran in Victorian *Literature and Culture* (2008) defines dramatic monologues as "a form in which a character

is revealed in conversation with an implied, silent listener" (73) and further observes that Browning's dramatic monologues like "My Last Duchess" "ironically expose the speaker's strategies of self-protection and self-deception in hiding or disguising particular feelings" (73). In spite of categorising Browning's poems as 'monologues,' they are in a sense also 'dialogic' because the narrator's discursive mode takes its shape through the contestation of the listener's report or reply. They are also 'double voiced' because, taking cue from the Russian philosopher Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), one can say, there is a sharp distinction between the narrator's own accent and the relative inflection. Thus, dramatic monologue is a valuable and effective literary device that can engage readers and convey complex ideas in a compelling way. Furthermore, dramatic monologue can be a powerful tool for exploring the complexities of human emotion and the nature of identity and selfhood.

Activity:

1. The Victorian period saw a range of poetic forms, from the sonnet and dramatic monologue to long narrative poems. What are the ways in which form (e.g., Browning's use of dramatic monologues) shapes the thematic concerns of the era?

4.15.8. Summing Up

In this unit we have looked back at the major Victorian poets, both male and female, and the various forms of poetry they produced. We have seen that poets such as Tennyson, Browning and Christina Rossetti, are often considered as precursors to modern poetry. In fact, as we have tried to point out, the themes, styles, and techniques employed by Victorian poets anticipate many of the characteristics of modern poetry. One of the key ways in which Victorian poetry anticipates modern poetry is its focus on individualism. Victorian poets often explored the inner workings of the human mind and emotions, delving into themes of love, loss, and identity. For example, Tennyson's poem "Ulysses" portrays the protagonist's desire for adventure and self-discovery, reflecting a sense of individualism and a rejection of societal norms. Similarly, Browning's dramatic monologues, such as "My Last Duchess," give voice to complex and often morally ambiguous characters, highlighting the complexities of human nature. In addition to its

exploration of individualism, Victorian poetry also anticipates modern poetry in its experimentation with form. Poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins and Algernon Charles Swinburne pushed the boundaries of traditional poetic forms, incorporating innovative rhyme schemes, meter, and imagery. Hopkins, for example, developed his own unique style of poetry known as "sprung rhythm," which avoided the strict metrical patterns of traditional verse in favour of a more natural and organic rhythm. This experimentation with form laid the ground work for the free verse and avant-garde poetry of the modernist movement. The themes, styles, and techniques employed by Victorian poets laid the foundation for the innovative and diverse poetry of the modernist and postmodernist movements. By examining the works of Victorian poets, we can gain a deeper understanding of the evolution of poetry and the ways in which it continues to shape and reflect our world even in Postcolonial time.

4.15.9. Self-Assessment Questions

Broad Answer Type Questions:

1. Comment on how Victorian poetry reflects the social and political issues of the time.

2. Write a critical essay on the major themes and concerns of Victorian poetry.

3. How did Victorian poets balance tradition and innovation? Elaborate your opinion with suitable examples.

4. What role does gender play in Victorian poetry? Give your considered opinion with relevant examples.

5. How do the Victorian poets engage with the Romantic legacy? Critically illustrate your response.

6. In what ways do Victorian poets explore the relationship between religion and science? Explain.

7. Write an essay on how nature is depicted in Victorian poetry.

8. What is the relationship between the individual and society in Victorian poetry? Give your considered opinion.

9. How do Victorian poets address issues of gender and women's roles ?

Mid-length-Answer Type Questions:

1. How do Victorian poets reflect the tension between faith and doubt ?

2. What role does industrialisation play in the themes of Victorian poetry ?

3. How is nature portrayed differently by Victorian poets compared to Romantics ?

4. How does Tennyson explore grief and loss in his poetry ?

5. What innovations did Robert Browning bring to the dramatic monologue ?

6. In what ways does Gerard Manley Hopkins use language and form to express religious faith ?

7. How does Victorian poetry depict the relationship between the individual and society ?

8. What are the key features of Matthew Arnold's poetic style ?

9. How do Victorian poets respond to the scientific advancements of their time ?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Who is A.H.H. in Tennyson's poetry ?

2. Define Dramatic Monologues.

3. Who is the author of *Men and Women* ?

4. Who initiated 'sprung rhythm' ?

5. Who are the Pre-Raphaelite poets ?

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Unit – 16 ❑ The Victorian Age: Fictional and Non-fictional Prose

Structure

4.16.1. Objectives

4.16.2. Introduction

4.16.3. Historical and Social Background

4.16.4. Victorian Fiction I

     4.16.4.1. Early Victorian Novels

     4.16.4.2. Late Victorian Novelists

     4.16.4.3. Women Novelists

4.16.5. Victorian Fiction II

     4.16.5.1. Victorian Science Fiction and Fantasy

     4.16.5.2. Victorian Detective Fiction

     4.16.5.3. Victorian Fantasy Literature

4.16.6. Victorian Non-Fictional Prose

     4.16.6.1. Sage Writing

     4.16.6.2. Religious Writing

     4.16.6.3. Political Writing

     4.16.6.4. Literary Criticism

     4.16.6.5. Scientific Writing

     4.16.6.6. Biographical and Autobiographical Writing

     4.16.6.7. Travel Writing

     4.16.6.8. Philosophical Writing

     4.16.6.9. Historical Writing

4.16.7. Summing Up

4.16.8. Self-assessment Questions

4.16.9. Suggested Readings

4.16.1. Objectives

This Unit makes you familiar with the prose writings of the Victorian Era. Victorian prose literature includes both fictional and non-fictional prose. The main objectives of this unit are to

- provide a comprehensive view of the social and historical background of the Victorian Period;

- acquaint you with the features of fictional and non-fictional prose of the period;

- identify various types of fictional and non-fictional prose;

- understand why prose writings, particularly novel writing, flourished during this age;

- make you reflect on why women novelists became important contributors to the growth of British novel;

- recognise major exponents of Victorian prose, both fictional and non-fictional;

- place some important texts in the contexts of writers' lives and contemporary historical, cultural and social conditions; and

- enable you to respond critically and analytically to the development of prose writings during the Victorian Age.

4.16.2. Introduction

Victorian literature was preeminently dominated by prose writings. You are already acquainted with the growth and development of English prose writings in the preceding units and you know the different forms of prose literature that emerged in different ages of the literary history of England. Study of prose writings also reveals the fact that they manifest diverse characteristics emerging from contemporary

social, cultural and political environment, and influenced by historical, scientific and other factors.

Victorian Age succeeded the Romantic Period (1790-1830; critics also offer slightly different years of beginning and closure of the period) which was a great age of poetry. Of course, there were eminent prose writers like Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincey, etc. in the Romantic Period. Romantic prose mostly bears the personal stamp of the author. Victorian prose, on the other hand, is mostly objective and attempted to please the public. Prose in the Romantic Period is very much imaginative and marked by elements like supernaturalism and mysticism. Writers were eager to escape the mundane reality and often their journey was solitary. The focus of Victorian prose is realism and everyday life. Unlike the elements of idealism in the prose writings of the Romantic Age, the prose works of the Victorian Age address directly social issues such as industrialisation, problems of factory workers, child labour, poverty, class conflicts, morality, materialistic mindset and so on.

Prose became immensely popular during the Victorian Period. It was influenced by rapid changes in cultural, social and political spheres. With the expansion of mass education, the middle class people got the scope to be educated and they found their aspirations, problems, domestic and social life being reflected in prose literature. Journals and periodicals provided ample space for long and complex stories of common people and prose writers became the true literary representatives of the age. It was an era of intellectual development and we have great thinkers who enriched the Victorian prose.Various forms of prose literature including novels, essays, philosophical writings, religious writings, detective fiction, scientific fiction, short stories, etc. developed during this period.

In this unit we shall discuss major genres of prose writings along with the eminent writers who contributed to the growth of Victorian prose literature. Fictional works are divided into two sections: Fiction I and Fiction II. Fiction I deals with Victorian novels with sub-sections, Early Victorian Novelists, Late Victorian Novelists and Victorian Women Novelists. Fiction II focuses on Detective Fiction, Scientific Fiction and other Fantasy Writings. The non-fiction group comprises Sage Writing, Religious Writing, Scientific Writing, Historical Writing, Literary Criticism, Political Writing, etc.

4.16.3. Historical and Social Background

Queen Victoria ascended the throne of England in 1837 and ruled the empire until her death in 1901. But the Victorian Period in the history of English literature usually also includes William IV's reign (1830-1837). During this age England witnessed great transformations caused by many factors such as industrialisation, abolition of slavery in the colonies, Parliamentary Reform, development of the railways, free trade, Chartist movement, scientific inventions and so on.

It was a period of rapid urbanisation, as well as of industrial, material and commercial growth. However, rapid industrialisation resulted in the exploitation of factory workers and underprivileged children. There was remarkable technological advancement. Mass production in factories, improvement of communication system, use of steam engine, telegraph and postal services, etc. brought significant changes in Victorian life. New scientific ideas and Darwin's epoch-making theory of evolution challenged the orthodox Christian faith. Common people faced spiritual crisis and conflict between science and religion. New theories questioned the existence of God and gave birth to Agnostics who believed that anything beyond this material phenomenon was impossible. Victorian society put emphasis on morality, proper behaviour and modesty of women.

Many acts of reformation took place in the political sphere. Introduction of Reform Act (1832) democratised the electoral system. Chartist movement (most intense between 1838 and 1848) was a political movement by the working class people who demanded a radical reform of the British Parliament. The slavery system was abolished in the British Empire in 1838.

Victorian society maintained a double standard that deprived the women of their rights. A woman was expected to play the role of "Angel in the House" and to preserve the moral values in domestic and social life. Men were considered to be the providers and women were to be homemakers. However, with the spread of education, women were not satisfied only as readers of male authors, they became outstanding writers also. We shall discuss elaborately the contribution of women novelists during this period in the sub-section 4.16.4.3. As students of Victorian literature you should also be familiar with Oxford Movement and the concept of Victorian Compromise.

Oxford Movement

From 1833 there started a religious movement within the Church of England and this is known as Oxford Movement. The immediate cause of the movement was the conflict between the state and the Church of England. There was a strong view that the Church must have an independent existence and a spiritual status. Leaders of the movement were John Henry Newman, Richard Hurrell Froude, John Keble and Edward Pusey. It is also known as "Tractarian Movement" since its propaganda was conducted through tracts mostly written by Newman and Keble.

Victorian Compromise

The term 'Victorian Compromise' refers to the contradictory ideas and attitudes in the Victorian society. Such contradictions were found in relations between religion and science, aristocracy and democracy, romanticism and realism, between individualism and collectivism. Conflicting attitudes were reflected in the writings of great authors like Tennyson, Browning, Dickens and others. Some of them believed in old faith and rejected new ideas, while some others sought for a compromise between the two. New scientific concepts such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution challenged the orthodox religious beliefs and it resulted into a conflict between science and religion. There were also combination of positive and negative attitudes, pessimism and optimism. Thus many Victorians sought for reconciliation between the opposites.

4.16.4. Victorian Fiction I

In this section we shall elaborately discuss Victorian novels and novelists. Among the fictional prose writings, the literary space in Victorian England was dominated by novels. Novels as a form of fiction had the same impact what poetry had in the Romantic Period or drama had during the Restoration. Novels addressed every issue, every dispute of social and domestic life. They became an integral part of the Victorian life as Anthony Trollope in 1870 comments, "Novels are in the hands of us all; from the Prime Minister down to the last appointed scullery maid" (qtd. in Cunningham 93).

There are several reasons for the immense popularity of novels during nineteenth century. The Victorian society was undergoing rapid changes because

of industrialisation and other social, cultural, political factors, already discussed insection 4.16.3. The novels written during this period focused on concerns and anxieties of common people, addressed isssues related to domestic and family life, dealt with social problems and topics like exploitation of factory workers, child labour, courtship, marriage, moral questions and so on. According to Cunningham, the novel as a genre "addresses itself directly to 'life' ....It tells stories, reworks the mundane material of everyday life into something significant, and (most nineteenth-century readers would add) it teaches moral lessons" (93). Novel became immensely popular during this age and it had wide acceptance among women who formed the majority of readership. John Sutherland estimates that between 1837 and 1901some 60,000 novels were published in Britain – roughly 20 percent of all book production (qtd.in Brantlinger1). The wide readership of Victorian novels was also determined by the serialised publication of long stories in periodicals and magazines. They provided an effective platform to the novel writers to reach out to larger number of educated people. Many novels were first published in these periodicals and magazines. Some such periodicals and magazines are *The Quarterly Review, The Edinburgh Review, The Westminster Review, Household Words, All the Year Round,* etc.

4.16.4.1. Early Victorian Novels

Charles John Huffham Dickens (1812-1870), a widely recognised novelist, is assuredly the "the master of the early Victorian novel" (Alexander 276). Born in 1812 in Portsmouth, he spent happy years of his boyhood at Chatham. This period was followed by intense misery when his father was imprisoned for debt in 1822. He had to join the blacking factory only at the age of twelve and Dickens recorded the bitter and humiliating experience of working here in *David Copperfield* (1850). He then studied in Wellington House Academy until 1827 and learned shorthand.

After working briefly as an office boy in a firm of lawyers he started writing news reports and also sketches. His first success as a writer came with the publication of *Sketches by Boz* (1836), a collection of sketches of life and manners. The extension of this form could be found in *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-1837), a comic novel which was originally planned as a series of sketches. With the publication of this work Dickens began his career as a novelist.

Dickens's novels often contain melodramatic elements. His novels record the

changes caused by industrial revolution in England. There are autobiographical ingredients in his novels. His novels also depict the circumstances of childhood and issue of child labour in Victorian England. Dickens had a deep sense of sympathy for the poor, for the people belonging to the lower middle class. He has portrayed the seamy sides of London life and the theme of urban life becomes the centre of many of his novels. According to Sanders, "Dickens's novels are multifarious, digressive and generous. In an important way, they reflect the nature of Victorian urban society with all its conflicts, disharmonies, its eccentricities and its constrictions, its energy and its extraordinary fertility, both physical and intellectual" (405).

Dickens has created many vivid, colourful and life-like characters who are remembered for their manners, physical features, clothes, habits, inclinations, speeches, etc. William Long has identified four different types of characters in Dickens's novels: first, "the innocent little child," like Oliver, Joe, Paul, etc.; second, "the horrible or grotesque foil," like Squeers, Quilp P, Uriah Heep, etc.; third, "the grandiloquent or broadly humorous fellow," like Micawber and Sam Weller; and fourth, "tenderly or powerfully drawn figure" like Lady Deadlock, Sidney Carton, etc. (493).

Most of Dickens's novels were published serially in the weeklies like *Household Words* and *All the year Round*. *Oliver Twist* (1837-38) depicts the social evils, the suffering of poor city children and the cruelty of injustice. The miserable condition of children continues in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39) which manifests Dickens's episodic and melodramatic style. *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41) is an example of Dickensian sentimentality. Here the death of little Nell, a helpless Victorian female victim, reveals Dickens's use of pathos and sentimentality. *Barnaby Rudge* (1840-41) is Dickens's first attempt to write a historical novel.

David Copperfield, a semi autobiographical novel, was published in nineteen monthly instalments in *Household Words* (1849-50). It is regarded as Dickens's masterpiece and Dickens himself remarked, "I like this the best" (qtd. in Carter 252). The novel, a bildungsroman, presents the growth of David from childhood to mature manhood. There are dramatic conflicts between different ways of life, between different strata of contemporary society, between convention and reality. The novel shows Dickens's deep insight into human situation and his skill in creating memorable characters like Mr. Micawber, Uriah Heep, Dora, etc.

Bleak House (1852-53) is most integrated and planned novel of Dickens. The novel is not about people, but about the mentalities, feelings and experiences of living in a phantasmagoria (Alexander 279). It satirises the English legal system. In *Hard Times* (1854) the setting is an imaginary industrial town, the Coketown. The novel portrays the industrialisation of English Midlands and its dehumanising effects on the society. The novel critiques the utilitarian philosophy and fact-based education system of the time. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is a historical novel by Dickens. It portrays the eruptive situation in two cities, London and Paris against the backdrop of French Revolution. *Great Expectations* (1861) skillfully combines Dickens's narrative and analytical techniques. The novel explores the relation between gentility and morality and deals with the protagonist, Philip Pirrip's struggle to become a gentleman and his realisation of the vanity of false values. *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) is Dickens's last complete novel before his death in 1870. It presents a bleak picture of the contemporary society. It explores the themes of materialistic values, financial and social ambition, hypocrisies of the Victorian society, social falsity and the like. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) is an unfinished Gothic novel.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63)

Born in Calcutta, India, William Makepeace Thackeray returned to England after his father's death. He had his education at the famous Charterhouse school and Cambridge University. He had a versatile talent as a novelist, essayist, humourist and also rhymester. He worked as a journalist and comic illustrator. His early works include satirically humorous studies of London manners, for example, *The Yellow Plush Correspondence, Snob Papers*; parodies such as *Barry Lyndon*; humorous travel books like *The Paris Sketch-Book, The Irish Sketch-Book*, etc. Thackeray was a brilliant caricaturist and satirist. His pen-name was 'Michael Angelo Titmarsh' and he was a successful novelist of his time. His novels are characterised by cynicism, social realism, hypocrisies, vanities, snobberies of the upper-class, anti-heroic vision and complex characters.

Thackeray's first major novel *Vanity Fair* (1874-78), subtitled *A Novel without a Hero*, was published serially in *Punch*. The title of the story was borrowed from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The story has Napoleonic Wars as a background and it covers a period of time from Battle of Waterloo (1815) to the enactment

of First Reform Bill (1832). The whole story revolves round two women –Becky Sharp, a penniless orphan and Amelia Sedley, a rich and unworldly lady. Becky, a victim of the society, is an ambitious adventuress who flouts the conventional moral norms and makes a place for her by her wit and adaptability. Amelia Sedley, on the other hand, is soft-hearted, sentimental and affectionate. It is a satirical historical novel in which Thackeray unmasks the snobbery and heartlessness of a materialistic society. *The History of Pendennis* (1848-50) is a bildungsroman as the novel chronicles the growth of the protagonist Arthur Pendennis from childhood to adulthood. *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852) is a carefully constructed historical novel which presents an accurate picture of the past age including the courts and camps of Queen Anne's age. *The Newcomes* (1853-55) and *The Virginians* (1857-59) are two other major works by Thackeray. *The Newcomes* exposes the vices and virtues of mid-nineteenth century society. *The Virginians*, which is a sequel to *The History of Henry Esmond*, is another historical novel that relates the story of successive generations of Esmond family.

Though Thackeray's chief popularity rests on *Vanity Fair*, he is often considered as a counterpart to Dickens. He also opposed the utilitarianism of his age. According to Carter, "Thackeray contributed substantially to the growth of the nineteenth century novel" (263).

Anthony Trollope (1815–1882) was both a civil servant in the Post Office. He was a prolific novelist and in his realism he was influenced by Thackeray. He is best known for the series of six Barsetshire novels: *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Throne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1864), *The Small House at Allington* (1864) and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). These novels are set in the imaginary country of Barsetshire and its ecclesiastical centre, Barchester. His later works include political or Palliser novels such as, *Phineas Finn* (1869), *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), *The Way We Live Now* (1875) etc. His works cover different aspects of Victorian society focusing on issues like morality, inheritance, property, class structure, politics, etc.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), novelist and critic, was a clergyman who was committed to social reformation. His early novels like *Yeast* (first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1848), *Alton Locke* (1850) deal with social problems, injustices, issues related to the working class people. He wrote some historical novels also, such as *Hypatia* (1853), *Westward Ho!* (1855) etc. He is specially remembered for his *The Water-Babies* (1863), a children's fantasy.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81), the British Prime Minister and politician, was also a novelist of the Victorian age. He was a prolific writer and his novels are brilliant and witty. They deal with social issues, political and historical events, class inequality, religious conflicts, etc. His first novel *Vivian Grey* (1826) explores aspects of the fashionable society of the time. It was followed by novels like *The Young Duke, Contarini Fleming* (1832), *Alroy* (1833) and *Henrietta Temple* (1837). But he is best known for his 'Young England Trilogy' *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847). These political novels deal with the cleavage between rich and poor, called 'the two nations' by Disraeli. His later novel *Lothair* focuses on the themes of faith, identity and religious conflicts.

William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-1882) was known for his popular historical romances. His historical novels bring together gothic and melodramatic elements, adventure stories and fanciful history. His historical novels are *Rookwood* (1834), *The Tower of London* (1840) and *Old St. Paul's* (1841). In characters like Dick Turpin, Jack Shepherd, Ainsworth attempts to idealise the 'heroic criminal' can be traced. His characters are partly historical and partly mythical. He has romanticised history and his novels are more fanciful than factual.

Charles Reade (1814–1884) started his literary career by writing plays. His play *Masks and Faces* became a novel *Peg Woffington* in 1853. He is known as a reforming novelist as his novels like *Christie Johnstone* (1853) and *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856) plead for reformation of prisons and the treatment of criminals. His best known work is *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), a picaresque historical novel. He was criticised for explicitly writing about 'taboo subjects,' but he was a realist and considered as a natural successor of Dickens.

Charles Lever (1806–1872) was an Irish novelist and his major novels depict the military and Irish social life. His early novels are *Harry Lorrequer* (1839), *Charles O'Malley* (1841) and *Jack Hinton the Guardsman* (1843). Novels such as *Tom Burke of Ours* (1844) and *The Knight of Gwynne* (1847) are popular for their racy, anecdotal style. His later novels include *Sir Jasper Carew* (1855), *The Fortunes of Glencore* (1857) and *Lord Kilgobbin* (1872). *Lord Kilgobbin* is his best-known novel which depicts the chaos, despair, discontent of the Irish people under the English rule.

Among the early Victorian novelists mention should be made of some outstanding women novelists like George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë,

Anne Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell. Their contribution to the genre of novel will be discussed in the sub-section 4. 16.4.3. (Women Novelists).

Activities:

1. Trace five major works of Early Victorian novelists and write short notes on them.

2. Read the Part II of Volume 2 of *A History of English Literature* by W.R. Goodman and Chapter 24 of Volume IV of *A Critical History of English Literature* by David Daiches and discuss with your friends some early Victorian novelists not included in this material.

3. Find out five differences between Romantic novels and Victorian novels.

4. Prepare a list of periodicals and magazines where early Victorian novelists used to publish their novels serially. Mention the period of their publication.

5. Choose the correct alternative:

   (i) Which literary genre became the leading genre in English during the Victorian era?

      a. Poetry
      b. Novel
      c. Drama
      d. Essay

   (ii) Dickens' "Hard Times" was published in

      (a) 1859

      (b) 1865

      (c) 1870

      (d) 1854

4.16.4.2. Late Victorian Novelists

You have read about the early Victorian novelists in the earlier section. Now we will discuss the late Victorian novelists.

George Meredith (1828-1909) was a major Victorian novelist of the later period. He is called the 'grand old man' of English Literature. His novels are

characterised by psychological realism, and his use of metaphor and symbolism has rendered his prose poetic. His first important novel is *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). Other remarkable novels are *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (1871), *The Egoist* (1879) and *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). *Diana of the Crossways* shows Meredith's remarkable ability to portray female characters. *The Egoist*, one of his best known novels, deals with the stories of the 'egoist,' Sir Willough by Patterne, who is rich, fashionable and intolerably self-centred and conceited.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was born in the rural county of Dorset which, in his novels, is recognised as Wessex. He was an architect, novelist and poet. His novels are remarkable for their anecdotes, representation of lively situations and gradual interplay of characters through incidents. Since he spent a long time in the countryside, there are rich descriptions of the English country life vivid with narratives of intimate relationship between characters and environment in his novels.

Hardy's novels are classified into three groups:

(a) Novels of 'Character and Environment': *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

(b) 'Romances and Fantasies': *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *Two on a Tower*, (1882), *The Well-Beloved* (1897, first published serially in 1892).

(c) 'Novels of Ingenuity': *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), *A Laodicean* (1881).

Hardy's novels with the background of the fictional countryside (created after Dorset) are called 'Wessex novels.' The list includes *Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* etc.

Though Hardy was not an unmitigated pessimist, his vision is essentially tragic. Hardy experimented with traditional tragic model. According to Riza Öztürk, "Hardy's tragedy emerges either from an external or an internal conflict, or from both simultaneously, from which the protagonist is led to an inevitable catastrophe" (10). Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* brings about his own fall, while

Tess is "the victim of a hypocritical sexual moralty" (Carter 288). In *Jude the Obscure*, tragedy is caused due to the conflict between the individual and society. In many novels like *The Return of the Native* or *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* nature is portrayed as unfriendly and hostile to human beings. Hardy's novels also "reveal the cosmic indifference or malevolent ironies which life has in store for everyone" (Carter 287). Again, chance and coincidence play an important role in Hardy's novels. Chances and coincidences often lead to tragic destinies for characters in novels like *The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and so on.

Samuel Butler (1835-1902) is the author of *Erewhon* (1872) and *The Way of All Flesh* (published posthumously in 1903). *Erewhon* depicts a utopian society and satirises Victorian ideas of duty and religion. *The Way of All Flesh* (1903) is a semi-autobiographical novel and depicts his own upbringing in a clerical family.

George Gissing (1857-1903) is considered one of the greatest novelists in England in the 1890s. His major novels are *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), *The Unclassed* (1884), *The Nether World* (1889), *New Grub Street* (1891). He is a naturalist in the sense that his works deal with the everyday life in detail and express concern for the deprived section of the society.

George Moor (1852-1933) was an Anglo-Irish novelist. He is chiefly remembered for his novel *Esther Waters* (1894) which relates the story of a religious girl who becomes unwed mother and endures many ordeals. His other important works are A *Mummer's Wife* (1885), *Evelyn Innes* (1898), *Sister Teresa* (1901), *The Brook Kerith* (1916).

4.16.4.3. Women Novelists

Victorian women novelists contributed significantly to the growth of the English novel. Many of them started their literary career by writing novels. Advancement of printing technology, publication of periodicals and wide circulation of newspapers, libraries, etc. provided many young women writers the scope to choose writing as a career. They no longer remained 'consumers' of the novel, but established themselves as successful producers of this literary type. Due to industrialisation, political and economic transformations, women writers got a congenial environment to prove their story telling ability and also to challenge the conventional gender roles. This era witnessed many outstanding women novelists including George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell and Margaret Oliphant. Carter

and McRae in this context comments, "After the flourishing of women's writing towards the end of the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century brought great popularity to many female authors" (271). However, many female authors of this age adopted male pen names for gaining acceptability of their works to the common readers many of whom had prejudices against female authors.

Mrs. Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865) was a novelist and biographer of Charlotte Brontë. While staying at Manchester, she experienced the evils of industrialisation and her novels reveal the plight of industrial workers, the conflict between factory owners and workers and other social problems. *Mary Barton* (1848) is her first novel followed by *Cranford* (1851-1853) which was published in Dickens's periodical *Household Words*. *North and South* (1855) also examines the effects of industrialisation on the society. Her unfinished work *Wives and Daughters* (1866) is psychologically complex, dealing with fine female characters like Mrs. Gibson, Molly Gibson and Cynthia Kirkpatrick. According to Carter and McRae, "Her contribution to the Victorian novel is now recognised as one of the considerable social commitment and artistic achievement" (274).

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) wrote under the pseudonym 'Currer Bell.' Her first novel *The Professor* was published posthumously in 1849. Her other novels are *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853). Her best known work, *Jane Eyre*, a fictional autobiography, was published under the male pseudonym Currer Bell. It is a bildungsroman and it relates the story of an orphan, Jane Eyre, who after living a miserable life becomes the governess to the ward of Mr. Rochester, a mysterious, wealthy landlord, whom she marries at the end of the story. The novel is written in the first person and narrates the quest of a woman for her identity. It is the story of a strong-willed, self-independent female protagonist. *Shirley* introduces a variety of characters and reveals the effects of industrialisation. In *Villette* Charlotte tells the story of Lucy Snowe's struggles to cope with her loneliness, isolation and unrequited love.

Emily Brontë's (1818-48) only novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) was published under her pen name 'Ellis Bell.' The novel is set in the wild moorland of Yorkshire. It is the story of a passionate and intense love relationship between Heathcliff, a foundling, and Catherine, the daughter of Mr. Earnshaw, the foster father of Heathcliff. They are sometimes violently passionate and sometimes moderately romantic in their relationship. When Catherine (Cathy) marries Edgar Linton,

Heathcliff runs away and returns after three years as a rich man. Though he sets about to take revenge on Linton and Earnshaw families, he, after Cathy's death, finally isolates himself from all external attachments and desires to be united with Cathy in death. At the end a boy reports that he has seen the ghosts of Heathcliff and Cathy walking across the moor. The novel reveals the emotional and psychological reality of characters. The structure is extremely complex with gothic and romantic elements.

Anne Brontë (1818-48) wrote two novels: *Agnes Grey* (1847) and *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall* (1848) under the pseudonym of 'Aston Bell.' She is not well-known like her two sisters and her novels are less successful.

George Eliot (1819- 1880) is the pen-name of Mary Ann Evans. Since her father was a land-agent, she had the scope to experience the country life and society. Many of her novels reflect her pastoral idealism and bear testimony to her keen observations about the country life. Her novels explore the vital issues along with the social and philosophical concerns of the day. Her major novels are *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1863), *Middlemarch* (1871–1872), *Daniel Deronda* (1876). *Adam Bede* is a moving story of an unmarried girl who is seduced and is accused of murdering her infant child. *The Mill on the Floss* is the story of a brother and sister, Tom and Maggie, who are reunited during a flood and ultimately drown in an embrace. *Romola* is a historical novel, set in medieval Florence. *Middlemarch* is George Eliot's best-known work. The plot centres round Dorothea Brooke, a young woman, who initially marries the elderly Casaubon, but she is disillusioned. Dorothea gradually becomes conscious of her being sexually attracted to Will Ladislaw and marries him. Virginia Woolf comments that this is "one of the few English novels written for adult people" (qtd. in Carter 270). Eliot's novels show a great deal of social and psychological realism. She represents her women characters as superior to her male characters and she criticises the traditional gender roles of women in the Victorian society. Her characters are mostly ordinary, unheroic people and they are realistically presented in her works.

Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897) is a Scottish writer. Her popular series 'Chronicles of Carlingford' includes novels like *Salem Chapel* (1863), *The Perpetual Curate* (1864), *Miss Marjoribanks* (1865–66), etc. Carlingford is a small town near London which serves as the setting of these novels. *Caleb Field* (1851) is a historical

novel. Her novels reveal different issues like class, religion, and societal expectations. She was a prolific writer who wrote more than one hundred novels.

Victorian novels were also enriched by some minor women novelists including, Mrs. Craik (well-known work: *John Halifax, Gentleman*, 1856), Mary Elizabeth Braddon (well-known work: *Lady Audley's Secret*, 1862), Mrs. Henry Wood (well-known work: *East Lynne*, 1861) and Mrs. Humphry Ward (well-known work: *Robert Elsmere*, 1888). Mrs. Eliza Lynn Linton (1822–1898) wrote historical and socialist novels. *Rebel of the Family* (1880) is her well-known novel.

Activities:

1. Consult David Cecil's *Early Victorian Novelists,* chapter II to chapter VIII, and prepare a list of writers he has discussed. Mention the novelists, if any, we have not discussed here.

2. Visit the site of ePathshala and consult materials on individual writers. Follow the link:

   https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/Home/ViewSubject?catid=9RA537jM1m 7VD3VCoav4lQ==

3. For a more detailed study about the novels of the Victorian Age, consult Chapter 5 (Gail Cunningham's "The Nineteenth-Century Novel") *of Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature.*

4. You may watch on the YouTube "Women Novelists of the Victorian Period": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-o_qWJIvZgQ

5. Follow the link given below to collect useful information about women writers:: chttps://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-victorian-womens-writing/victorian-women-writers-careers/38E8D853C4 DCD946C779429B1589C72B

6. Consult Chapter 22 ("The Receptions of Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy" written by Elizabeth Langland) of the book *A Companion to The Victorian Novel* edited by Patrick Brantlinger and William b. Thesing.

7. Watch the film adaptation of *A Tale of Two* Cities: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtGrw8CWA5g

4.16.5. Victorian Fiction II

4.16.5.1. Victorian Science Fiction

We have mentioned earlier that the Victorian England witnessed transformation due to industrialisation and rapid growth in the field of science and technology. Scientific inventions and ideas had far-reaching influence on the Victorian literature. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) shattered the age-old religious beliefs and there was constant conflict between religious faith and the scientific ideas. In science fiction the elements of science and technology play pivotal roles. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is one of the earliest forms of this genre. Victorian science fiction was popularised by Jules Verne (1828-1905) and H.G. Wells (1866-1946). Herbert George Wells, a pioneer of science fiction, is famous for his 'science romances' *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). These are considered as examples of classic science fiction.

4.16.5.2. Victorian Detective Fiction

Detective fiction emerged in the Victorian Period as a new genre of fiction and most of them were published in periodicals. Factors like socio-economic and political changes, rapid urbanisation, foundation of the Metropolitan Police Force (1829) and the Detective Force (1842) and also new scientific methods of solving crimes contributed to the growth of detective fiction during this period. Interests in sensational stories and the growth of serialised fiction in magazines and periodicals paved the way for the development of this genre. Victorian detective fiction primarily flourished in the form of short stories, though we have novels and novellas also.

The precursor of English detective fiction is the American short story writer Edgar Allan Poe. In England it started with Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens and got widespread popularity in the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle (1859 –1930). Poe's contribution to the development of this genre is notable. The French detective C. Auguste Dupin in his short stories would be a template for many of the detectives to appear in the late nineteenth century English detective fiction. With the publication of *Bleak House* (1852-1853) Dickens was accepted as a writer of the detective fiction. Inspector Bucket, a professional detective, shows

his power of logical reasoning and scientific methods of solving mysteries. His investigation centres round the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn. Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) is a full-fledged detective story. Here the detective Sergeant Cuff played an important role in solving the mystery of disappearance of a valuable Indian diamond. His best-known novel is *The Woman in White* which was published in Dickens's magazine *All the Year Round* in 1859 and 1860. The novel contains elements like mystery, crime, eccentric characters, confused identities, and suspense and surprises. In the story the art tutor Walter Hartright's investigation uncovers the conspiracy against Laura Fairlie and finally her identity is restored. Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) is famous for his detective short stories and novels about the detective Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr. Watson. His major detective fictions are: *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes* (1891), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1893), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905) and so on.

4.16.5.3. Victorian Fantasy Literature

Nineteenth-century realism led to a kind of order and coherence and it limited the free march of imaginative and literary expressions. Against this trend a variety of writers attempted to construct a counter tradition which was an addition to the prevailing realism. It is the expression of 'other realities' that became popular in the second half of the Victorian Age. The writers of the narratives of 'other realities,' according to Stephen Prickett, "…tried to extend and enrich ways of perceiving 'reality' by a variety of non-realistic techniques that included nonsense, dreams, visions, and the creation of other worlds" (3). There was a search for other worlds, other realities, stranger occurrences. Victorian Fantasy Literature encompasses a variety of forms including novels, novellas and short stories.

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) with its gothic setting and mystery and macabre elements may be considered as the precursor of Victorian Fantasy Fiction. Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–1873), an Irish writer, is best known for his fantasy fiction *Uncle Silas* (1864), a novel with grotesque, mysterious elements. William Morris (1834 –1896)'s *News from Nowhere* (1890-1891) is a socialist 'utopian fantasy' which represents a future socialist society free from contemporary social evils like money-mindedness, industrialisation, inequality, etc. Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), a blending of fantasy and moral allegory, narrates the story of transformation of Tom, a chimney-sweep, into a clean little boy. Scottish

author George MacDonald (1824 –1905) contributed to fantasy literature through his novels like *The Princess and the Goblin* (1868) and *Phantastes* (1868). *Phantastes* is considered as the first fantasy fiction for adults.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) contributed to different forms of literature. His *Treasure Island* (1883) is an adventure novel with elements of mystery, suspense and romance. The story deals with the search for hidden treasure buried in a desert island. It is also called 'desert island literature.' *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a Gothic horror novella about the alter ego, personifying good and evil in one character.

Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) is the pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) are treated as children's fantasies and there are many fantasy elements that subvert logical reasoning. The two fantastical fictions relate the story of a young girl, Alice's adventures.

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) also enriched the fantasy fiction genre. His *The Happy Prince and Other Stories* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891) are collection of children's fantasies. His novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) tells the story of a beautiful young man and his portrait. The novel reveals eerie, magical and supernatural elements.

Activities:

1. Consult the following link and read the research paper for detective fiction: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240660974_Victorian_Detective_Fiction

2. Watch on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeyMw-8bWyk

3. Visit the site of ePathshala and you will get excellent materials on individual writers of science fiction, detective fiction and other fantasy writings. Follow the link: https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/Home/ViewSubject?catid=9RA537jM1m7VD3VCoav4lQ==

4. Read carefully the chapter "The Nineteenth Century" in the book, *The Routledge History of Literature in English* by Roland Carter and John McRae. Note down important points on Victorian fantasy.

5. Watch film adaptations of the following texts:

    Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, Frankenstein, The Hound of the Baskervilles, The Invisible Man.

4.16.6. Victorian Non-Fictional Prose

Victorian Period provided a fertile field for the growth of non-fictional prose. Non-fiction prose basically contains facts and real-life incidents. The age is remarkable for a variety of non-fictional prose literature which includes philosophical, political, economic, scientific, cultural, religious, biographical and autobiographical writings. You have already been acquainted with the political, social and cultural background of the Victorian Period in the section 4.16.3. Orthodox religious beliefs and superstitions were gradually replaced by scientific, rational ideas. Newspapers, periodicals, family magazines became popular and suitable vehicle to covey profound thoughts. Expansion of education and literacy, growth of middle class, rapid development of printing technology were also important factors for the increase of readership of non-fiction prose.

In the following sub-sections we shall discuss different types of Non-Fictional Prose :

4.16.6.1. Sage Writing

Michael Alexander describes the Victorian age as "The Age and its Sages" (247). John Holloway, the literary historian, gave the name "sage writing" to this body of Victorian Literature. The phrase is used in his book *Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (1953). The 'sage writers' are great intellectuals whose writings not only address the issues of the day like moral degradation, philosophical and social questions, Christian Socialism, education reform and such other matters, but also provide some moral guidelines, convincing leadership, valid analyses of different social, economic, cultural and philosophical questions through their work. They were the first to identify the dehumanising effects of industrialisation and effects of industrial capitalism on social and personal life. Michael Alexander argues, "The society and conditions shaped by the Industrial Revolution met their first response in these thinkers" (253). Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), John Ruskin (1819-1900), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Thomas Macaulay

(1800-1859), Charles Darwin (1809-1882) are major contributors to the sage writings.

4.16.6.2. Religious Writing

With the progress of intellectual and scientific thoughts new conflicting ideas in relation to religion and science, faiths and doubts, mysticism and rationalism became important issues. There was a crisis of faith particularly with the appearance of new challenging ideas of great thinkers like Charles Darwin and Karl Marx. Though there were many religious reformations during Queen Victoria's regime, to a large extent Victorian life was governed by moral and religious considerations. Many religious writers attempted to teach moral values to cure the social ills of industrial Britain. John Henry Newman (1801–1890), the master of non-fictional prose, wrote mainly on religion and education. His *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) is a lucid presentation of the nature of religion in the context when religious thinking were muddled in controversies. This book records the history of his religious career and his defense against Charles Kingsley's criticism of his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872) was a theologian and a founder of Christian Socialism. *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* (1850–62), *What Is Revelation?* (1859) and *The Claims of the Bible and of Science* (1863) are his remarkable works. Cardinal Manning (1808–1892) was also a converted Roman Catholic. His various religious views of Priesthood, role of church are communicated in his famous prose works like *Unity of the Church* (1842), *The Eternal Priesthood* (1883).

4.16.6.3. Political Writing

During the Victorian period Britain underwent several political transformations. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) are major exponents of political prose writings during the period. Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism* (1839) reveals his sympathy for the poor industrial workers, but he also argues for a profounder reform. Here he brings forth 'The condition-of-England' question. In *Past and Present* (1843) he argues against scientific materialism and utilitarianism. The book contains Carlyle's political and philosophical thoughts. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841) is a collection of six lectures given in 1840 by Carlyle on different types of heroes including divinities, prophets, poets,

priests, men of letters and and rulers. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was an influential political thinker and economist. His important political works are *On Liberty* (1859), *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), *The Subjection of Women* (1869) *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). *On Liberty* is about civil, or social liberty. In *Considerations on Representative Government* Mill speaks for representative government which is the ideal form of government. *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) is Mill's massive work on political economy and economic reformation.

4.16.6.4. Literary Criticism

Victorian Age was an age of realism which considerably influenced literary criticism of the period. In the bourgeois world of the age criticism provided an important space for intellectual activities. The object of literary criticism of the age was to evaluate and explain literary texts and to analyse structures, forms, genres, and aesthetic qualities, social and cultural contexts of those texts. Victorian Literary Criticism is diverse and productive. Walter Horatio Pater (1839-1894) and Oscar Wilde were advocators of Aestheticism. Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), a golden book of British Aesthetic movement, introduces impressionistic criticism as a method of art criticism. Oscar Wilde in *The Critic as Artist* (1891) puts emphasis on beauty and form of art rather than its moral message. John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1834-1860) is a critical work in five volumes. Here Ruskin distinguishes between the "Imaginative faculty" and "Theoretic faculty." According to him, criticism should be independent from the artistic practice. Matthew Arnold's most influential critical work is *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1864). In Arnold's view criticism should be "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas" (Arnold 35).

4.16.6.5. Scientific Writing

Advancement of science had influenced Victorian society and literature. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) challenged the Evangelical Christianity and questioned the account of the creation of the world of *Genesis* in the Bible. Darwin's theory of Evolution revolutionised the traditional ideas of natural history. Among his other works *The Descent of Man* (1871) is well-known. English biologist and anthropologist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), known as "Darwin's

Bulldog," popularised the theory of Evolution. *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863), *A Manual of the Comparative Anatomy of Vertebrated Animals* (1871) are some of his scientific writings. The most prominent of Herbert Spencer's (1820 – 1903) scientific writings are *Principles of Biology* (1864) and *Principles of Psychology* (1870-1872).

4.16.6.6. Biographical and Autobiographical Writing

The autobiographies are retrospective prose narratives by the authors about their personal lives. Major Victorian autobiographical writings including John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* (1873), Charles Darwin's *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (published posthumously in 1887), Anthony Trollope's *An Autobiography* (published posthumously in 1883), John Henry Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) reflect diverse issues such as spiritual and mental crises, personal beliefs, moral developments, self-reflection, relationships between the self and the public life, spiritual, aesthetic, intellectual growth of the writers and so on.

Among the biographical writings mention may be made to Thomas Carlyle's *Life of Friedrich Schiller*, John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1872–1874), Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), James Anthony Froude's *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* (1882).

4.16.6.7. Travel Writing

Victorian Travel Writing was a comparatively new but popular branch of literature. With the advancement of science and technology, transport and communicative systems also developed. It widened the travel opportunity. Expansion of the British Empire and settlement of colonies in different parts of the world enhanced the scope to travel to different places for various purposes like national, individual, administrative, employment, trade and commerce, tourism, etc. Interest in scientific, geographical, cultural studies and the eagerness to explore unexplored landscapes were also pivotal factors that fuelled the travel literature during Victorian period. Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821 –1890) was a British explorer who travelled to Asia, Africa and South America. His *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (1855) is a famous travel writing that records his journey to make a Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca). Robert Louis Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879) describes his 12-day solo hiking journey through

the areas of the Cévennes mountains with his companion, Modestine, the donkey. *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839) depicts Darwin's meticulous observations of the natural world of South America and the Galápagos Islands. Travel opportunities during this period were extended to women travellers also. Isabella Bird (1831–1904) was an English female traveller. Her important travel writings are *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879), *The Englishwoman in America* (1856). Mary Kingsley's (1862–1900) *Travels in West Africa* (1897) records her journey throughout the West African area by boat and on foot without any European companion.

4.16.6.8. Philosophical Writing

Victorian Philosophical writing is more practical than speculative, more spiritual than metaphysical. Philosophical writings of the period encompasses various ideas including politics, religion, ethics, science, rationality, education and society. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) advocated the doctrine of Utilitarianism, propagated by Jeremy Bentham. His works express his ideas of liberty, gender equality, education and such contemporary issues. His major works are: *A System of Logic* (1843), *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), *On Liberty* (1859), *Utilitarianism* (1861), *An Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865), *The Subjection of Women* (1869). John Ruskin's (1819–1900) prose style is most romantic among the Victorian Sages. His *Unto This Last* (1860-1862) is a collection of essays on political economy. He criticises the orthodox political economy and also calls for moral regeneration and social reform. His ideas influenced many thinkers like William Morris and M.K. Gandhi. Matthew Arnold's (1822–1888) *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) is a great prose work which focuses on the dilemma of the English society. Arnold criticises the aristocracy as Barbarians and the middle class as Philistines. For him culture is 'the best which has been thought and said' in the world. James Martineau (1805–1900) was a religious philosopher and a Unitarian. He was opposed to materialism and emphasised the spiritual interpretation of the world of nature and life.

4.16.6.9. Historical Writing

The contribution of historians to the Victorian prose literature is significant. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was a historian and politician. In *The*

History of England from the Accession of James the Second (first two volumes published in 1848) Macaulay presents a detailed account of two regions: James II and William III. Macaulay could complete only five volumes. Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History* (1837) is a three-volume work on French Revolution. *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (1856–1870) and *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1872–1874) by James Anthony Froude (1818–1894) and *A Short History of the English People* (1874) by John Richard Green (1837–1883) are remarkable historical works of the period. Edward Augustus Freeman (1823–1892) wrote many historical works. His best known works are *The History of the Norman Conquest of England* (1867–1879) and *The Reign of William Rufus and the Accession of Henry the First* (1882).

Activities:

1. Read the chapter "The Nineteenth Century" in the book, *The Routledge History of Literature in English* written by Roland Carter and John McRae. Note down the main points on non-fictional Victorian prose.

2. Read the chapter "The Age and its Sages" in the book *A History of English* Literature written by Michael Alexander. Note down the main points on sage writings and other non-fictional prose.

3. Watch this video on non-fictional Victorian prose:
   https://www.google.com/search?q=victorian+non
   fictional+prose+videos+youtube&oq=victorian+non-
   fictional+prose+videod&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCQgCECEYChigATIG
   CAAQRRg5MgkIARAhGAoYoAEyCQgCECEYChigATIJCAMQIRgKG
   KABMgcIBBAhGI8CMgcIBRAhGI8CMgcIBhAhGI8C0gEKMjY4OTlqM
   GoxNagCCLACAQ&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=
   cid:9496906e,vid:w3yoc-9xv3k,st:0

4. Watch on the youtube:
   Unto This Last: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gI6Y5GrVho
   Culture and Anarchy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oksh25ZQfTM
   The Function of Criticism at the Present Time: https://www.youtube.com/
   watch?v=04azY0FajtY

4.16.7. Summing Up

From the elaborate discussion in this unit we have learnt about:

- the social and political background of the Victorian Age;

- The conflict between science and religious faith that had impact on the literature of the period;

- the reason of popularity of prose particularly novels during Victorian Period;

- the characteristics of Victorian novels;

- major novelists of the period;

- contribution of women novelists;

- the growth and development of Victorian prose fiction;

- great exponents of non-fictional prose writings;

- various genres of fictional and non-fictional prose writings.

4.16.8. Self-assessment Questions

Long–answer Type Questions:

1. Who, according to you, are the two major early Victorian novelists? Write a critical note on any of them.

2. Write a critical essay on Charles Dickens as a novelist.

3. Assess the contributions of the following non-fictional prose writers: (a) Thomas Carlyle; (b) John Ruskin.

4. Critically comment on the major "sage writers" of the Victorian Period.

5. Discuss the contributions of Victorian women novelists with special reference to George Eliot.

7. Examine how Victorian novels reflect the significant social changes of the period.

8. Write a note on the features of Victorian novels.

9. Discuss how the conflict between scientific ideas and traditional faith influenced the Victorian prose.

10. Discuss the contributions of Carlyle and Ruskin to the development of Victorian prose.

11. Write a note on various genres of non-fictional prose writings during the Victorian period.

Mid-length-answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on Thomas Hardy

2. Comment briefly on Victorian detective fiction.

3. Briefly review the works of Brontë sisters.

4. What is 'Victorian Compromise'?

5. Give a short account of 'The Oxford Movement.'

6. Show your acquaintance with *David Copperfield.*

7. Write a short note on Biographical and Autobiographical Writings.

8. Write a short note on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

9. Show your acquaintance with John Stuart Mill.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Name two philosophical works by John Stuart Mill.

2. Who wrote *Culture and Anarchy*? What is the main argument of the author in this work?

3. Mention the epoch-making book written by Charles Darwin and give the year of its publication.

4 What was the real name of George Eliot? Name two of her novels.

5. Mention one female travel writer of the Victorian Period and mention one of her works.

6. Name two Victorian literary critics and their major works.

7. Who is the author of *Vanity Fair*? What is its subtitle?

8. What are Barsetshire novels?

9. What are 'Wessex novels'?

10. What is Dickens's last finished novel? Name his unfinished novel.

11. Name one Victorian novelist who was born in India.What was his pen-name?

12. Mention the 'Young England Trilogy' by Benjamin Disraeli .

13. Who is known as "Darwin's Bulldog"? Name two of his works.

14. Mention two biographers of the Victorian Age and mention their works.

4.16.9. Suggested Readings

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Cunningham, Gail. "The Nineteenth-Century Novel." *Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*, edited by Marion Wynne-Davis, Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 1989.

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Öztürk, Riza. *The Origin of Hardy's Tragic Vision*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

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Module – 5

British Literature in the Twentieth Century

Unit – 17 ❏ Modern British Literature: Poetry

Structure

5.17.1. Objectives

The objective of this unit is to provide you with an overview of how the socio-cultural context in the Great Britain gradually changed over the decades in the twentieth century and how the realm of British poetry evolved in tandem with this ongoing transformation of the milieu. The various phases of development that British poetry underwent in these hundred years have given birth to a intriguingly vast body of poetry that is unique in terms of richness and diversity.

5.17.2. Introduction

The twentieth century was, indeed, an eventful period which witnessed two World Wars, political and economic upheavals of unprecedented proportions, gradual decolonisation of the erstwhile British colonies (especially in the second half of the century), followed by globalisation and free market in the last decade. Consequently, the British society gradually assumed a cosmopolitan and multicultural character by the end of the century. The twentieth century also witnessed a rapid urbanisation of Britain. The realm of twentieth century British Poetry evolved in tandem with the above-mentioned ongoing changes in the social, political and economic aspects of the British society, and this has resulted in the emergence of a bewildering variety of poetic practices ranging from modernist experimentation to postmodern playfulness, from Georgian poetic convention to free-verse confession, and from Edwardian poetry of Empire to post-imperial diversity.

Moreover, the entire history of twentieth-century British poetry is pervaded by alternate resurgence of nationalist and internationalist trends as well as regional and global perspectives. Modernist poetry thrived under the influence of the continental Europe, and assumed an essentially cosmopolitan character. Laura Marcus and Peter Nichols have observed in this context: "British Modernism was an exilic phenomenon (hardly "English" at all) ... England and Englishness were criticised from the outside as avante-gardism was increasingly equated with cosmopolitanism" (1). They further go on to point out: "While a strand of Modernist cosmopolitanism outlived the Modernist moment itself, it frequently existed alongside a literature concerned more directly with local specificities of class and place" (2). Indeed, if we chart the evolution of British poetry through to the end

of the twentieth century, we find how the coherent idea of "Englishness" was gradually broken due to pressure from the once-marginalised communities of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. The concept of "Englishness" or "Britishness" was further transformed by the emerging writers from erstwhile British colonies who had relocated to Britain.

5.17.3. Background

Great Britain went through the crisis of the Empire and the decolonization. The early decades of the twentieth century saw cracks beginning to appear on the erstwhile robust colonial edifice, which showed slow but definite signs of impending collapse. Incidents like the Boer war in South Africa, the Easter Uprising in Ireland in 1916, the Jalianwalabagh Massacre in India in 1919 and the loss of Singapore to Japan in 1942, greatly contributed to the intensified crisis and eventual decline of the British Empire.

One should also take note of the considerable impact that the two World Wars had on the economic structure of the contemporary British society. The economic depression of the 1930s was a great blow for the poverty-stricken masses. The scarcity of jobs and the devaluation of money made life extremely difficult. Even many large business organisations went bankrupt due to the stock exchange crashes. Indeed, the political, geographical, economic and social relations were significantly altered because of the two World Wars. If World War I highlighted the issue of territorial conquest, World War II underlined the destructive potential of technology and the magnitude of human suffering. In the poetry written during the two World Wars, we see an endeavour to come to terms with the traumatic experience of intense suffering and the theme of power and cruelty. The Wars also underscored the frail nature of human existence. When one sees how obsessed the poets and artists in the first half of the twentieth century were with the workings of the human mind, one may argue that they might have retreated to the uncharted depths of the human psyche in order to escape the dismal reality of inhumanity, massacre and suffering. Even though Britain officially attained victory in the Second World War, it could not, however, conceal the deep crisis the country was mired in. The economic depression of the inter-war years had meant that Britain entered World War II with limited resources, and when the War finally came to an end in 1945, it ended up being virtually bankrupt.

In the immediate aftermath of the World War II, the British society was pervaded by an optimistic outlook, a feeling that Britain was on the threshold of a new age of prosperity. The Welfare State created by the contemporary Labour government encouraged the public to dream of a better life for everyone. But, owing to the country's dwindling economic status, the government was too short of funds to meet peoples' expectations by paying for their health, education and welfare provision. Britain had to go through a number of painful adjustments because of the ongoing decline of its economy from the 1950s through to the 1970s. First of all, it had to come to terms with the agonising fact that it was no longer the dominant force on the world stage, that it was replaced by the United States as the new leader in the global political scene. Britain also had to accept the truth that it enjoyed only a marginalised position even in Europe. Moreover, as Peck and Coyle point out: "Britain also had to adjust to a new economic reality; that much of its industrial infrastructure was old and inefficient, that British working practices left a lot to be desired, and that, perhaps due to complacency, there had never been enough investment in research, new plant and new skills.... At a rather more intangible level, Britain and the British people had to adjust to a sense of national decline and loss of national self-confidence" (268).

When the Conservative government came to power in 1970, it intended to bring about an end to welfare reform. But, under the tremendous pressure of slow economic growth, rising unemployment and demands for increased wages, it inadvertently stuck to the existing trend of welfare state. However, their victory in the 1979 election helped the Conservative Party to take a determined, right-wing and free-market-oriented approach under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, and under her successor, John Major, in the 1990s. The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed endeavours to deal with some of the fundamental issues Britain then faced. This neoliberalist approach of the Conservative government—as exemplified by a systematic, decisive abandonement of the concepts of welfare state, nationalised industry, close regulation of British economy—came to known as 'Thatcherism.' Nationalised industries were systematically privatised; trade unions were subjected to severe regulations; government funding for public health, education, welfare, etc. were reduced; numerous draconian laws were made to prevent immigration and to impose restrictions on civil liberties.

5.17.4. Modern British Poetry 1: Poetry from 1900-45

5.17.4.1. Edwardian and Georgian Poetry

The poets writing in the early years of the twentieth century have usually been discussed separately. However, in his book *Edwardian Poetry*, Kenneth Millard discusses seven poets – Henry Newbolt, John Masefield, Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas, A.E. Housman, John Davidson, and Rupert Brooke—as a group, and argues that their work deserves more critical attention than it has received so far. Having discussed several individual poems, Millard identifies certain common concerns: the changing and perhaps diminishing value of the notion of England, a skeptical attitude regarding the linguistic medium itself, and a mistrust also of creative imagination. The book not only offers a re-evaluation of these poets but also provides a literary background for their poems, and thus draws critical attention to a body of pre-war modern British poetry that is quite different from the Modernist trend of the following decades.

In a review of modern English poetry, Edwardians claim attention first. Kipling, Bennett, de La Mare, Masefield and Yeats stand in the forefront of Edwardian poetry. Of course they did not solve difficulties, whether social, political or introspective, but they helped to view them impersonally and yet practically, under the influence of contemporary ideas. These poets continued in the old tradition; none of them founded a school. They kept to nineteenth-century methods. They were well-advised to do so, because behind and around them there was a body of traditionalists, less inspired and less creative, but nevertheless sufficiently influential to sustain public opinion. The Edwardian age is in the main an age of criticism, of questioning and of refusal to accept established institutions. From another point of view Edwardian age appears as a time of great prosperity and glitter, of social stability and spacious case, the halcyon period before storm.

Georgian Poetry derived its name from the title given to the five volumes of poems edited by Edward Marsh and published between 1912 and 1922. Poets like D. H. Lawrence, Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, Walter de la Mare, Ralph Hodgeson, *et al* contributed to this series. The Georgian poets attempted to write poetry that faithfully represented life and was free from any kind of ornamentation and exaggeration. Their poems were also exceedingly sentimental, and reminded

the readers of earlier poets like John Clare and the English Romantics. Specimens of Georgian poetry like James Stephens' "The Fifteen Acres" resembled the poems of the seventeenth century poets like William Camden and Michael Drayton, who vividly described and lavishly praised the English landscape and scenery, especially the rural ones. In this context, one can possibly argue that the Georgian poets of the twentieth century emerged as a response to the initial phase of global migrations and cosmopolitanism. Their emphasis on the local and the regional might have been a direct response to this process of the globalisation of the country.

However, strangely enough, even though Georgian poets aimed to portray the beauty of rural England, they were not concerned with the socio-economic conditions of the various social classes of people residing in these villages. Their portrayal of the English countryside was exclusively nostalgic and eulogical in nature, and did not attempt to capture the real living conditions found in their contemporary rural England.

A true Georgian, Walter de la Mare rarely found inspiration in the burning problems of his age, and preferred to concentrate on romance, dream and nature as his main themes. He had the imagination of a child, which conjured up a world which lay like the fabric of a vision, bathed in an unearthly atmosphere. Fairies, phantoms and mysterious presences haunt his poetic world. Hence, his poems often have a dream-like quality. Even during the World Wars, he remained aloof from the socio-political problems that confused his contemporaries. John Masefield and a few others managed to go beyond the simple sentimentality of such pastoral poetry, and attempted to offer a deeper insight into life. Poems like "Lollingdon Downs" show how Masefield endows the English landscape with not just sentiment but also larger issues of life and death.

Another prolific poet whose powerful presence was felt during this time was Thomas Hardy. He authored over nine hundred poems, capturing a bewildering range of feelings and attitudes. While some of his poems are gently ironic, some are powerful love poems, and some others are replete with caustic humour; some bemoan the transience and frailty of human existence, and others are darkly pessimistic. The poet's point of view continuously changes — from common incidents and feelings to a cosmic consciousness, and consequently, the reader witnesses a contrast "between 'life's little ironies' and the global randomness of things" (Carter and McRae 353).

5.17.4.2. Poetry of the World War I

A major socio-political phenomenon like World War I demanded immediate aesthetic response. Consequently, a group of poets emerged during the second decade of the twentieth century and composed poems to record their response to the experience of war. Rupert Brooke became famous for the way he glorified war and propounded the nationalist agenda. His famous poem "The Soldier" deals with the theme of nostalgia and romanticism, and suggests the legitimacy of the British Empire.

However, a host of other poets including Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Edmund Blunden, Edward Thomas and Ivor Gurney, created poetry out of their traumatic experience of the trenches, wounds and death on the war front. They exemplify a realistic approach to war that depicted the futility of war and provided a stark contrast to Brooke's idealistic approach. In their poems, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Gurney satirised the army officers whose excessive vanity and ineptitude was responsible for the unnecessary deaths of countless fine young men. Especially, in Sassoon's poems, we often come across trenchant satire. For him, war was almost entirely about grievous wounds and outrageous injustices rather than about the shrewd politics indulged in by the contending nations. In poems like "They" and "The General," he has vividly depicted how the soldiers who were mutilated and disfigured during the war had to live with the horrors long after the war had come to an end. His poems often show how he rejects the notions of glory, heroism and even patriotism. In his *Diaries*, he expressed his utter disbelief at how women were 'thrilled' to hear that the soldiers had "shed the blood of Germans." In keeping with his harsh realism, Sassoon has consciously opted for anti-romantic, colloquial language instead of conventional poetic diction.

Edmund Blunden offered a candid assessment of the patriotism, jingoism and disillusionment associated with war in his memoir *Undertones of War* (1928). In his poems, we see that Blunden had a greater control over his emotions than many of his contemporary poets. He was unique among the war poets because he was the only one who wrote about how nature was being polluted and destroyed because of the war. Indeed, he has portrayed war as something that destroys nature's creations. His most memorable poems deal with his painful memories of his deceased companions. In poems like "1916 Seen from 1921," he mourns that he survived while his fellow soldiers perished in the war.

The most prominent war poet of this era was Wilfred Owen who began his poetic career in the Keatsian vein, but underwent gradual transformation as a result of his first-hand experience on the war-front. His famous declaration (in his Preface to his only volume of poems which was published posthumously) almost became a slogan for the entire genre of war poetry: "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the Pity." His poems emphatically argues that no cause justifies the extinction of human life on such a colossal scale. His poem "Dulce et decorum est" describes—in a bitterly ironic tone— the horrors of a gas attack. His celebrated war poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth" depicts his disillusionment with the notion of war as glorious. In another wonderful poem "Strange Meeting," a soldier meets in his dream the ghost of an enemy soldier he killed in battle. In the poem, "Disabled," a disabled soldier who has lost his legs and one arm looks at healthy young men and women, and recalls his youth when he was handsome and 'whole.' The girls now touch him "like some queer disease." He bitterly recalls that his really glorious days were not those he spent in the trenches, but rather those he spent on the football field and on the dance floor in pre-War days. In Owen's poetry, we come across no heroes, only mutilated young men who are struggling to cope with physical disability and are haunted by horrific memories. His poems never propagate patriotic or nationalistic ideas.

5.17.4.3. Modernist Poetry

Modernist Poetry emerged in the early years of the twentieth century and reached its peak during the 1920s. These were tumultuous times when man's notions of time and space, his understanding of the nature of reality, and even his notion of human nature, were being radically redefined because of the significant breakthroughs made by Bergson, Einstein, Darwin, Freud and Marx in their respective fields, and also owing to major scientific inventions like telephone, aeroplane, etc. The very concept of objective truth became impossible, and reality appeared to lose its supposed solidity. It was an era when traditional religious certainties and absolute moral standards were collapsing, and the long-cherished traditional ideas and values were being questioned. It was, indeed, a disorienting experience which resulted in a complete loss of the meaning and purpose of life and in an all-pervasive sense of a horrifying void, uncertainty, angst. Modernist poetry emerged in response to this radically changing socio-cultural milieu and intellectual climate.

Modernist poetry was essentially an urban art form, exclusively concerned with

city life in industrialised society. Moreover, it is a distinctly cosmopolitan phenomenon: poets like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound had come in contact with and were shaped by the literary atmospheres of different cosmopolitan centres like New York, London, Madrid and especially Paris. Hence, the works of these Modernist poets did not have any typical British flavour.

However, it is imperative to remember that 'Modernist poetry' was not a single, coherent aesthetic movement: rather, the term was mostly used as an umbrella term which covered a host of different experimental approaches in the realm of poetry. Ezra Pound made a famous declaration, "Make it new!" and indeed different groups of poets displayed a general aversion to the traditional formalism and the ornate poetic diction prevalent in Victorian poetry (especially the Pre-Raphaelites), and were eager to indulge in fresh experimentation. Consequently, each group forged a unique path of its own, thus giving rise to as diverse poetic practices as Imagism, Symbolism, Vorticism, etc. Indeed, the modernists were "inveterate risk takers" who had the firm conviction that "the untried is markedly superior to the familiar, the rare to the ordinary, the experimental to the routine" (Gay 2). However, one of the most distinctive qualities that characterised the Modernist poets was what Peter Gay describes as the "lure of heresy" (3). As Gay has pointed out, "[the Modernist writers] drew satisfaction not only in having taken a new, an untried, a revolutionary path — their own — but also in the sheer act of successful insubordination against ruling authority" (4). Perhaps, the pleasure of writing a radical poem, at least partially, is derived from the iconoclastic modernist poet's satisfaction at violating the sacrosanct literary conventions. An American by birth, T. S. Eliot is universally accepted as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. His poetry offers graphic descriptions of the post-First-World-War English society— its disintegration, barrenness, ennui, spiritual bankruptcy, disillusionment, despair and terror. His first volume of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) portray the boredom, emptiness and pessimism. Eliot explores the unsavoury depths of contemporary city life in a series of sordid episodes. *The Waste Land* (1922) is considered one of the most important documents of the age. In this poem, he has used the mythic structure of the legend of the Fisher King in the Arthurian cycle, and has depicted modern London as an arid, waste land. The two major symbols of this poem are draught and flood, which represent death and rebirth respectively. With *Ash Wednesday* (1927), he entered a new stage of poetic development, in which he found hope for man in the Christian faith. His magnum opus, *Four Quartets* (1944),

portrays his search for religious truth, which leads finally to a new hope in the Christian idea of rebirth and renewal.

Another titan of this era and one of the leading figures of the Irish Renaissance, W. B. Yeats, too, was acutely conscious of the spiritual barrenness of his age, and his entire poetic career can be aptly summed up as an attempt, at first to escape from the all-pervasive, sordid materialism, and later to search for a new ideal which will cure this spiritual barrenness. His early poetry shows clear signs of the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite poets. He seeks to escape into the dreamland of fairies, and looks for his themes in Irish legends and the lives of people untouched by the modern civilisation. The best remedy he finds for the spiritual emptiness of his age is a return to the simplicity of the past. In his early poems, he is essentially a romantic. Some of these poems are "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (1888), *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), and *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). However, after 1916, he ceased to be an escapist, and began taking great interest in the reality of his contemporary society. Hence, his later poems are marked by stark realism. Some of these poems convey an ominous sense of impending disaster—something which has found perhaps the finest expression in an iconic poem like "The Second Coming" (1919).

Yeats's poetry is remarkable for his use of symbols. By means of them, he succeeds in expressing those deep, emotional experiences which he felt to be otherwise inexpressible. But his symbols are often difficult to understand. And the difficulty arises from the fact that he uses the same symbol to convey a variety of experiences in different contexts. Thus, the tower may represent an intellectual refuge or the soul's yearning for the world of the spirit. His other well-known symbols include the moon, the rose, the swan and Byzantium. He always used the traditional verse forms, though he sometimes modified them to suit his own needs. But his rhythms are close to everyday speech.

5.17.4.4. Poetry of the 1930s

In the history of British poetry, the decade of the 1930s was a time of intensive search, achievement and discovery. This decade witnessed great socio-political and ideological conflict. The western civilization was then rushing towards economic breakdown, as unemployment exponentially increased, and Germany and Italy plunged into Fascism. The hopes for a brave, new world, which vanished completely

by 1918, gave way to the disillusionment and despair which has been vividly depicted in T. S. Eliot's poems "The Waste Land" (1922) and "The Hollow Men" (1925). So, there was a need for a new world, for a new outlook on life, but the fulfillment of this need appeared to be almost impossible. The poets of the 1930s desperately searched for a solution to the world's problems in Freudian psychoanalytic theories of the Unconscious and Marxist philosophy of revolution. The poetry of the '30s generally refers to the more politically engaged works of a group of left-wing poets who met at Oxford in the early 1930s, and came to realise that lack of commitment would essentially be equal to support for the right. This group, led by the towering figure of W. H. Auden, also included Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, Christopher Isherwood and Cecil Day Lewis. Being inspired by left-wing political ideals, they championed the cause of the proletariat and depicted their lives with genuine sympathy.

The Thirties poets revolted against the Victorian and the Georgian tradition, and experimented with new poetic themes and forms. However, they also chose to deviate from the path shown by their immediate predecessors—the Modernist poets. Modernist poetry was avowedly elitist in its approach, and hence quite difficult for the uninitiated readers. The poets of the Thirties were strongly critical of this notion of difficult poetry meant for a select few. Instead, they attempted to appeal to a wider audience, and consequently, opted for more colloquial expressions and the vocabulary, idioms and rhythms of everyday speech. Moreover, while the modernist poets were anti-humanist in their approach and depicted the human subject as already subverted by desire, the poets of the 1930s rehumanised this subject, transforming him into an agent of political action. It is this note of revolt that makes the poetry of the Thirties so unique.

Auden came under the influence of Hopkins and Eliot. Much like Eliot, he shows the hollowness of the disintegrating post-war civilisation. But, unlike Eliot, he prescribes communism as the solution to the world's problems. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the poems Auden wrote at the fag-end of the 1920s were concerned with psychic landscapes, but in the 1930s his poetry became explicitly politicised and sought to bridge the chasm between theory and practice. He was, indeed, a poet of the masses. He studied them with deep sympathy and advocated social reforms in accordance with the Marxist prescription for the betterment of the underdogs. Especially, in his early poetry, he shows a clear faith in violent social

revolution as a means to a better social order. However, after having come under the influence of Freud's psychoanalytic approach to the problems of human life, he forsook the Marxist theory of revolution, and instead opined that the upliftment of the proletariat was possible only through the change of heart on the part of the bourgeois. He advocated sympathetic understanding rather than a sentimental pity for the downtrodden. Auden ceaselessly experimented with verse forms. He used a wide variety of styles, but he usually displayed a knack for elliptical thought and dense imagery. Much like his subject matter, his verse technique was also influenced by Eliot, Owen, Hopkins and the French symbolists. From Owen, he learned the use of assonance and internal rhyme; from Eliot, he got the symbolist method; from Hopkins, the Sprung Rhythm; and from both Hopkins and Eliot, the technique of severe condensation.

Spender was acutely conscious of the suffering and unhappiness of the inter-war period, and like Auden, he, too, pinned his hopes for the future on the Marxist theories. His *Poems* (1933) shows the same political attitude as that of Auden. He emphatically declares that the old world "where shapes of death haunt life" must go, and the young comrades must "advance to rebuild...advance to rebel;" giving up "dreams... of heaven after our world," they must follow "the palpable and obvious love of man for man;" and as "people ordered like a single mind," they would build a world where no one should remain hungry and "Man shall be man" (qtd. in Sinha 620). Like Auden and Spender, Cecil Day Lewis saw the world plagued by exploitation, hunger and death, and sought hopes for this diseased world in left-wing ideals. In *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933), he lashes out at the existing social order, and advocates a violent revolution to abolish this unjust social system and replace it with a just one.

Another gifted poet of this generation was Louis MacNeice. Even though he belonged to the Auden group and though he was acutely aware of the problems of his times, unlike the others he never embraced the left-wing political ideals and did not believe that communism could provide permanent solutions to the problems of the world. He was an idealist who realised that ideals can never be fully attained. Yet, he held fast to the ideals of a humanist longing for a decent life in a world of selfless individuals. Albert observes, "A purer artist than Auden, MacNeice is acutely aware of the musical and rhythmical potentialities of language, and he writes with a control, finish, lightness of touch, and a structural sense which are often

lacking among the members of his group" (542). His poetry is often didactic, but his reluctance to take up a positive attitude to the issues of contemporary life robs his poetry of that propulsive force which distinguishes good didactic poetry.

5.17.4.5. Poetry during Second World War

The year 1939 was replete with an overwhelming sense of an ending, which was created by various factors such as the growing loss of faith in the idealism of the 1930s, the deaths of great men like Yeats and Freud in 1939, the war in Spain and the mounting power of autocrats like Hitler and Mussolini, the pessimistic sense of failure which crept into the consciousness of the general public, Auden and Isherwood's departure for the America, and the declaration of war in the Autumn of 1939. In *Our Time*, Randall Swingler declared the end of the greatest hopes of the Auden generation: "The war has put an end to that literary generation. All their fantasies have been outdone by the reality. Auden's legendary plots, amazing assaults upon social life, look silly and childish now before the blatant conspiracies and villainies of real politics. Nothing is left of their imaginings but the twilight, peopled by the ghosts of literary values long defunct" (qtd. in Shires 3). At the end of this decade, creative writers had serious doubts about the future of literature, and the editors also believed that they were witnessing the dissolution of an entire civilisation.

Notable poetic figures during the Second World War are Dylan Thomas, Sidney Keyes, Keith Douglas, Alun Lewis, Henry Reed, Bernard Spencer and Roy Fuller. The problems that these poets faced at a tumultuous time like this were an uncertainty about the role of art, a loss of inspiration in the face of unprecedented violence, and the quest for a new style to portray this sense of crisis. It was not possible for the poets of the Second World War to write a poetry of propaganda, warning, compassion, horror, or militarism: so, they decided to simply record and accept a variety of contradictory responses (Shires 11). Shires significantly points out: "The years 1939-42 ... actually encouraged both introspection and a non-judgemental observance of the outward scene.... the old metaphors and symbols were no longer functional without alteration. There was no journey to a new life now, no mountain to ascend, no jigsaw pieces to put together for meaning" (11).

The young poets of this era consciously did away with the trope of successful Audenesque journeys. For example, in his poem "Advice for a Journey," Sidney

Keyes harbours no illusions: he is well aware that death awaits one at the end of one's journey, and that both peace and joy are equally elusive in nature. Similarly, Roy Fuller's poem "The Journey" (1939) is yet another portrayal of an aborted quest. The poets who gained prominence in the Forties were reacting not only to their immediate literary predecessors (through mimicry and defiance), but also to their contemporary times.

The New Apocalyptics were a group of poets who gained prominence in the early 1940s, and derived their name from the anthology *The New Apocalypse* (1939) edited by J. F. Hendry and Henry Treece. Other subsequent anthologies by these poets comprise *The White Horseman* (1941) and *The Crown and Sickle* (1944). Influenced by Herbert Read, poets like George Barker, G. S. Fraser and Henry Treece contended that violent times demand violent poetry. While on the one hand they rebelled against the romantic strain, on the other they also reacted against the modernist obsession with decay and collapse. While they resembled the Surrealists in their reaction against the Audience school, they also chose to distance themselves from the Surrealists. They also displayed kinship with earlier poets like D. H. Lawrence and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Poets like Dylan Thomas and David Gascoyne were also often included in this group for their abundant use of violent images and surrealist technique. The works of the Apocalyptics poets often offer a vision of maiming and trauma, death and decay, as epitomised by the poems of Gascoyne and Barker.

5.17.4.6. Revival of Scottish Poetry

In the meantime, Scottish poetry experienced a revival. After Robert Burns, the Scottish poets throughout the nineteenth century, used to indulge in stereotypical representations of Scottish characters and circumstances in an idealised pastoral setting. Scottish poetry had entered a phase of decadence due to this nostalgic obsession with the tradition established by Burns. During the Scottish renaissance of the twentieth century, the poets attempted to write realistic poems that faithfully portrayed real-life experience in their contemporary Scotland. In order to do this, the poets needed to seek inspiration from the poets of the Golden age – the fifteenth century – a time when Scots was already a well-developed language, and Scottish poetry had national as well as European traits. This new generation of poets emulated William Dunbar instead of Burns.

The most prominent figure in this group was Hugh MacDiarmid (nom de plume of Christopher Murray Grieve) who was undoubtedly the most talented Scottish poet since Burns. His early poems were written in a variety of the Scots language that he forged out of a blend of his own native Border dialect, words from various regions of Scotland, and numerous archaic words he collected from the works of Dunbar and other late medieval Scottish poets. These poems are characterised by "wonderful verbal delicacy," "precise observation of natural objects" and "tense mystical clarity of vision" (Daiches 1146). Some of the best specimens of this phase of MacDiarmid's poetic output are to be found in Sangschaw (1925) and Pennywheep (1926). His magnum opus is perhaps a long poem, "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" (1936), which comprises numerous related lyrics and descriptive and reflective poetic passages. Daiches observes in this context: "Using the speaker's drunkenness as a means of removing his inhibitions and getting him into that visionary state in which he can see into the very soul of Scotland and diagnose her modern predicament, Macdiarmid alternates between lyricism, savage satire, comic irony, philosophic reflection, and personal confession. The drunkenness is a liberating device, rather as the dream in medieval dream-allegory or the journey in Dante" (1146).

However, in the later phase of his poetic career, he mostly abandoned Scots and instead opted for Standard English. But, sometimes, the vocabulary he used was so varied (sometimes chosen from technical dictionaries) and his tone and movement so different from those of his contemporary poets in England, that English in his hands almost became a different language altogether. From the very outset, he consciously associated his poetry with European avant-garde movements, and also wrought a unique blend of his Scottish nationalist fervour with an internationalist perspective. Indeed, his poems are replete with quotations from and allusions to various foreign writers. His political stance, as evident from poems like "Hymns to Lenin" (1931-35), is an eclectic mix of Communism, Scottish nationalism and Internationalism. Since his purpose was to diagnose the problems of the Scottish society and play the role of a prophet preaching against the Establishment, he not only combined those apparently incompatible attitudes but also used them to launch attacks on vices like complacency, provinciality, stuffiness and respectability.

5.17.5. Twentieth Century British Poetry 2: Poetry since 1945

5.17.5.1. The Movement

After the World War II, in the 1950s, we come across some refreshing new voices – the Movement poets. J. D. Scott, the literary editor of *The Spectator*, coined the term "The Movement" to describe a group of writers that included Philip Larkin, Elizabeth Jennings, Kingsley Amis, Thom Gunn, Donald Davie, D. J. Enright, John Wain and Robert Conquest. This 'Movement' began when Robert Conquest published a poetic anthology titled *New Lines in* 1956. The "Introduction" to this anthology had the nature of a poetic manifesto, and here, its author, Conquest, declared that the purpose of this anthology was to acquaint the reading public with a 'genuine and healthy poetry of the new period.' Poets like Philip Larkin, Elizabeth Jennings, Kingsley Amis, Thom Gunn and Donald Davie contributed to this volume. Even though these poets did not share a common set of beliefs about life or principles about poetic practice, they had, indeed, some basic points of similarity, such as care for poetic craftsmanship, presentation of a situation, observation along with judgement, rejection of mythical and imagistic approaches so that even common readers could spontaneously enjoy them. What united these poets, according to Conquest, was 'a negative determination to avoid bad principles.' The modernist trends which dominated the English poetic scene prior to World War II were no longer acceptable in the post-War scenario. The Movement poets rebelled against the modernist trend of deliberately making poetry difficult through the use of mythological allusions and intertextual references, as exemplified by the works of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. They also criticised the literary critics for popularising this kind of difficult in elitist poetry. The Movement poets preferred simplicity to scholarship: they sought to simplify poetry by writing in the language of everyday life – even using foul language and street slang – so that it could appeal to common people. Moreover, these poets held that poetry should be guided by logic and a strict discipline of feelings in order to reveal the meaning of what it depicts. It prefers to avoid intricacies of style, a chaos of emotions and an inflation of the poet's subjective self to cosmic dimensions. On the other hand, they welcome qualities like erudition, irony, thoroughness, an ability to contemplate and render a thought lucidly and calmly.

Of all the contributors to the anthology, it was perhaps Conquest and Holloway

who embodied the principle of the Movement most consistently in their works. Holloway's poems appear to be impersonal, since he successfully conceals from the readers both his own self and that of the poem's lyrical hero. He has a penchant for the allegorical narrative. His choice of words is prudent and well-considered; his lines flow very smoothly; and his descriptions of objects are graphic and logically consistent.

The poems of Philip Larkin give an impression of simplicity, which is, however, both a strategy and an engagement that sought to give birth to a new freshness that was distinctively English in temper. He rejected the idea of an internationalised Modernist ethic, and instead opted for the conditions of immediacy and intimacy. His first work *The North Ship* (1945) appeared to be under Yeats's influence to a great extent. Poems like "Church Going" highlights the possibility of questioning the institutional orthodoxy in the context of ordinary experience. Besides simplicity, Larkin's poems also offer an impression of sincerity, and this remained a feature of even his later poets.

5.17.5.2. Ted Hughes

Apart from the Movement poets, another poet who gained prominence in the later part of the twentieth century is Ted Hughes. He is rightly hailed as the one who was further developing the animalist tradition in poetry practised by earlier poets like Rudyard Kipling and D. H. Lawrence. This is evident from his subtle and exquisitely accurate descriptions of animals, his ability to see the world from the perspective of the animals, and his use of strikingly unusual and expressive animal metaphors. However, as his books *Wodwo* (1967) and Crow (1970) suggest, while Hughes is apparently talking about animals, he is actually referring to man and even the universe. For Hughes, man's lot is always invariably tragic and the society inexpressibly cruel. He finds the allegory and the embodiment of this tragedy and this cruelty in the realm of animate and inanimate nature.

Nature, according to Hughes, spontaneously integrates death, subjugating it to its higher aims. Nature is endowed with 'dark' instincts, the most ancient being that of prolonging life through reproduction. The constant collisions and interactions of the major and minor manifestations of this instinct create the chaos in nature. Life is like an arena, spread out in space and in time, for the great battle fought by its various forms, for their place under the sun. The purpose of a living creature's

life is to participate in this battle without a moment's respite. In Hughes' poems, all living creatures, all life forms are replaceable and interchangeable, like the hunter and the hare shot by him in "The Harvesting." Nature is animate and likened to man; man is a metaphor of nature and vice versa. In nature, Hughes looked for analogies to human behaviour, and in man for a reflection of natural phenomena.

With Hughes, nature is sombre, cruel, unsmiling. He finds what he is looking for in the completeness and adaptiveness of separate biological individuals and species, among which the highest is homo sapiens. To the senselessness of the universe and the rampant destruction of life, he counterposes the perfection of a plant and a dumb creature as well as the reason and will of man. Among the post-war English poets, no one has shown the unity of the small creature with the vast world of as stirringly as Hughes.

5.17.5.3. Irish Poets

Ronald Carter and John McRae have pertinently pointed out: "Between the 1950s and the turn of the millennium there was a shift towards post-Empire, post-colonial, less class-oriented, more pluralist societies and communities.... there was now an explosion of Englishes, going beyond class and social status, beyond geographical, educational or gender boundaries, and beyond ethnicity. [You would do good to go back to Units 1-4 in Module 1 as well as Unit 20 of Module 5 of this course to reinforce your knowledge of globalisation of English literature and language]. What Seamus Heaney called 'the mud flowers' of dialect flourished as never before, and 'the notion of a hieratic voice of authority (whether that of received pronunciation, the BBC, the Irish Catholic priest, the Oxford don, or the patriarchal male) was rejected,' as Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford put it in their Introduction to a major 1990s anthology" (440).

Seamus Heaney was the most important Irish poet, and one of the most powerful poets writing in English, in the late twentieth century. Indeed, as an Irishman, many of his poems depict the horrors which still plague Northern Ireland. His portrayal of the countryside and the natural world bears testimony to the influence of earlier poets like D. H. Lawrence and Ted Hughes. In one of his early poems, "Digging" (1966), he delves into his own memory, into the lives of his family members, into the bygone ages of Irish history, and into deeper levels of myth and legend which has forged the character of the Irish people. He strives to transcend the awful daily

occurrences in Northern Ireland to uncover the forces beneath Irish history which might bring back hope and comfort. But he does not conceal the ingrained tribal passions of revenge and honour which linger in contemporary society. Some of his early works are *Door into the Dark* (1969) and *North* (1975). In the poem *North*, Heaney casts a retrospective glance at the concealed imperial origins of the English language in Viking Ireland and Norse culture. In his later anthologies, he has studied the 'bog people,' his own relationships, and "the complex relationships between individual and society, cult and history" (Carter and McRae 446). When his poems were included in the *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982), Heaney retorted, "My anxious muse…Has to refuse/ The adjective," and went on to declare, "British, no, the name's not right," thus significantly asserting the quintessential Irishness of his poetic creations. However, it is, indeed, ironic that even though Heaney strongly disapproved of the label 'British,' he always wrote in English instead of opting for any regional Irish dialect. His later volume *The Spirit Level* (1996) established him as a poet of nature, politics and humanity, who was capable of forging great poetry out of the essentially ordinary. Carter and McRae observe: "[Heaney's] range and depth, from local to international, from deeply personal to easily universal, has given new strength to poetry in English" (448).

Other poets, besides Heaney, who rejuvenated Irish poetry in the late twentieth century, include Tom Paulin, Mebdh McGuckian, Paul Durcan, Eavan Boland, Michael Longley and Derek Mahon. Ciaran Carson and Tom Paulin used their Ulster background in many of their poems. In *Opera Et Cetera* (1996), Carson has narrated a range of tales, and studied the very nature of language; his long-lined rhyming couplets echo Irish ballad rhythms. Eavan Boland emerged as one of Ireland's most prominent female poets. Much like Heaney's works, her volumes, *Outside History* (1990) and *In a Time of Violence* (1994), embody an awareness of history and a sense of national pride. However, her works are also informed by a feminist sense of the potential for the growth of Ireland. The contributions of the Irish poets of this period can be summed up with Carter and McRae's pertinent observation: "Contemporary Irish poetry can be working-class, polemical, feminist, occupied with history and tradition, and at the same time, open to international influences and concerns. Poets like Pearse Hutchinson and Michael Davitt […] are reinvestigating the tradition of poetry in the Irish language, bringing together the strands of history, legend, literature and language, which give Ireland its modern identity and heritage" (449).

5.17.5.4. Martians and Gorgons

The latter part of the 1970s witnessed the emergence of the 'Martian' school of poetry under the leadership of Craig Raine. It was not really a 'school;' rather, it was a defamiliarising perspective derived from the poem "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home" (1979). This specific type of poetry explores the various ways of seeing. If one charts Raine's poetic career from *The Onion Memory* (1978) through to *Clay: Whereabouts Unknown* (1996), one often sees him offering unusual perspectives to familiar things, as exemplified in such analogies as 'a pug like a car crash' and the moon growing faint in the morning 'like fat in a frying pan.'

In stark contrast to Raine, Tony Harrison believed poetry to be 'the supreme form of articulation,' and insisted that the poet's role was to 'reclaim poetry's public function' (qtd. in Carter and McRae 450). He often used Yorkshire as the setting of his poems; he dealt with issues like social conflict, education and class, violence and language; and used colloquial forms, natural speech, and regional dialects. As Carter and McRae rightly point out, Harrison consciously chose to write "committed, dramatic poetry which is never comfortable and always challenging" (450). Some of his important works are *A Kumquat for John Keats* (1981), *U.S. Martial* (1981), and *The Gaze of the Gorgon* (1992). The title of the last-mentioned anthology, *The Gaze of the Gorgon*, explains why these poets are also referred to as "Gorgons".

5.17.5.5. Black British Poetry

Since the Second World War, Britain has experienced a huge influx of immigrants from its (erstwhile) colonies. Consequently, British society was gradually assuming a multicultural identity. This growing multicultural nature of the British society had a distinct impact on contemporary British poetry. Especially from the beginning of the 1980s, British poetry underwent a shift from native to non-native origin.

Black people, who had migrated from the African countries or the Caribbean islands to Britain, began raising their voices, and were gradually gaining recognition. They often depicted in their poems the hardships and the prejudicial treatments the black people had to experience quite often in their British host land. Thus, Black British Poetry was essentially political in nature, and often took on the nature of complaints: it usually included satire, cynicism, subversive political message and ideology. It is also variously known as Dub poetry, Beat poetry, Performance poetry,

etc. These poems are populist in appeal, and are often written in Creole or Nation Language. Indeed, the Black British poets often deliberately use a distorted version of English as a means to fight back against the dominant culture of the white-skinned British natives. Works of poets like Linton Kwesi Johnson and Benjamin Zaphaniah portray the collective psyche of the black people in Britain, plagued by anguish and rage. Zaphaniah was born in Birmingham, but grew up in Jamaica and later in the UK. His poetic ouvre comprises works like *The Dread Affair* (1985), *Talking Turkeys* (1995) and *Funky Chickens* (1996), the last two of which are addressed to young adults. He observed: "I think poetry should be alive. You should be able to dance to it" (qtd. in Carter and McRae 456). His poem "As a African" portrays the range of minorities for whom he speaks in his poetry.

Some of the other poets who introduced into late-twentieth-century British poetry social and racial issues, fresh rhythms and performance styles, are John Agard (who was born in Guyana), Grace Nichols, and Ben Okri (Nigerian by birth). Ben Okri's poetic output comprises an anthology of poems, *An African Elegy* (1992), and an epic poem, *Mental Fight* (1999). However, the issue of Black British Poetry being included in the canon of British Poetry remains problematic. As Lauri Ramey pertinently observes in this context, "As long as standards of approval for British poetry tend to be narrow and atavistic, the more experimental and bold black British poetry remains invisible and illegible as part of the British canon" (115).

The contributions of these poets from former colonies can be aptly summed up in the words of John Brannigan: "The significance of the colonial legacy... for these writers... is to open up for literary exploration the meanings of Englishness, both in the past and the present. As the industrial transformation of the nineteenth century prompted the 'condition of England' novel, the colonial and migratory legacies of the post-war period have brought renewed literary attention to the state of the nation" (624).

5.17.6. Summing up

In this unit, we have discussed how British poetry underwent various phases of development in the twentieth century, and how various schools of poetic practice eventually emerged in response to various social, political and economic factors like the two World Wars, the impact of gradual decolonisation on the diminishing

imperial status of Britain, demographic transformation of Britain owing to the influx of immigrants from former colonies, changing approaches and policies of the British Government, etc. This unit has also attempted to show that with the passage of time, British poetry has gradually lost its typical Britishness, and has instead taken on a hybrid identity owing to the conspicuously increasing contributions of various non-British poets, especially in the last couple of decades of the twentieth century.

5.17.7. Self-assessment Questions

Broad Questions:

(a) Analyse the political, social and cultural background against which British literature flourished.

(b) What is Modernism? Write a critical account on the rise and development of modernist poetry in Great Britain.

(c) Discuss how the realm of British Poetry underwent gradual changes in the last phase of the twentieth century under the impact of globalisation and multiculturalism.

Mid-length Questions:

(a) Make a brief comparative study between the types of poetry written in the first and the Second World Wars respectively.

(b) Write a critical note on the poetry of the World War I.

(c) Briefly discuss the impact that Modernist poetry had on the successive generations of British poets through the end of the twentieth century.

(d) Write a critical note on Edwardian and Georgian Poetry.

(e) Write a critical essay on the revival of Scottish Poetry.

(f) Who were the major poets of the 1930s? Assess the significance of the Poetry of the 1930s.

(g) Who were the Movement poets? Analyse the significance of their poetry?

(h) Analyse how British poets responded to the Second World War.

(i) Critically comment on the emergence of non-white 'ethnic' poets in Great Britain.

Short Questions:

   (a) What is Vorticism?

   (b) Which movement in British poetry emerged in the 1950s, characterised by its focus on everyday and colloquial language?

   (c) Which poetic work by T. S. Eliot has used the myth of the Fisher King of the Arthurian cycle as an important component of its thematic structure?

   (d) Name some Black British poets.

   (e) Mention some of the major works of T. S.Eliot.

   (f) Mention some of the major works of W. B.Yeats.

   (g) Who are the major Movement Poets?

   (h) Write a brief note on either Philip Larkin or Ted Hughes.

   (i) Write a short note on the Martians and Gorgons.

5.17.8. Suggested Readings

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Unit – 18 ❑ Modern British Literature: Fictional and Non-Fictional Prose

Structure

5.18.1. Objectives

5.18.2. Introduction

5.18.3. Historical and Cultural Context

5.18.4. Modern British Fiction

     5.18.4.1. Early Twentieth-Century British Fiction

     5.18.4.2. Late Twentieth-Century British Fiction

     5.18.4.3. Modern British Short Stories

5.18.5. Modern British Non-Fiction

     5.18.5.1. Modern British Essays

     5.18.5.2. Modern British Journalistic Writings

     5.18.5.3. Modern British Biographical Writings

5.18.6. Summing Up

5.18.7. Self-Assessment Questions

5.18.8. Suggested Readings

5.18.1. Objectives

In this Unit, we will try to trace the trajectory of the development of twentieth-century British fiction and non-fiction. The corpus comprises novels and short stories including those categorised under the heading of popular literature (such as detective fictions) as well as non-fictional works such as biography, autobiography and essay. These works played a crucial role in shaping the literary canon of the period. The unit will also identify major figures of these genres and evaluate their contributions. In order to contextualise these works, the unit will provide a critical discussion of the socio-historical background of the period.

5.18.2. Introduction

A key characteristic feature of the modern British prose literature is its engagement with contemporary social and political issues. Writers grappled with the tumultuous events of the twentieth century, including the two World Wars, the rise of fascism, and the struggles for social justice and equality. Many writers used their literary works to critique the power structures and injustices of their time, shedding light on the realities of war, imperialism, and social inequality. Novelists such as Joseph Conrad, George Orwell and William Golding used their fiction to explore themes of power, oppression, and resistance, offering powerful critiques of the systems that shaped their world.

The twentieth century prose marked a period of significant socio-cultural transformation and literary experimentation. It was allied with what Frederic Jameson terms 'critical pluralism' (281). 'Critical pluralism' is a concept in political theory and philosophy that emphasises the importance of multiple perspectives and values in understanding and addressing social and political issues. It recognises the diversity of viewpoints and the need for a pluralistic approach to public discourse and decision-making. To be precise, critical pluralism is about fostering a democratic and inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued, and critical engagement is encouraged to address complex social and political issues. This era in fact saw the emergence of new styles, novel themes, and diverse voices that challenged traditional literary conventions. This reflected the changing social, political, and cultural landscape of the time. Writers from different backgrounds, cultures, and identities made their mark on the literary scene, expanding the boundaries of 'literature.' Rise of the working class novels and spread of women's prose writings carrying new women's consciousness and sensibilities suggest how marginalised voices found platforms for expressing their opinions and sensibilities, Moreover, latter half of the twentieth century witnessed the proliferation of immigrant writers from the British colonies. One may cite the examples of novelists such as V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta and Hanif Kureishi. The socio-cultural background of Great Britain thus went through radical changes. This diversity of voices enriched the literary landscape, offering readers new insights into the complexities of human experience and the richness of cultural diversity.

One of the key characteristics of modern British prose of the twentieth century is its willingness to push boundaries and challenge conventions. Modernism as a cultural movement made its impact felt in every branch of literature. Writers such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce experimented with narrative structure and language, creating works that were innovative and groundbreaking. Non-fiction writers of the period also made significant contributions to the literary landscape; authors such as E. M. Forster, Bertrand Russell, George Orwell and Aldous Huxley used their essays and non-fictional works to explore a wide range of topics, from the nature of art and literature to the role of technology in society. Thus, on the whole, modern British prose of the period is characterised by diversity, innovation, experimentation and social relevance.

5.18.3. Historical and Cultural Context

The Edwardian period, spanning the reign of King Edward VII (1901 to 1910), is often remembered for its relative peace and stability, particularly in contrast to the tumultuous years that followed. This era, also known as the Belle Époque, was characterised by several key aspects contributing to its peaceful reputation. The British Empire was at the height of its power and influence, maintaining global dominance and ensuring a period of relative international stability. This "British Peace" helped suppress major conflicts and maintain order in various parts of the world through economic prosperity, technological and scientific advancements, rich cultural environment, social reforms and many more. Writers like E. M. Forster, Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling contributed to the rich literary landscape of the Edwardian era, capturing the complexities of a time marked by rapid industrialisation, social change, and geopolitical shifts.

The two World Wars – World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) – had a profound impact on modern British literature. The brutality and senselessness of World War I shattered the idealism of the pre-war era. This disillusionment is a major theme in the works of war poets like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Rupert Brooke. Their poetry often depicted the grim realities of trench warfare and the psychological scars it left on soldiers. The trauma of the war accelerated the rise of Modernism in literature. Modernist writers such as

Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot experimented with new forms and techniques to capture the fragmented and chaotic nature of the post-War world. Works such as Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) reflect a deep sense of loss and fragmentation. The war's impact led to a more cynical and ironic tone in literature. Writers like Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh used satire to critique society and its values, as seen in Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Waugh's *Decline and Fall* (1928). The horrors of World War II, including the Holocaust and the atomic bombings, deepened existential and absurdist themes in literature. Authors like George Orwell and Samuel Beckett explored these themes. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1932) presents a dystopian vision of totalitarianism, while Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) captures the sense of meaninglessness and despair. Post-World War II literature also began to include a wider range of voices and perspectives. The war's aftermath and the decolonisation movement led to the influx of authors from former British colonies, enriching British literature with diverse cultural insights.

The post-World War II era also saw a surge in movements for women's suffrage. These movements expanded beyond the demand for voting rights and addressed a range of gender equality issues, including political representation, workplace equality, reproductive rights, and combating gender-based violence. Efforts to increase women's representation in politics continued. Women, however, remained underrepresented in political systems.

Throughout the twentieth century, the British Empire experienced a gradual process of disintegration. The key events of the period may be mapped as follows:

1947 : Independence of India and Pakistan.

1957 : Independence of Ghana, the first African colony to gain independence.

1960 : "Year of Africa"—seventeen African nations gained independence.

1963 : Kenya gained independence.

1997 : Handover of Hong Kong to China, marking the end of British colonial rule in Asia.

The visibility of working classes in social and educational spaces evolved significantly. The visibility of the working class in modern British social and
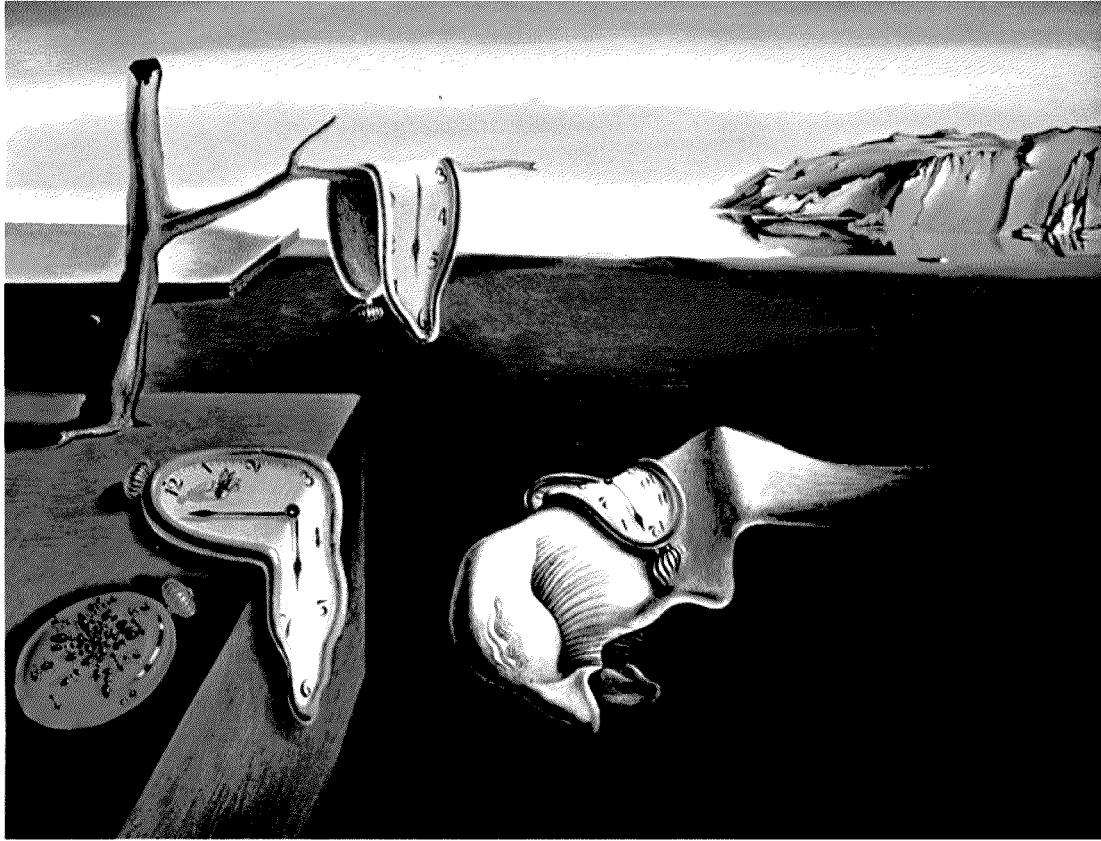
educational spaces improved, driven by media representation, political activism, and educational reforms.

Each wave of migration has significantly shaped the cultural and social landscape of England. Multiculturalism prospered in England mainly since the 1960s. The aftermath of World War II saw significant labour shortages in England, leading to recruitment drives in Commonwealth countries. This resulted in large-scale immigration from the Caribbean, South Asia, and Africa, fundamentally altering the UK's demographic and cultural landscape. For instance, one may refer to the popularity of Indian and Caribbean cuisine and the influence of reggae, *bhangra*, and hip-hop in British music.

Given below are two specimens of modernist art – one is Pablo Picasso's famous Cubist painting "Guernica" (1937) and the other one is Salvador Dali's Surrealist painting "Persistence of Memory" (1931). These two will help you understand the experimental nature of all modernist works.

[Figure 1: "Guernica" by Pablo Picasso (Wikimedia); Source: https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2020/7/13/the-art-of-war-examining-picassos-guernica-as-a-tool-for-leader-professional-development]

[Figure 2: Salvador Dali's "Persistence of Memory;"
Source:https://www.wikiart.org/en/salvador-dali/the-persistence-of-memory-1931]

Activities:

1. Go through this link: https://youtu.be/1VjMzRcEW90?si=f1rtwrRLin3PXEv W. Listen to the lectures which will provide relevant information about Modernism.

2. Consult print and internet sources and prepare a list of immigrant writers of both twentieth century and twenty first century who have NOT been mentioned above.

3. What do you mean by 'trench warfare'? Consult relevant sources to prepare a list of literary works which reflect the impact of 'trench warfare.'

4. Mention some activities related to the movement for women's suffrage in Great Britain. You have to search books and internet materials for this activity.

5. Consult books on history of English literature and other sources and then prepare a list of 'working class novels' and their authors.

6. Consult relevant sources to mention different categories of art movements/ styles (such as Cubism) and go to internet sources to see paintings belong to these 'movements/styles.'

7. Write a short note on the term 'Avant-garde.' Consult relevant print and online materials.

5.18.4. Modern British Fiction

5.18.4.1. Early Twentieth-Century British Fiction

There are some major writers whose writing career spanned both the centuries– for example, Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), a Polish-British writer known for novels like *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Lord Jim* (1900), which explored themes of human nature and imperialism; Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) who wrote works such as *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *Kim* (1900), and is known mainly for his stories about British imperialism and vivid portrayal of India; Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) renowned for novels such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1892) and *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874); Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), a Scottish writer best known for creating the character Sherlock Holmes, featured in novels like *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). Each of these authors contributed significantly to English literature, exploring various themes and styles in their works. One may also mention Edwardian novelists like Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) known for exploring themes of everyday life and the impact of social change on individuals; Herbert George Wells (1866-1946), a prolific writer of science fiction like *The Time Machine* (1895); Ian Sinclair (b. 1943), a British writer and activist known for his muckraking novels such as *Downriver* (1991); G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), known for his wide-ranging contributions to literature, including detective fiction ("Father Brown" stories), essays and poetry. Each of these authors made significant contributions to literature and their respective genres, influencing generations of readers and writers.

The fiction of the twentieth century marked a period of significant transformation and experimentation in British literature. In his book *The Struggle of the Modern* (1963) Stephen Spender observes:

> The moderns are those who start off by thinking that human nature has changed: or if not human nature, then the relationship of the individual to the environment, forever being metamorphosized ... This change, recoded by the seismographic senses of the artist, has also to change all relations within arrangements of words or marks on canvas which make a poem or novel, or a painting. (xiii)

Jesse Matz in the book *The Modern Novel : A Short Introduction* (2004) also observes,

> The modern novel does not just refer to any and all fiction written in modern times, or to fiction that is recent or new. It refers to something more specific: fiction that experiments with ways to contend with modernity. It refers to fiction that tries for new *techniques, new theories, new languages* ...(6, emphasis added)

Modernism in British literature, which flourished from the late nineteenth century and continued to the mid-twentieth century, was, as you have seen earlier, characterised by a deliberate break from traditional forms. It embraced new, experimental techniques in writing. Modernist writers sought to capture the complexities and fragmented nature of contemporary life, often focusing on themes of alienation, dislocation, and the search for meaning in an increasingly chaotic world. Key features of British modernism include :

1. Stream of Consciousness : This narrative technique aimed to depict the flow of thoughts and feelings passing through a character's mind. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf are notable for their use of this style.

2. Fragmentation : Modernist works often lack a clear, linear narrative and instead present a fragmented and disjointed sequence of events.

3. Alienation and Isolation : Characters in modernist literature often feel disconnected from society and struggle with a sense of alienation.

4. Symbolism and Imagism : Modernist writers frequently used symbols to convey deeper meanings and embraced imagism, focusing on precise, clear imagery.

5. Rejection of Realism : Modernists rejected the detailed descriptions and straightforward narratives of realism, opting for more abstract and subjective representations.

Modernism in British literature had a profound impact on subsequent literary movements and continues to influence contemporary writers. The experimentation and innovations of modernist authors paved the way for postmodernism and other avant-garde literary movements, shaping the course of the twentieth century literature.

In the very beginning of the twentieth century two significant works were published– Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Enoch Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives Tale* (1908). Later Woolf's novels *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) employed the stream-of-consciousness technique to delve deep into the inner thoughts and emotions of its characters. In these works, she focuses more on the-clock-of-the-mind rather than the-clock-on-the-wall. Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957) was an English writer best known for her pioneering work in stream-of-consciousness narrative technique. Her most famous work is the semi-autobiographical novel sequence titled *Pilgrimage*. This series consists of thirteen novels that delve into the inner thoughts and experiences of the protagonist, Miriam Henderson, reflecting Richardson's exploration of modernist literary techniques and feminist themes. Her contributions influenced later writers such as Virginia Woolf (1882-1941). Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920) re-imagines Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* in a modern urban setting: "*Ulysses* is the high point of Modernism, bearing the same relationship of the development of novel as *The Waste Land* does to the poetry. Both were published in book form in 1922" (Carter and McRae 392). Joyce's use of interior monologue in *Dubliners* (1914), a collection of short stories, and in his novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922) challenged traditional storytelling conventions. One of the characteristic features of the twentieth century British novels is the exploration of the individual's place in society and the impact of societal norms and expectations on personal identity. For example, in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the protagonist struggles with the constraints of her social status and gender, highlighting the tension between personal desires and societal expectations. The novel focuses on "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (Woolf 84). Woolf's writing is characterised by its lyrical prose and psychological depth, as she delves into the complexities of human experience. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, Woolf explores themes of memory, identity, and the passage of time, creating a rich tapestry of interconnected lives.

"The phrase 'stream of consciousness' was coined in 1890 by the American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) as a description of the flow of thought within the waking human mind. It was a phrase much used and abused in the criticism of the new fiction of the 1920s and 1930s, and particularly with reference to the work of Virginia Woolf, in an effort to come to terms with a literature which boldly attempted to replicate or represent the flux of thought and feeling within a character without resorting to objective description or to conventional dialogue. The technique had been first pioneered in France, notably by Édouard Dujardin in *Les Laurierssont coupés* of 1888 and later by Marcel Proust whose vast serial novel, collectively known as *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27), had a vast impact on Britain both in its original French and in the fine translation of 1922-31, retitled (with an intrusively nodding reference to Shakespeare) *Remembrance of Things Past*. The phrase 'stream of consciousness' had, however, first been adapted to literary-critical usage in 1918 by May Sinclair in an essay on Dorothy Richardson's attempt to eliminate 'the wise all-knowing author' from her novel sequence *Pilgrimage*" (Sanders 518).

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* examines the oppressive nature of totalitarian regimes and the loss of individual freedom in a dystopian society. His writing is characterised by sharp wit and incisive social commentary, making him one of the most influential writers of the century. Authors such as E. M. Forster (1879-1970) and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) delved into the tensions between tradition and modernity, exploring how societal norms and expectations shape personal identity. For example, Forster's novel *Howards End* (1910), with its motif of 'only connect,' examines the clash between the bourgeois Wilcox family and the intellectual Schlegel sisters, highlighting the struggle to find a sense of belonging in a rapidly industrialising society. Forster's writing is characterised by nuanced portrayal of characters and its exploration of moral and ethical dilemmas. In *A Passage to India*, for example, Forster examines the complexities of British colonialism in India, highlighting the tensions between the colonisers and the colonised. Lawrence's exploration of sexuality and human relationships in novels like *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1921) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) left a lasting impression on readers.

There were also key movements and groups that shaped British novels of the twentieth century. The Bloomsbury Group, for example, was a collective of writers, artists, and intellectuals who shared a commitment to artistic experimentation and social change. Members of the group, such as Woolf, Forster, and Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), collaborated on projects and engaged in lively debates about art, politics and society.

5.18.4.2. Late Twentieth-Century British Fiction

British novels of the late twentieth century exhibited a keen attention to the nuances of everyday life. Writers such as Rebecca West (1892-1983), Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973), Anthony Powell (1905-2000) and Anita Brookner (1928-2016) explored the intricacies of human relationships, the complexities of love and desire, and the tensions between individual freedom and social conformity. Novelists of this period often focused on the minutiae of daily existence, offering intimate portraits of characters navigating the challenges of modernity and the complexities of the human heart. Overall, British novels of the late twentieth century are a testament to the enduring power of the literary imagination to capture the complexities and contradictions of the modern world. From the experimentalism of modernist writers to the social realism of post-war novelists, these works have shaped our understanding of the human experience and continue to inspire and provoke readers today. George Orwell (1903-1950) in works such as *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) used allegory and satire to critique totalitarianism and the erosion of individual freedoms. In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, for example, Orwell paints a bleak picture of a dystopian society where the government controls every aspect of people's lives, from their thoughts to their actions. Through his writing, Orwell warns against the dangers of authoritarianism and the importance of preserving democratic values.

The late twentieth century British novels often grappled with the aftermath of war and the trauma experienced by individuals and communities. In works such as Pat Barker's *Regeneration* (1991) and Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001), the psychological effects of war are explored through the experiences of soldiers and civilians, shedding light on the lasting impact of conflict on the human psyche. In the aftermath of the World War I and the World War II, writers grappled with the traumas of war, the decline of empire, and the shifting social landscapes of

post-war Britain. Novels such as Aldous Huxley's (1894-1963) *Brave New World* (1932) explored dystopian visions of the future, while works like Doris Lessing's (1919-2013) *The Grass is Singing* (1950) and *The Golden Notebook* (1962), William Golding's (1911-1993) *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *The Inheritors* (1955) confronted the legacies of colonialism and racism. The primary theme of William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is the inherent evil and savagery in human nature. The story explores how a group of boys stranded on a deserted island descend into chaos and violence as societal norms and order break down. Other significant themes include the loss of innocence, the struggle for power, and the conflict between civilisation and barbarism. The novel delves into the darkness in the minds of human beings and questions the veneer of civilisation that often masks our more primal instincts.

British novels of the late twentieth century also reflected the changing social landscape of the time. Graham Greene's (1904-1991) *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The Quiet American* (1955) explore the consequences of totalitarianism and imperialism on personal freedom and morality; these novels serve as powerful critiques of the oppressive systems that govern society, urging readers to question authority and resist conformity. Mention may also be made of Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989) *Murphy* (1938), *Molloy* (1955) and *The Unnamable* (1958) which were based on single consciousness of the characters concerned. Furthermore, Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), Muniel Spark's *Memento Mori* (1959), John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* (1977), Martin Amis' *London Fields* (1989), *Money* (1984) and *Time's Arrow* (1991), A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) need to be cited in the list of significant fictional works in the Modern Age.

Another important development in the late twentieth-century British literature was the rise of Postcolonial immigrant literatures. Writers who stayed in the United Kingdom such as Salman Rushdie (b. 1947), and V. S. Naipaul (1932-2018) explored themes of identity, displacement, and cultural hybridity in their works, reflecting the legacy of British colonialism and its impact on colonised peoples. Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) is a prime example of postcolonial diasporic literature, skilfully intertwining magical realism with historical events to narrate the story of India's independence. The central premise of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is the intertwining of personal and national history. The novel

follows the life of Saleem Sinai, who is born at the exact moment of India's independence from British rule on August 15, 1947. Through Saleem's life, which is marked by extraordinary events and supernatural powers, Rushdie explores the political, social, and cultural upheavals in postcolonial India. The narrative weaves magical realism with historical events, emphasising the interconnectedness of individual destinies with the fate of the nation. Some of his major works include: *Midnight's Children* (1981), a novel that explores the transition of India from British colonialism to independence, intertwining personal and national histories and *The Satanic Verses* (1988), a controversial novel that deals with themes of religious faith, cultural hybridity, and the immigrant experience in the UK. Hanif Kureishi (b. 1954), a British writer of Pakistani descent, also delves into themes of identity, race, and the immigrant experience in Britain. Kureishi's style often includes sharp social commentary, blending realism with satirical elements to critique societal norms. Some of his notable works include: *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), a novel that follows a mixed-race teenager in London, dealing with issues of identity, sexuality, and the clash of cultures and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), a screenplay about a young Pakistani man in London who transforms a run-down laundrette, touching on themes of racism, entrepreneurship, and sexual orientation. There is a host of postcolonial diasporic novelists such as, among others, Monica Ali, a British Bangladeshi author, (*Brick Lane*, 2003), Zadie Smith, born to an Afro-Jamaican mother and an English father, (*White Teeth*, 2000), and Kamila Shamsie of Pakistani origin (*The City by the Sea*, 1998, *Kartography*, 2002 and *Home Fire*, 2017). One must also mention Tanzanian-born Abdulrazak Gurnah (1948-) who won Nobel Prize in 2021. He migrated to England in 1968 as a refugee. *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Paradise* (1994), *By the Sea* (2001) are some of his important works. Migration, displacement and nostalgia constitute the main thrust of his novels. 'To Gurnah, migration is not merely an autobiographical experience but "one of the stories of our times", and a representative one at that' (https://literature.britishcouncil.org/ writer/ abdulrazak-gurnah).

Thus, we may say that twentieth century British novels reflect the diversity and complexity of the era, exploring a wide range of themes and styles. From modernist experimentation to postcolonial critique, these works continue to resonate with readers today, offering valuable insights into the historical and cultural context of the time.

Activities:

1. Go through these two videos:
   a. https://archive.nptel.ac.in/courses/109/106/109106172/#
   b. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICeGAV4Jx6k

2. Go through Virginia Woolf's essay "Modern Fiction" (You may get an access through this link: https://maulanaazadcollegekolkata.ac.in/pdf/open-resources/VWoolfModernFiction.pdf)

3. Which twentieth century British novel begins with the line, "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen"?

4. Which novel by Graham Greene explores themes of faith, betrayal, and moral ambiguity in a South American setting?

5. Write short notes on :
   Graham Greene; George Orwell; Hanif Kureishi; Zadie Smith; Kamila Shamsie; Abdulrazak Gurnah; Salman Rushdie

5.18.4.3. Modern British Short Stories

The twentieth century saw a flourishing of British short stories, with writers such as Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce making significant contributions to the genre. These writers experimented with form, style, and content, pushing the boundaries of what a short story could be. One of the defining features of the twentieth-century British short stories is the focus on the interior lives of characters. Writers such as Joyce (in stories like "Araby", "Eveline", "The Dead Grace") and Lawrence (in stories like "Odour of Chrysanthemum," "The Rocking Horse Winner," "The Princess") delved deep into the minds of their protagonists, exploring their thoughts, emotions, and motivations in intricate detail. This psychological depth added a new dimension to the short story, allowing readers to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of human experience.

Another key theme in the twentieth-century British short stories is the exploration of social and political issues. Writers such as Graham Greene (in stories like "The Destructors," "The End of the Party," "Across the Bridge"), George Orwell (in "Shooting an Elephant") and Somerset Maugham (in stories like "Rain," "The Verger," and "The Lotus Eater") used the short story form to critique the society

in which they lived, throwing light on issues such as class inequality, colonialism, and the impact of war. By addressing these pressing concerns in their works, these writers helped to bring about social change and raise awareness of important issues. In terms of style, the twentieth century British short stories were marked by their experimentation with form and structure. Writers such as Woolf and Lawrence broke away from traditional narrative conventions, using techniques such as stream of consciousness and non-linear storytelling to create innovative and engaging works. Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) was a renowned New Zealand-born writer who became one of the most influential figures in the development of the modern short story. Her works like *Bliss* (1918), *The Daughters of the Late Colonel* (1921), *Garden Party* (1922) are celebrated for their themes, innovative narrative techniques, psychological depth, and subtle exploration of human relationships and emotions. Mansfield is known for her use of stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and a focus on moments of epiphany. Her stories often avoid conventional plots and instead concentrate on the internal experiences of her characters. Mansfield's contributions to the short story genre are profound. These formal innovations challenged readers to think differently about the nature of storytelling, pushing the boundaries of what was considered possible in the short story form.

5.18.5. Modern British Non-Fiction

The non-fiction in the twentieth-century British literature was a dynamic and diverse literary form that reflected the complexity and vibrancy of its time. Writers experimented with narrative techniques, engaged with pressing social and political issues, and brought a range of voices and perspectives to the forefront.

5.18.5.1. Modern British Essays

The twentieth century saw a significant evolution in British essay writing, with writers exploring a wide range of topics and styles. From the early modernist experiments of Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot (1888-1963) to the more politically charged essays of George Orwell and Doris Lessing, British essayists of the twentieth century made a lasting impact on the literary landscape. One of the key characteristics of these essays is their analytical nature. Writers such as George Orwell, E. M. Forster and Bertrand Russell used their essays and memoirs to engage with pressing social and political issues of the time, sparking important debates

on issues such as censorship, propaganda, and the abuse of power. Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951) reflects on the challenges of democracy in a rapidly changing world. Orwell's celebrated essays "Politics and the English Language" and "Prevention of Literature" remain seminal works on the importance of clear and honest communication in political discourse. Orwell's works remain relevant today for their incisive commentary on power, surveillance, and manipulation.

Writers such as Woolf and Eliot were known for their deep engagement with complex ideas and their innovative use of language. Eliot's critical essays such as "Tradition and Individual Talent," "Hamlet and His Problems," "To Criticize the Critic" and "The Metaphysical Poets" approached literary texts and critical issues from fresh perspectives. In her celebrated essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf famously argued for a new form of writing that reflected the fragmented nature of modern consciousness. The celebrated lines from the essay may be quoted here: "Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (88). In that very essay Woolf claims that 'the proper stuff of fiction' does not exist – "everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought" (89). The essay is "an early assessment and promotion of the Stream of Consciousness technique (although it does not employ the term)" (Goring *et al* 318). By equating a novel with 'personal impression of life', Henry James (1843-1916) in his celebrated essay "The Art of Fiction" observes: "A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like every other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts" (128). Similarly, Eliot's essays on poetry and criticism were marked by their rigorous analysis and intellectual depth. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) is a seminal work of literary criticism; the idea of 'flat'/'round' character as proposed by Forster continues to be studied and debated by scholars today. Literary critics like F. R. Leavis (1895-1978) also played a key role in shaping the critical reception of British literature and encouraging new approaches to literary analysis; Leavis attempted to map the 'great tradition' of the British novelists by bracketing Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Lawrence, Joyce and Woolf in the same category. Lessing and Russell, in their essays on social justice, explored the ways in which literature could be a tool for social change. On the whole, the twentieth century was a rich and diverse period for British essay writing; their essays continue to be studied and admired for their analytical rigour, social commentary, and literary innovation.

5.18.5.2. Modern British Journalistic Writings

The twentieth century British journals played a significant role in shaping the intellectual landscape of the time. These journals served as platforms for scholars, writers and thinkers to engage in critical discourse, debate ideas, and disseminate knowledge to a wider audience. Journals such as *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New Statesman*, and *The Spectator* provided a forum for scholars and writers to publish their work and engage in critical dialogue with their peers. These journals served as important venues for "the dissemination of new ideas, theories, and research findings, helping to shape the intellectual debates of the time" (Smith 48). Moreover, these journals played a crucial role in promoting cultural exchange and fostering international collaboration. Journals such as *The London Review of Books* and *The Economist* provided a platform for writers and thinkers from around the world to share their perspectives and engage in cross-cultural dialogue. This exchange of ideas helped to enrich the intellectual landscape of Britain and fostered a greater understanding of global issues and perspectives. Furthermore, these journals played a key role in promoting interdisciplinary research. Journals such as *Nature* and *The British Journal of Sociology* provided a platform for scholars from different disciplines to publish their work and engage in interdisciplinary dialogue. This collaboration helped to break down traditional academic boundaries and fostered a more holistic approach to research and scholarship. The legacy of British journals in the twentieth century continues to influence intellectual thought and academic discourse to this day.

Rebecca West (1892-1983) is remembered as one of the most influential and versatile journalists of the twentieth century. Her work, spanning fiction, journalism, and criticism, remains relevant for its exploration of social, political, and psychological themes. West's commitment to truth and justice, along with her literary prowess, has left a lasting mark on British literature and beyond. West's account of the Nuremberg Trials, *A Train of Powder* (1955), a collection of essays and reportage, showcases her skills as a journalist and commentator on legal and moral issues.

5.18.5.3. Modern British Biographical and Autobiographical Writings

Biographical writings have long been a popular genre in British literature, providing readers with insights into the lives and experiences of notable individuals. In the twentieth century, British biographical writings underwent significant changes

in style, content and approach. One of the key developments in the twentieth-century British biographical writings was the shift towards a more subjective and introspective approach. Authors began to delve deeper into the psychological and emotional aspects of their subjects, providing readers with a more nuanced understanding of their lives and motivations. This can be seen in works such as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), which combines biography with fiction to explore themes of gender identity and self-discovery. Orwell's memoir *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) offers a firsthand account of the Spanish Civil War. Mention may also be made of Christopher Isherwood's partly fictionalised autobiography *Lions and Shadows* (1938), Elizabeth Bowen's memoir *Bowen's Court* (1942), *Stephen Spender's World Within World* (1951), and Graham Greene's autobiographical memoir *A Sort of Life* (1977). Furthermore, the twentieth century saw a rise in biographical writings that challenged traditional notions of heroism and greatness. Authors began to question the myth-making tendencies of biographical writing, presenting their subjects as flawed and complex individuals rather than idealised figures. This can be seen in works such as Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918), which offers a satirical take on the lives of four prominent figures from the Victorian era – Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Arnold and General Charles Gordon. Mention may also be made of Strachey's two other contributions to biography writing – *Queen Victoria* (1921) and *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928).

One of the defining features of the twentieth-century British autobiographical writings is the diversity of voices and perspectives that emerged during this period. From the working-class memoirs of writers like Richard Hoggart (1918-2014) and Alan Sillitoe (1928-2010) to the upper-class reminiscences of figures such as Evelyn Waugh and Nancy Mitford, autobiographical works reflected the wide range of experiences and backgrounds that characterised contemporary British society. This diversity of voices allowed readers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of the time, as well as the ways in which individual lives were shaped by broader historical forces. In terms of style, the twentieth-century British autobiographical writings often exhibited a keen attention to detail and a commitment to honesty and authenticity. Writers like George Orwell and Doris Lessing, for example, were known for their unflinching portrayals of their own lives, warts and all. This commitment to truth-telling not only added depth and complexity to their narratives, but also served to challenge conventional notions

of autobiography as a genre focused solely on self-aggrandizement or self-justification. By presenting their lives in all their messy, contradictory glory, these writers invited readers to engage with the complexities of human experience in a more honest and empathetic way. Writers like Virginia Woolf and Jean Rhys (1890-1979), for example, experimented with form and structure in their autobiographical works, blurring the lines between fiction and non-fiction and challenging traditional notions of authorship and identity. By pushing the boundaries of the genre in this way, these writers not only expanded the possibilities of autobiographical writing, but also opened up new avenues for exploring the complexities of human experience and subjectivity.

> "*A Room of One's Own* is, however, far more than an insistent plea for privacy, leisure, and education; it is a proclamation that women's writing has nearly come of age. It meditates on the pervasiveness of women as the subjects of poetry and on their absence from history; it plays as fancifully as the narrator of Orlando might with the domestic fate of a woman Shakespeare, but above all it pays tribute to those English novelists, from Aphra Behn to George Eliot, who established a tradition of women's writing" (Sampson 517).

5.18.6. Summing Up

Modern prose writing has been a significant genre that has shaped the literary landscape over the decades of twentieth century. This era was marked by cultural, social, and political changes that greatly influenced the works of the British writers. The twentieth century saw the emergence of key figures who revolutionised the way prose was written and perceived, leaving a lasting impact on the literary world. In addition to the influence of modernism and the world wars, the twentieth century also saw the rise of important literary movements such as Postmodernism and Postcolonialism; these movements reflected the changing social and political landscape of the time and helped to broaden the scope of British literature. Looking to the future, modern prose of the twentieth century British literature is likely to continue evolving in response to shifting cultural, social, and technological landscapes.

5.18.7. Self-Assessment Questions

Broad Questions:

1. Discuss how World War I and World War II influenced British literature in the twentieth century.

2. What are the defining characteristics of modernist literature in Britain, and how are they exemplified in the works of authors like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce? Discuss.

3. Write an essay on how British novelists portrayed the decline of the British Empire and its impact on the process of decolonisation.

4. How did the works of Orwell and Huxley reflect concerns about totalitarianism and technological dystopia? Discuss.

5. How did the political and social upheavals of the twentieth century shape British non-fiction writing ? Explain.

6. Analyse the role played by essays and literary criticism in shaping British literary and cultural debates during the twentieth century.

7. How did British non-fiction writers address the issues of race and colonialism? Elucidate.

8. How did the themes and styles of British novels in the twentieth century reflect the social, political, and cultural changes of the time? Discuss.

9. Analyse the role played by modernist writers in reshaping the literary landscape of Britain in the twentieth century.

Medium-length Questions:

1. Why is Salman Rushdie considered to be an important postcolonial writer?

2. Write a brief note on postcolonial immigrant novels in Great Britain.

3. What are the major themes and concerns in British memoirs and autobiographies from the twentieth century? Discuss.

4. Mention some notable examples of British novels and non-fictional works from the twentieth century that continue to resonate with readers today. Why do you think they have enduring significance?

5. How did British journalists and non-fiction writers chronicle the changing nature of British society throughout the twentieth century? Elucidate.

6. Write a short essay on British modernist fiction.

7. Give a picture of the development of short story in twentieth-century Britain.

8. Write a short assessment of modern British journalistic writings.

9. Define 'stream of consciousness' technique and mention its characteristics.

Short Questions:

1. Who is the author of 1984?

2. Which novel by Huxley envisions a dystopian future where humans are genetically engineered?

3. In what year was Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* published?

4. What is the central theme of Forster's *A Passage to India*?

5. Who wrote the novel *Lord of the Flies*? What is its theme?

6. Who wrote the feminist work *A Room of One's Own*?

7. Who authored *The Golden Notebook*, a key work of feminist literature?

8. What is the main subject of Orwell's essay "Shooting an Elephant"?

9. Write a short note on *A Room of One's Own*.

5.18.8. Suggested Readings

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Unit – 19 ❑ Modern British Literature : Drama

Structure

5.19.1. Objectives

This unit attempts to

- introduce the learners to the sociopolitical changes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries;

- identify how the trends in drama shifted with the turn of the century;

- acquaint the learners with the prominent playwrights and their works of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

- familiarise the learners with the modern trends in theatre in the pre-war, inter-war and post-war periods;

- instil in the learners the capacity to appreciate the dramatic practices of the twentieth century.

5.19.2. Introduction

The twentieth century saw rapid economic changes, social instability, and widespread pessimism. These trends existed before the twentieth century began. The publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 rocked people's faith and belief systems, provoking religious doubts and prompting many to question the existence of God. Also, "Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887 was felt by many to represent the end of an era" (Carter and McRae 285). The vast expansion of the British empire of 13 million sq. miles began to disintegrate in the post-Victorian era. Though Britain won the South African War in 1902, under the reign of King Edward VII (1901-1910), the victory was deemed hollow. The South African War, fought between 1899 and 1902, signalled a growing opposition to British colonisation, and it inspired other colonies to fight the British colonisers. Moreover, the tragedy of the passenger liner *Titanic* sinking in the North Atlantic on her maiden voyage in 1912 dealt a significant blow to British pride. These events perhaps prompted the nation "to prepare ... for what were to be yet greater checks on its pride and confidence during the war of 1914-1918" (Sanders 491).

The British Empire still epitomised power and prestige, but the British military strength had diminished. Britain's economic growth rate, compared to America and Germany, was stagnating. Also, the Irish question remained unresolved in the first decade of the twentieth century. The introduction of Home Rule in 1912 incited strong opposition in Ulster, heightening the risk of internal conflict as Ireland teetered on the brink of civil war. Thus, the nation's consolidation stood questioned and the national peace seemed apparent with several undercurrents of political turmoil. All these events bore forebodings of the later volatile years of World War I (1914-1918). The changes during those years were unprecedented and the shock of war was tremendous. On-field soldiers' letters narrating their first-hand horrific accounts of the war shook the nation and the rest of Europe during those warring years. The war had protracted impacts, which scarred society irrevocably. The economic depression and the diminished British military powers contributed to the socioeconomic instability and the prevailing sense of insecurity. Such significant changes in society were mirrored in the writings of the time. Modern writers abandoned conventional literary structures in favour of reality, using art as a medium for expressing the prevalent dissatisfaction of the time. Ezra Pound's injunction

"Make it new" encapsulates the mood of the modern era. Pound's call for 'making it new' signalled a departure from traditional literary presentations to reimagine and recreate something new. [For more information on the twentieth-century background, you are requested to read 4.16.2. (Introduction) and 4.16.3. (Historical Context) of the unit on Modern British Literatures: Fictional and Non-Fictional Prose (Module: 4, Unit: 16)]

Activities :

● Recount the significant historical events of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and note the key characteristics of the era.

● Refer to the section on 'Context and Conditions" in the chapter 'The Twentieth Century 1900–45' in Ronald Cater and John McRae's *The Routledge History of Literature in English* (pp. 285-287).

5.19.3. Realism and Modern Drama

Realism originated as an art and literary movement in the nineteenth century and flourished until the early twentieth century. This movement represented a reaction against romanticism and favoured presention of life as it is. Realistic art and literature reproduced the objective reality without obscuring it with flowery romanticism. This form of art and literature debunked idealism to extract the real picture of society. The movement for realist representation impacted late nineteenth century theatre, considered as the beginning of modern theatres. The objective of modern theatre to present life in its objective state opened up the British theatre to the influences of the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). Ibsen championed social realities in various fields such as prostitution, the complexities of marriage, the status of women in society, and female sexuality. Ibsen influenced playwrights such as George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and John Galsworthy (1867-1933). Shaw insisted that Ibsen's works "had helped stir the awareness in men 'that in killing women's souls they had killed their own'" (Sanders 486). Influenced by Ibsen, Shaw introduced ideas in his plays, hence his plays are called "Plays of Ideas." These ideas would counter the conventional ideas and eventually tear apart the mask of idealism to expose the unsettling realities of life. His plays dealt with contemporary social realities, such as female prostitution and women's independent pursuit of professions. Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* (1892) dealt with

social issues of feudal exploitation of the poor and *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) confronted two contemporary women's issues: "the future professional careers of educated, would be independent women, the oldest profession, female prostitution" (Sanders 487). Shaw called these plays "Unpleasant Plays," which were meant to challenge audiences' conventional notions and to shake them out of their complacency.

[Figure 1: "George Bernard Shaw in the garden of his country home in Ayot St Lawrence, Hertfordshire. Photograph: Hulton Archive/Getty".

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/stage/gallery/2014/apr/11/pygmalion-100-george-bernard-shaw-my-fair-lady-in-pictures]

Then he wrote "Pleasant Plays," (1894) including his famous play *Arms and the Man: An Anti-Romantic Comedy*. Here he subverted the romantic idea concerning

war, heroism and love. The practical and mercenary soldier, Bluntschli was contrasted with the brave and idealistic soldier Sergius. The depiction of these two contrasting characters with their conflicting ideas revealed the true nature of war and heroism. In his play, *Candida* Shaw mocked irrational idealism of a young poet (Eugene Marchbanks) who was infatuated with a socialist preacher's wife (James Morell's wife Candida). *The Man of Destiny* was a humorous war of words between Napoleon and a "strange lady," whereas *You Never Can Tell* was an exhilarating farce about a separated family reunited by accident. Shaw's "Pleasant Plays" were meant to be pleasant comedies; however, the plays' satiric tone was sharp and witty. Shaw's pursuit of creating 'New Drama' led him to write *Man and Superman* and *Major Barbara* in 1905. In *Pygmalion* (1913) Shaw explored the relationship between the 'creator' (Henry Higgins, a phonetician) and his 'creation' (Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower seller).

[Figure 2: "Edmund Gurney as Alfred Doolittle, Mrs Patrick Campbell as Eliza and Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Professor Henry Higgins in the first London run of *Pygmalion*, at His Majesty's theatre in 1914. Photograph: Hulton Archive/Getty." Source: https://www.theguardian.com/stage/gallery/2014/apr/11/pygmalion-100-george-bernard-shaw-my-fair-lady-in-pictures]

Shaw's contemporary John Galsworthy was also concerned with realistic social issues. Galsworthy primarily focussed on class conflicts and class consciousness. His play, *The Silver Fox* (1906) dealt with two opposing families–one rich and

one poor. His subsequent plays, *Strife* (1909), *Justice* (1910), and *Loyalties* (1922) portrayed class conscience. Galsworthy used "bourgeois theatre to confront bourgeois audiences" (Sanders 488). His realistic depiction of social injustices and class divisions attracted considerable attention from politicians and leaders. Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, was so moved by the representation of suffering in *Justice* that he "abolished solitary confinement in prison" (Sanders 489).

Activities :

- Conduct quick research on Realism and how it impacted the literature of the twentieth century.

- Refer to relevant books and/or internet sources to find names of any two art and literary movements other than Realism in the twentieth century.

- Prepare a class presentation on G.B. Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and its anti-romantic features.

- Prepare a PPT presentation to show how John Galsworthy's plays are related to Realism.

- Research on Henrik Ibsen and write a brief essay on Ibsen's contribution to drama.

- Prepare a list of Shaw's "Unpleasant Plays" and "Pleasant Plays."

- Click on the link to watch the play *Arms and the Man* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVpoi4hT8EE.

5.19.4. Irish Literary Revival and Theatre

The late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century witnessed the revival of Irish nationalism. The relationship between Britain and Ireland was that of a coloniser and colonised, that led to the rise of Irish nationalism. David Hume's *History of England* portrayed Ireland in the late eighteenth century from the British perspective: "The Irish from the beginning of time had been buried in the most profound barbarism and ignorance…" (qtd. in Richards 2). Hume's demeaning judgement of Ireland reflected the British attitude toward the Irish people. The Irish nationalist intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were conscious of such a deprecatory British attitude toward Ireland. They highlighted

the prolonged British oppression of Ireland to mobilise Irish commons against British rule. This growing discontent of Ireland toward the British, coupled with the insistence on imposing Home Rule in Ireland in 1912, verged on a civil war in the early twentieth century.

The increased sense of nationalism demanded the flourishing of Irish literature that would revive the Irish culture and language. The Irish audience attended theatrical performances which raised interest in Irish national theatres. Theatre was considered "a means of regenerating the country" and "a powerful agent in building up of a nation" (Richards 2). Realising the growing demands for the Irish National Theatre, Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932), Edward Martyn (1859-1923) and W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) came together in 1897 to discuss Irish plays, which could raise the Irish national sentiments amid the British hostility. The realisation of the necessity for an Irish National Theatre culminated in the establishment of the Abbey Theatre, Dubin in 1904. The revival of Irish theatre initially centred on W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, who looked after the management and production of theatres. W. B. Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen* which inaugurated the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899 was set in "a famine-struck Ireland of the sixteenth century which, although historically distant, is given a more contemporary charge by its evocation of the Potato Famine of the 1840s through images of people with mouth green from eating dock and nettles" (Richards 3). Yeats aimed to revive the Celtic traditions, so he derived from Irish folklore and myths in his plays. Yeats' other plays include *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), *The Hour Glass* (1903), *The King's Threshold* (1904), *On Baile's Strand* (1905), and *Deirdre* (1907). Through his later plays Yeats "began to explore the possibilities of an innovatory stage technique" (Sanders 490). In his earlier plays the characters reflected "abstract ideas" and "psychological 'realism' [was] broken down into oppositions, shadows, and reflections" (Sanders 490). He further experimented with dramatisation techniques under the influence of Ezra Pound (1885-1972). Though Yeats' plays were rich in style, they were difficult to stage for they were highly poetic and presented abstract ideas.

The Irish theatre excelled in producing peasant plays. As Brenna Katz Clark observed, "Many of the audiences, only a generation removed from the land, looked to the Irish peasant as a symbol of their lost identity . . . A national theatre must be popular, and the peasant play met the requirements of that demand" (94). J. M. Synge (1871-1909) was the primary practitioner of this genre. Synge's plays did

not include conventional dramatic actions, but the stress was laid on the usage of peasant language. Synge's language highlighted "distinct ways of speaking which echo the rhythms of the English of Western Ireland, a language moulded by an underlying Gaelic syntax and by the seepage of provincial Catholicism" (Sanders 490). His one-act play *Riders to the Sea* (1904), set in Aran Islands, portrayed the failure of the fishermen living on the sea. All the men of the island ride towards the sea, which played the role of their life giver and taker at once. His plays, *The Tinker's Wedding* (1903-7), *The Well of the Saints* (1905) and his masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) achieved distinctive 'Irish comic form' (Sanders 490). In *Playboy* Synge unsentimentally presented an isolated rural community. Richards observed, "The play's comic celebration of savagery constituted the most fundamental challenge to what nationalist audiences deemed an acceptable representation of Ireland" (4). This representation of Irish life incited riots in Dublin, as it seemed that the play celebrated the savage fugitive rather than the Irish peasant community.

Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) was another important figure of Irish Literary Revival. O'Casey was a political activist with the Irish Citizen Army and later he turned to theatre. His play *Kathleen Listens In* (1923) was an "allegorical fantasy showing Kathleenni Houlihan, symbol of Ireland's traditional and mystical beauty, driven to distraction and illness by the babel of her persistent suitors..." (Rabey 30). O'Casey presented a cartoonish version of Ireland to depict the internal divisions. His play *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) was set during the Irish Civil War in the 1920s. The play centred on the dysfunctional Boyle family and showed the disintegration of the family under political pressure. *Juno and the Paycock* was the second play of the Dublin trilogy. The other two plays of the trilogy were *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923) and *The Plough of the Stars* (1926). All three plays of the trilogy were set against the backdrop of the Irish War of Independence. O'Casey's 'Tragi-comedy' *The Silver Tassie* was a comment on the First World War. After being rejected by the Abbey Theatre, the play was premiered in a London theatre in 1928. His later plays were *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* (1949) and *The Bishop's Bonfire* (1955).

Activities:

- Prepare a note of the political events leading to the revival of the Irish National Theatre.

● Refer to any relevant book on the History of English literature to prepare a list of all the intellectuals and important figures who contributed to the revival of Irish literature.

● Prepare a presentation on W.B. Yeats and his contributions to Irish literature. This presentation must include his contributions to poetry and drama.

● Click on the YouTube link to watch the film based on J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNvc9mA20TA.

● Read the chapter, "Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy: Disillusionment to Delusion" by Ronan McDonald (pp. 136-149) in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, edited by Shaun Richards (2004).
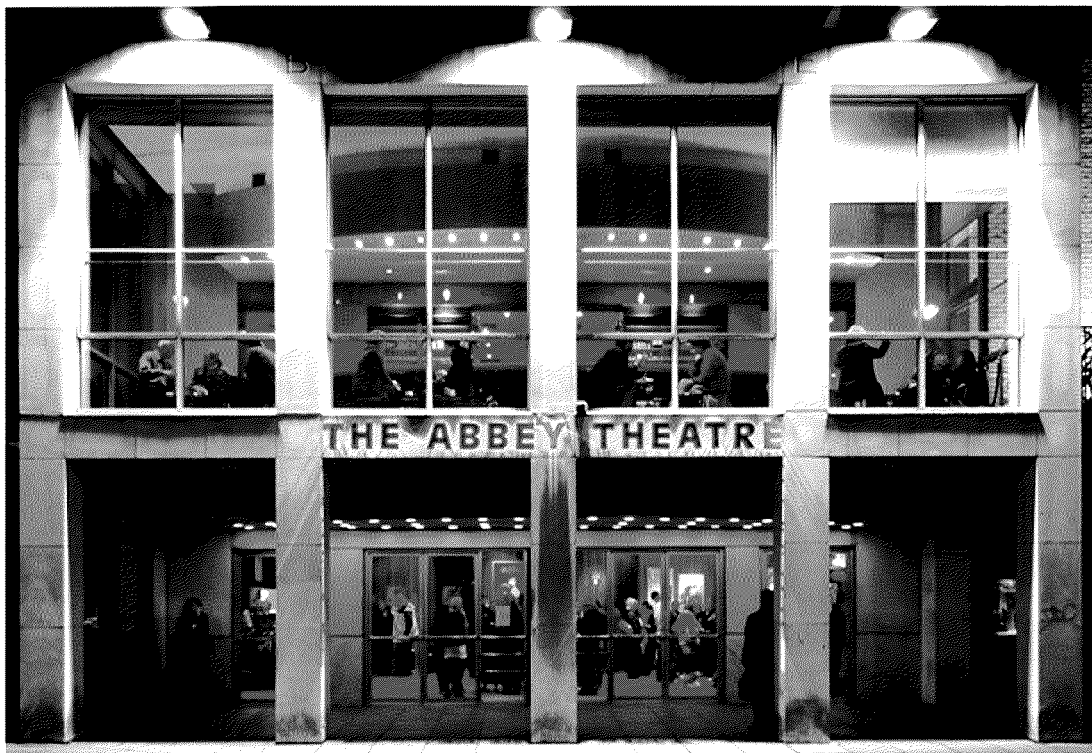
[Figure 3: The Abbey Theatre, also known as National Theatre of Ireland, in Dublin, Ireland. It opened to the public in 1904 for the first time.
Source:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_Theatre#/media/File:Abbey_Theatre_exterior.jpg]

5.19.5. British Inter-war Drama

The innovations of British 'Modernism' indirectly influenced theatres between the two world wars. In these inter-war years, several modernist authors and poets experimented with drama; however, all were unsuccessful. James Joyce's (1882-1941) *Exiles* (1918) was rejected by "the normally progressive Stage Society in London" (Sanders 550) and was first staged in Munich in 1919. In the years between the wars, T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) experimented with poetic drama, as his *Sweeney Agonistes*, published in 1932, was staged a year later in the United States. Eliot's next play, *Murder in the Cathedral* was first acted in 1935 in the Canterbury Cathedral. D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) tried his hands on plays to depict the mining working class of Britain. He wrote the plays – *The Daughter-in-Law* (1912), *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* (1914), and *A Collier's Friday Night* (1934).

Noël Coward (1899-1973) "combined the talents of actor, composer, librettist, playwright, and poseur" (Sanders 554). His play *Vortex* (1924) dealt with the troubled condition of a drug addict who was tormented by his mother's multiple adulteries. His next play *The Rat Trap* (1918) captured the troubled marriage between a dramatist and his novelist wife. His plays *The Queen was in the Parlour* (1926), *The Marquise* (1927), and *The Bitter Sweet* (1929) were successful during their time. Coward's *Cavalcade* (1931) traced "the fortunes and opinions of the Marryot family in twenty-one short scenes covering the years 1899-1930 ..." (Sanders 552). His other notable plays included *Private Lives* (1930), *Design for Living* (1933), and *Blithe Spirit* (1941). J. B. Priestley (1894-1984) was another important playwright writing plays during the inter-war years. His most notable plays, *Time and the Conways* (1973), *When We Are Married* (1938), and *An Inspector Calls* (1947) followed the structure of conventional 'well-made' play. His plays reinforced "the virtues of common sense and stolidity rather than to challenge preconceptions as to the nature of society or the role of the theatre" (Sanders 553). R.C. Sherriff, another important playwright of the time, wrote in *Journey's End* (1928). It represented the reality of British soldiers' lives in the First World War. Andrew Sanders opined that the play "brought a frank representation of wastage and violence to the London theatre ..." (553) and revealed the pity of war. W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood collaborated to produce dramas on contemporary

political issues. Some of their dramas included *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935), *The Ascent of F6* (1936), and *On the Frontier* (1939).

Activities:

● Read the section on "Inter-War Drama: O'Casey, Coward, Priestley, and Sherriff" in Andrew Sanders' *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (pp. 550-553).

● Prepare a list of the playwrights writing drama during the inter-war period and note down the thematic features of their plays. Provide a list of plays written by D.H. Lawrence. Consult relevant books and internet sources to have some idea about the themes of the plays.

5.19.6. T.S. Eliot and Poetic Drama

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) revived poetic drama in the twentieth century, believing that "the tendency... of prose drama is to emphasize the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express ourselves in verse" (qtd. in Jones 1). Eliot's use of poetry in theatre allowed him to overcome the 'superficiality' of prose to convey a wide "range of expression" and to reveal "the subtleties of nature" in a person (Peacock 225). Eliot's "mystical longing to be free from time and perception of eternity in moments of vision" (Sanders 543) characterised Archbishop Thomas Becket's experience in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). The play addressed the controversial subject of the martyrdom of Archbishop Becket in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. This play had a significant impact, contributing to the revival of poetic drama.

His next significant play *The Family Reunion* (1939) was mostly written in blank verse and incorporated elements of Greek drama. The play delved deep into the protagonist, Harry, tracing his journey from guilt to redemption. It was verbally intense but theatrically less exhilarating. In his next play *The Cocktail Party* (1950), Eliot blended "the London West End theatrical conventions with poetic drama..." (Carter and McRae 322). This play achieved commercial success by incorporating features of Morality plays and Comedy of Manners. Eliot's next dramatic ventures included *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) and *The Elder Statesman* (1959) which also interfused "Greek myths with modern types and conditions" (Sanders 543). These

plays, though poetic, lacked dramatic vigour on stage, and hence were not commercial successes. Eliot's dramatic endeavour further included the unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes*. His attempt to revive poetic drama was significant in the literary history of the twentieth century. However, his plays failed to recreate the grandeur of Renaissance poetic drama. Although his plays were loaded with intense dialogues and intricate thoughts, they lacked dramatic exuberance.

Activities:

● Prepare a presentation on T. S. Eliot's contribution to the revival of poetic drama in the twentieth century.

● Prepare a note on T. S. Eliot's contribution to poetry and prose.

● Note down the reasons behind T. S. Eliot's plays not achieving commercial success.

● Research on Archbishop Thomas Becket and the reason behind his martyrdom.

5.19.7. Post-War British 'New Theatre'

By the end of World War II in 1945, Britain and other parts of Europe had been devastated. The conflict decimated major British industrial cities and rocked the country's economic foundation. Along with the aftermath of World War II, Britain was on the verge of losing its status as the great coloniser. For years, colonies such as India had revolted against British rule, and by 1945, Britain was struggling to maintain its colonies. Amidst such sociopolitical changes in the post-world war phase, the world of literature underwent transformations and experimented with innovative forms and techniques. The "landscape of ruins" formed "an integral part of much of the literature of the late 1940s and the early 1950s" (Sanders 586). The ruinous landscapes emanated in the literature of the times aesthetically and philosophically. The theatrical manifestations were seen through the evolution of 'new theatre' which debunked the norms of traditional well-made plays.

Such a manifestation of the post-war phase in theatre was through Irish dramatist Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989) *Waiting for Godot*, which premiered in the English language in 1955. The original version of the play was composed in French

as *Enattendant Godot* in 1949. The play was later included in Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* in 1960. Esslin wrote about 'The Theatre of the Absurd,' "At first sight these plays do, indeed, confront their public with a bewildering experience, a veritable barrage of wildly irrational, often non-sensical going-on that seem to go counter to all accepted standards of stage convention" (3). Esslin derived the word 'absurd' from Albert Camus' philosophy of absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Absurdity referred to the purposelessness and meaninglessness of human situations, the message the absurd dramas seemed to convey. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* was an important depiction of absurd drama in the early 1950s. The drama featured two tramps Vladimir and Estragon who were waiting for a character named Godot underneath a dead tree. Unfortunately, Godot never arrived and the play appeared as a "vivid waiting" in Beckett's words. The dialogues lacked coherence and seemed illogical, but the play was layered. His next, *Endgame* (1957) was another absurd drama, set in a 'bare interior' featuring a paralysed elderly man, waiting for an unspecified 'end.' In his mime play, *Act Without Words II* (1967), Beckett seemed to direct "his audiences to explore the new sensory and physical formulations" (Sanders 599). Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* (1959), *Footfalls* (1976) and *That Time* (1976) dealt with memories, but "these memories negate(d) the linear concepts of time and ageing as much as they disturb old assumptions about 'plot'" (Sanders 599).

John Osborne (1929-1994) was another prominent playwright of the post-war period who reacted against traditional theatres. Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) was marked as a revolutionary dramatic representation in British theatre. The drama was deemed revolutionary because it jolted audiences out of their complacency, its language was shocking, and its setting never exceeded the drawing room. Jimmy Porter, the play's protagonist, represented an 'angry young guy' who had become disillusioned with modern life. The drama was regarded as an example of Britain's Kitchen Sink cultural movement, a British cultural movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The influence of this movement can be traced in theatres and literary works of the time. The protagonist of such a work was an 'angry young man.' The Kitchen Sink drama mirrored the socioeconomic reality of the period through the presentation of a disillusioned young man. Jimmy Porter represented the working class of Britain in the 1950s and their growing discontent about the depressed economic conditions in the post-war phase. Sometimes Jimmy Porter's

furious rantings also seem aimless. Jimmy Porter returned to the stage in Osborne's play *Déjà vu* in 1992. Osborne continued his depiction of an 'angry young man' through the character Martin in his play *Luther* (1961).

John Arden (1930-2012) practised drama in the post-1950s. He was a 'new generation playwright' who was launched at the Royal Court. Arden's *Live Like Pigs* (1958) was about "the resettlement of gypsies in a house-estate" and explored "anti-social behaviour" (Sanders 628). His next *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959) demonstrated an anti-militaristic theme. In his plays, *Left-Handed Liberty* (1965), *The Hero Rises Up* (1968), and *The Island of the Mighty* (1972), Arden questioned "British political, legal, military, imperial traditions" (Sanders 628). Arnold Wesker's (1932- 2016) plays were also performed at the Royal Court. His play *Chips with Everything*, which dealt with the concern of National Service, was first performed in 1962. His famous trilogy, *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958), *Roots* (1959) and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* (1960) all depicted the working class of the time.

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) was the most prominent playwright of the late 1950s. His four plays – *The Room, The Dumb Waiter, The Birthday Party* (all composed in 1957), and *The Caretaker* (1959) – indicate Beckettian and Kafkaesque influences on Pinter. His plays have "incongruous cliches" and feature "staccato barrage of unanswerable questions and half-associated ideas" (Sanders 629). His play, *The Homecoming* (1964) was set in an old house in London. Teddy with his wife, Ruth returned to London from America to his working-class family. Soon, sexual tensions escalated between Teddy and Ruth and eventually Teddy returned to America, leaving behind Ruth in London. *The Homecoming* left a sense of negativity and bitterness. Pinter's succeeding plays *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's Land* (1975), and *Betrayal* (1978) were menacing like that of his previous play. All these plays dealt with sexual tensions, love triangles, adultery and the complexities of human relationships. Pinter's plays are sometimes referred to as the 'Plays of Menace,' for dealing with menacing themes. His later plays included *One for the Road* (1984) and *Mountain Language* (1988). Joe Orton (1933-1967) made a significant contribution to the genre of modern comedies. His plays usually depicted his distrust of the system, which he deemed to be authoritarian and offensive. He wrote five major plays –*Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), *Loot* (1966), *The Ruffian on the Stair* (1967), *The Erpingham Camp* (1967), and *What the Butler Saw* (1969).

Tom Stoppard (b. 1937) was a Czech-born British playwright who seemed to

"take a deep intellectual pleasure in parallels, coincidences, and convergences that extend beyond a purely theatrical relish" (Sanders 632). His play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967) focused on the two noblemen of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In the play, the Elizabethan characters had the sensibilities and insecurities of the twentieth century, as they were aware of their impending death.The play could be considered a form of meta-theatre as it reimagined the characters of *Hamlet* to reflect the pervasive uncertainty and lack of purpose in post-war society. Stoppard's radio play, *If You're Glad I'll Be Frank* (1966), portrayed a husband who tried to "reclaim his wife who [had] become subsumed into a speaking clock" (Sanders 633). His *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968) was a parody of English detective stories. His play, *Jumpers* (1972) featured a philosopher about to lecture on the existence of God and was faced with a murder at his home. His prominent plays also included–*Travesties* (1974), *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), *Professional Foul* (1978), *Hapgood* (1988), *Arcadia* (1994), *The Intervention of Love* (1997), and *The Coast of Utopia* (2002). Edward Bond (1934-2024) was another prominent British playwright of the post-war period. Bond was influenced by German playwright, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Bond thought it necessary "to disturb the audience emotionally" (Sanders 635). *The Pope's Wedding* (1962) and *Saved* (1965) were two of his early plays. Bond showed violence on stage as he considered "violence as the inescapable consequence of the brutalization of the working class" in an industrialised society (Sanders 635). Some of his important plays were–*Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1968), *Lear* (1971), *Bingo* (1974), and *The Fool* (1976).

Prominent women playwrights emerged during the time, Caryll Churchill (b. 1938) being one among them. Her plays addressed the exploitation of the working class in the modern industrialised society of the twentieth century. In her works, she recognised the power dynamics that women were subjected to. Her subversive plays included–*Owners* (1972), *Cloud Nine* (1979), *Top Girls* (1982), *Serious Money* (1987), *A Play from Romania* (1990), and *Blue Heart* (1997). Another important woman playwright who wrote plays in the 1990s was Shelagh Stephenson (b. 1955). Her first play, *The Memory of Water* was staged at the Hampstead Theatre in London in 1996. *Ancient Lights* (2000) and *Mappa Mundi* (2002) were her other plays. The other important British dramatists include Alan Bennett (b. 1934) and Dennis Potter (1935-1994). Bennett's play T*he Madness of George III* was produced in 1991 and his *An English Abroad* was produced by BBC in 1983. Potter's works

include—*Pennies from Heaven* (1978), *Blue Remembered Hills* (1979), and *The Singing Detective* (1989).

Britain in the post-war phase witnessed the rise of multiculturalism and several playwrights of multicultural origin produced plays in the late twentieth century. Post-war Britain required economic rebuilding, but the country faced a labour shortage. The British Nationality Act of 1948 allowed the citizens of the Commonwealth to acquire British passports and work in Britain. This invited numerous immigrants from the Caribbean, African, and South Asian countries to seek a new life in Britain. The influx of immigrants changed the tapestry of British society in the post-war period, turning London into a centre of multiculturalism. In the following years, London produced notable playwrights of Caribbean, African and South Asian origins. Roy Williams, (b. 1968) a Caribbean-British playwright, focused on his Caribbean background, which introduced a multicultural perspective in British theatre. Williams' portrayal of his black Caribbean origin marked the transition in British theatres owing to the migration of multi-racial groups to Britain. Williams' notable works include *The No Boys Cricket Club* (1996), *Starstruck* (1997), and *Clubland* (2001) among others. Bola Agbaje, (b. 1981) born to Nigerian parents in London, composed several plays concerning racial afflictions and complexities. Her first play, *Gone Too Far* (2007) dealt with racial identity and conflicts. Her other plays include *Detaining Justice* (2009), *Off the Endz* (2010), *Belong* (2012), and *Take a Deep Breath and Breathe* (2013). Tanika Gupta (*b.* 1963), a British playwright of Bengali descent, wrote her first play, *Voices on the Wind* in 1995. Tanika Gupta's notable play, *Sanctuary* (2002) dealt with two refugees Michael and Kibar. Gupta addressed the issues of war-torn Kashmir of the 1980s and 1990s in her play. Debbie Tucker Green, a Jamaican-British playwright, wrote several plays concerning dysfunctional family, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. Some of her plays include *Dirty Butterfly* (2003), *Born Bad* (2003), and *Stoning Mary* (2005). We may also mention the name of Hanif Kureishi, well-known for his screenplay of the film *My Beautiful Laundrette* and his fiction *The Buddha of Suburbia*. A playwright of Pakistani descent, Kureishi wrote plays such as *When the Night Begins* (2004).

Activities:

● Prepare a presentation on 'Theatre of the Absurd.'

● Note the changing sociopolitical condition of Britain in the post-war period.

- Research on Bertolt Brecht and write about his contribution to theatre.

- Note the basic features of Harold Pinter's drama.

- Read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Research on Edward Bond's *Lear* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildensternare Dead* to understand how the two playwrights have used Shakespeare's plot in their plays.

- Refer to relevant books and internet sources to gather information about Franz Kafka and the features of his works. This would allow the learners to understand the meaning of 'Kafkaesque.'

- Prepare a list of the multicultural playwrights and their works discussed in this unit.

- Consult relevant books on the History of English Literature and internet sources to prepare a list of modern British playwrights NOT discussed in this unit. Mention their lifetime and some of their plays.

5.19.8. Summing Up

The unit opens with an overview of sociopolitical events in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, familiarising learners with the sociopolitical context and conditions of the period. The unit then discusses the shifting patterns in British theatre in the late nineteenth century, beginning with G.B. Shaw and John Galsworthy. At the beginning of the century, realism rose to prominence in British theatre as a means of challenging romantic ideas. Parallelly, in the aftermath of the twentieth century, there was a rise in Irish nationalism, which resulted in the birth of the Irish National Theatre. Meanwhile, the First World War broke out in 1913 and lasted till 1918, while the Second World War devastated the world from 1939 to 1945. Both World Wars had lasting impacts on contemporary society, as presented in inter-war British plays. T. S. Eliot revived poetic drama in the twentieth century, however, they failed to be commercial successes. A generation of post-war playwrights emerged who were acutely aware of the socioeconomic changes in an increasingly industrialised society and sought to break away from 'well-made play' to create 'new theatres.' Post-war Britain also produced playwrights

from diverse racial backgrounds, suggesting a transition in British theatres during the late twentieth century.

5.19.9. Self-Assessment Questions

Long Questions:

1. Elaborate how Realism is related to late nineteenth-century drama. Write about the main exponents of realistic drama.

2. What sociopolitical events led to the Irish Literary Revival? Elaborate on the playwrights who contributed to the rise of the Irish National Theatre.

3. Prepare a note on W.B. Yeats' contribution to the Irish Literary Movement.

4. Discuss the major playwrights during the inter-war period.

5. Why did T.S. Eliot choose poetry as a medium for his plays? Discuss Eliot's contribution to poetic drama in the twentieth century.

6. Elaborate on the main exponent of absurd drama writing in English.

7. Elaborate on the major British playwrights of the post-war phase.

Mid-length Questions:

1. Write a short note on the sociopolitical conditions in the post-Victorian period.

2. Write a short note on Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

3. Write a short note on John Galsworthy.

4. Assess the reasons behind T.S. Eliot's plays being commercially unsuccessful.

5. Why are the post-war dramas called 'new theatre'?

6. What is a theatre of the absurd?

7. Write a short note on John Osborne.

8. Write a short note on Harold Pinter.

9. Write a short note on the women playwrights of post-war Britain.

10. How did the multicultural British playwrights cause a transition in British theatres in the late twentieth century?

Short Questions:

1. What is kitchen sink drama?

2. Why did Ireland want Home Rule?

3. Why are Harold Pinter's plays called 'Plays of Menace'?

4. Mention any two plays by T.S. Eliot and write short notes on them.

5. What are 'Peasant Plays'?

6. What are 'Pleasant' and 'Unpleasant' Plays?

7. What are 'Plays of Ideas'?

8. Write short notes on:
   Arms and the Man, Loyalties, The Family Reunion, Murder in The Cathedral, Juno and the Paycock, Riders to the Sea, Playboy of the Western World, Look Back in Anger, The Birthday Party, The Homecoming, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Lear.

5.19.10. Suggested Readings

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus.* Penguin Books, 2013.

Carter, Ronald, and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English.* Routledge, 1997.

Clark, Brenna Katz. *The Emergence of the Irish Peasant Play at Abbey Theatre.* UMI Research Press, 1982.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd.* Anchor Books, 1960.

Jones, David E. *The Plays of T.S. Eliot.* Routledge and Kegan Paul Broadway House, 1960.

Kermode, Frank, ed. *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot.* Faber and Faber, 1975.

Kershaw, Baz, ed. *The Cambridge History of British Theatre.* Cambridge UP, 2008.

Krasner, David. *The History of Modern Drama*, vol. 1, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

---. *The History of Modern Drama*, vol. 2, Wiley-Blackwell, 2016.

Peacock, Ronald. *The Art of Drama.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957.

Rabey, David Ian. *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century*. Macmillan, 1986.

Richards, Shaun, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*. Cambridge UP, 2004.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford UP, 2005.

Shepherd, Simon. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre*. Cambridge UP, 2009.

Unit – 20 ❑ Expansion of English Language and Literature across the Globe

5.20.1. Objectives

In this chapter you will have discussion on:

- phases of expansion of the English language and literature
- expansion of English within the 'inner circle' with reference to American English
- expansion of English in the 'outer circle' with reference to Indian English
- redefinition of English literature and the expansion of the literary canon
- how with the spread of English across the world postcolonial literatures written in English flourished in erstwhile colonies in all the continents.

5.20.2. Introduction

In the last four hundred years, as we know, the English language expanded well beyond England and is now spoken by estimated two billion people. The importance of the language in every day linguistic transaction is evident: from typing messages in mobile, to reading books or official notices, or dailies or advertisements in billboards, English is a part of our official and personal linguistic experience. Not only in a multi-lingual country like India, but also across the world the language has become the chief communicating means in conducting business or research, exchanging ideas, or engaging in creative ventures. This expansion has happened over a period of time, due to specific political reasons, namely, the colonial expansion of England over the neighbouring isles and across the Atlantic, the rise of the United States after the World War I, and the post-colonial experience of the Asian and African countries under the neo-liberal economy. The language is so integrated into the new environment that it ceases to remain a foreign language and new literatures are being written in it. Like the language, English literature too is no longer restricted to the corpus of literary works written in England by English writers. English literature is being written in various linguistic environments across the world.

There are scholars and linguists who believe that the expansion of English has, in many cases, destroyed the chances of survival of the local language. This is quite true for the experience of the colonised people. For instance, the indigenous languages of the Australian tribes or American Indians are lost due to the colonial settlements. Contrary to this idea of 'linguistic imperialism' is the concept of linguistic appropriation where the so-called model of pure English is countered with the idea of world Englishes or global English. Appropriation is based on three concepts: first, it accepts the agency of the speaker, and suggests that an informed learner would be able to make decisions on his or her own. Secondly, it shows that the problem is not with the language per se, but with the association of the language with certain socio-economic factors, like the unequal distribution of wealth. Mario Saraceni has noted in his book *World Englishes* that English language proficiency can be related to better career prospect and better financial viability (139-42). It also suggests that English may not be accepted as it is, but can be adapted and developed according to the new cultural environment and its needs. This provides a scope for literary experimentations as well.

We have already seen how the language has multicultural roots of Celtic, Germanic, Norman, Latin traces. With the colonial expansion, the scope of linguistic and cultural interaction has further increased. Thus, we would argue that in spite of the political and social experience of the speaking community, the global English or world English underscores the role of cultural exchanges, and the ever-continuing evolution and syncretic growth of the language and literature.

5.20.3. The Circular Models and Linguistic Diaspora

In the first Unit of Module 1 you have already read about Braj B. Kachru's three-circle model. Kachru has made this three-circle model (see **Plate no 1**) on the basis of English as the Native Language (ENL), English as the Second Language (ESL) and English as the Foreign Language (EFL). Though the distinction between the three types of users can be extensively debated (for instance, how to categorise the second-generation Indian immigrant in the US who speaks English), Kachru's model works as the basis of English usage across the globe. The inner circle
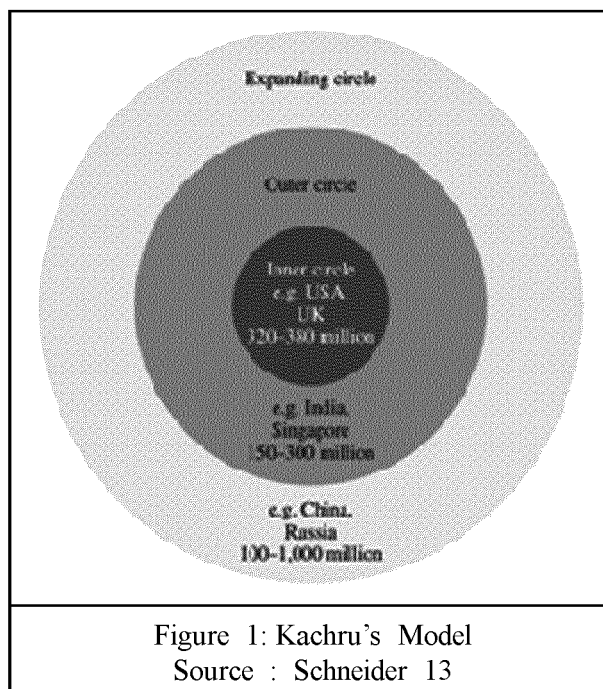

Figure 1: Kachru's Model
Source : Schneider 13

has countries like **USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand**; the outer circle includes Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, South Africa. The expanding circle accommodates China, Indonesia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, USSR, Zimbabwe. The outer circle countries acquired English due to their experience of the colonial rule by England; whereas, for the expanding circles, English is more of a link language which was spoken by the elite populace, or used in specific domains of science, technology, military, pan-regional business and creative writing.

Kachru's model is the only one that speaks of expansion of English. The oldest model was proposed by British linguist Peter Strevens in 1980 (See **Plate 2**). This shows a tree-like structure of English dispersal since the development of American English. Later circular models were proposed by Tom McArthur (See **Plate 3**) in his essay "Circle of World English" (1987) and Manfred Görlach in "Circle Model of English" (1988). They both spoke of a World English which has no one identifiable form. As the circle moves outwards, it includes the regional varieties including both the 'standard' and 'standardizing' forms. You must have noticed that standard forms are from places where English spread during the first diaspora, and the standardising forms come from the Asian and African nations.

Compared to these models, Kachru's model is much more holistic and easier to understand since he makes the circular form more historically accurate. His inner circle includes the first diaspora nations and the outer circle the second diaspora nations, while the expanding circle shows the later emergence of English as a global language. However, Kachru's model has also met with criticism as the difference between the ENL (English as a Native Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) are gradually becoming more difficult to ascertain. Also, the level of proficiency of the speaker may not be dependent on which part of the circle he
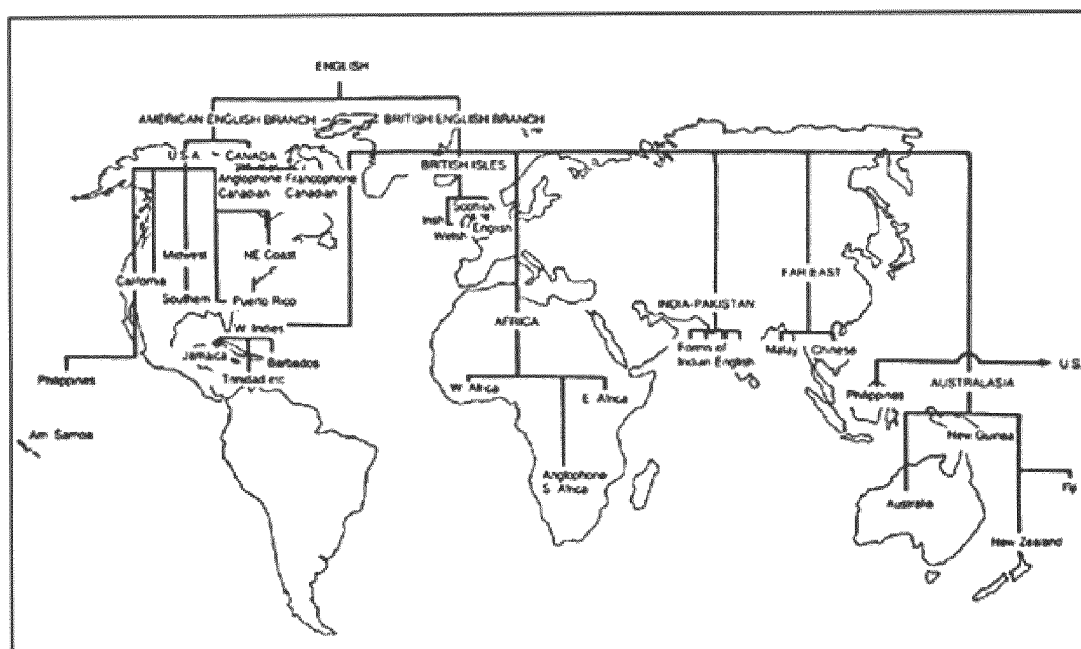

Figure 2: Streven's world map of English model
Source : Jenkins 13

or she belongs to. Similarly, the disctinction between the outer and expanding circle is hard to maintain in the present linguistic environment. You can understand that the field of World English is constantly evolving, hence it is difficult to arrive at any perfect solution at this juncture.

We shall in the following part of our discussion read the diversification of the language based on Kachru's model. Hence we shall begin with the inner circle with a specific reference to American English and move on to the outer circle with Indian English as a specific case study.

5.20.4. Expansion across the Atlantic: American English Language and Literature

Once English has gained its prestige and linguistic stability which coincided with the Renaissance and Reformation in England, the language started to move abroad.The tradesmen with better travel facilities and sometimes with royal patronage began their adventures across the sea. Spain, Portugal, England, and France tried to counter the Italian dominance around the Mediterranean by finding alternative trade options and routes. The English explorations began when Henry VII, the Tudor monarch, issued a patent to an Italian navigator, John Cabot in 1496. Stories of Columbus' expeditions fuelled the contemporary imagination, and Cabot made as far as Canada and Nova Scotia. However, modern scholars have not been able to decide where he finally landed. English explorers like Sir Willoughby, Richard Chancellor, Anthony Jenkinson expanded the map to the Northeast Passage. They were followed by Sir Francis Drake, Sir Richard Hawkins, Sir Richard Grenville who are also associated with the beginnings of colonisation process.

The English founded the settlement on Jamestown and Virginia in 1607 and Plymouth and Massachusetts in 1620. A major chunk of America came under British control, including parts of Hudson Bay in Canada, islands in the West Indies, and the Bermudas. The colonisation procedure saw the emigration of approximately sixty thousand people from Britain to the New World by the seventeenth century. The colonisers fought with the Spaniards and the natives and established their own cultural and linguistic hegemony. However, due to the strange progress of history, these colonisers sought independence from Great Britain during its Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1783.

What concerns us here is the spread of language to America. Unlike the forced learning of English in the colonies by the non-native speakers, English in the United
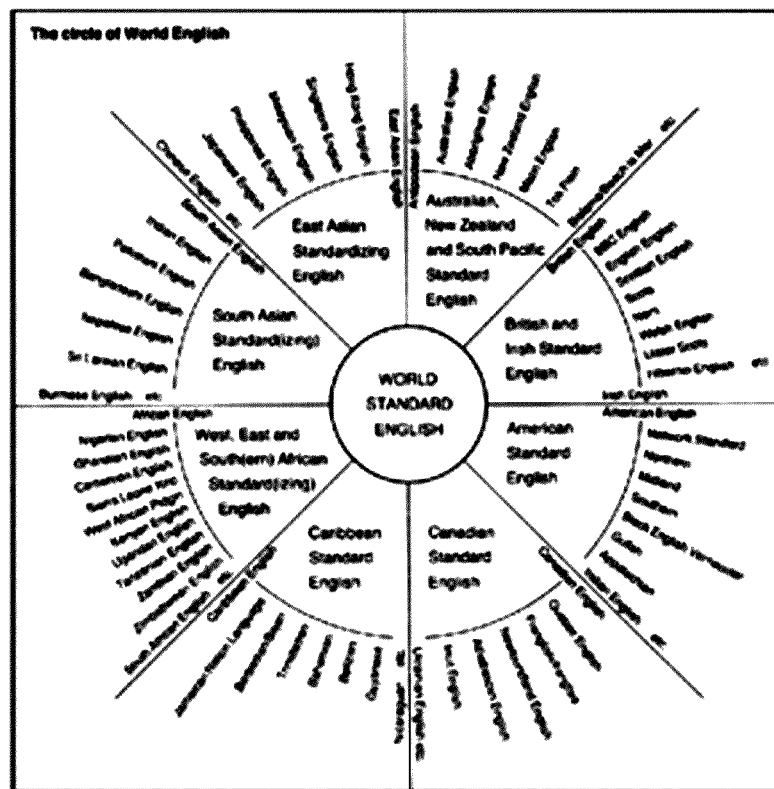

Figure 3: McArthur's Model
Source : Jenkin 18

States, like Australia and New Zealand, ousted the native tongues and the settlement of the colonisers displaced the local people. The Americans developed their English in a unique way, following a different type of standardisation. C. L Wren has pointed out that the basic difference between the American and British English is in the 'rhythm and intonation of speech' and 'vividness and force in metaphorical expressions.' The Americans developed new ways of speech partly because of the different conditions of life and partly because of different levels of interaction with other languages. The latter case can be attested by the Spanish influence on the American tongue which changed the word coriander to cilantro. The differences can be found in the pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary (lexis), spelling, punctuation, idioms, and formatting of dates and numbers. A few of them are listed below.

● The pronunciation of the two languages is different: the clipped syllable of the British accent and the nasal drawl of the American English are noticed by all the speakers.

● Certain archaisms survived in the American usage *gotten* as the past participle of *get, fall* for *autumn, aim to* instead of *aim at,* and *faucet* for *tap.* Again, the use of the suffix '-s' to *day, night, evening, weekend, Monday* and so on to form adverbs denoting repeated or customary action (eg, *I used to stay out evenings, the library is closed Saturdays*) has its roots on Old English.

● Directional suffix –word(s) is used differently in the two languages. Like British *forwards, towards, rightwards* are used for directional sense while in other cases the 's' is not retained as *in an upward motion.* On the other hand, American English uses the words without the 's' ending even in directional sense.

● In the British English the agentive –er suffix is commonly attached to *football, volleyball,* while in American English one uses *football player.*

● In formation of compounds, the American English favours the infinitive form of the verb, while British favours the gerund. Example can be sought in *jump rope/skipping rope, race car/racing car, rowboat/rowing boat, sailboat/sailing boat* where the American form precedes the British one.

● American English also has a tendency to drop the inflexional suffixes, for instance, *cookbook* instead of *cookery book, skim milk* against *skimmed milk, barber shop* against *barber's shop* and so on.

● In spite of the shared stock, some words developed new shades of meaning in the American usage. For example, *politician* has a disparaging sense; *solicitor* means a canvasser or visiting agent or beggar, and *clerk* means a shop assistant.

● In some cases, the American English has influenced the British tongue, particularly in the last quarter of the twentieth century. A sizeable body of slang has entered the latter language through the Hollywood films and cultural interactions. Some of these are *dumb* for 'stupid', *frame-up* for 'trumped up charge', *blue* for 'depressed', *pass out* for 'die or faint', *O.K.* for 'all right', and so on.

● Some words have also gained new meanings which are now used by the British, for instance *cut* as reduction, sense as a verb, *to fix* in a variety of senses as to tidy up, or intending or planning on something, and so on. Certain new metaphors have also entered like *to get down to brass tracks*, or expressions like *party machine*. In some cases, the words can mean totally different things, and what can describe it better than *football* versus *soccer*?

● In many cases the same idioms are expressed differently in the two languages due to their lexical differences. A few examples are as follows:

British English	American English
See the wood for the trees	See the forest for the trees
Skeleton in the cupboard	Skeleton in the closet
Blow one's trumpet	Toot one's horn
A new lease of life	A new lease on life
Take it with a pinch of salt	Take it with a grain of salt
A home from home	A home away from home
A drop in the ocean	A spit in the ocean

● The different spellings of American and British English have already been discussed. We can only add that Webster's dictionary popularised the American spellings and the growing importance of the American publishers in the globe contributes to this popularity.

Overall, we can say that the American influence brought in a fresh lease of vividness and immediacy to the British tongue, changed its morphology and syntax though for both the speakers comprehending each other is not a problem.

English literature in America was initiated by the early immigrants, many of whom were explorers, soldiers and colonial officers and pilgrim fathers. Notable among them are John Smith (*A True Relation of...Virginia...*,1608 and *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*,1624), Daniel Denton (*Brief Description of New York,* 1670) and William Penn (*Brief Account of the Province of Pennsylvania,* 1682), and Thomas Ashe (*Carolina,* 1682), John Winthrop (*Journal Written during 1630–49*), William Bradford (*History of Plymouth Plantation, through* 1646) and the corpus of works (biographies, journals, narratives of sea voyages and the dangers they posed and of course religious writings).These authors in the seventeenth century were concerned mainly with the new American space,

the promises it holds for the colonists, and the challenges of building up new societies of British immigrants there. Initially, the early literary authors in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America looked up to the British authors for their models. Later, American literature began to develop as a unique literary variety written in American English against the background of the vast landscape, big rivers, vast deserts and unique flora and fauna, and imbibing the new frontier spirit and that of the American Dream. Multicultural literature gradually flourished in the United States of America which is widely known as a nation of immigrants. One can cite examples, among others, of Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (1851), Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Robert Frost's volume of poetry *North of Boston* (1914), F. Scott Fitzerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Maxine Hong Kingston's fictional autobiography *The Woman Warrier* (1976) and Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eyes* (1970) and Jhumpa Lahiri's short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). We will not, however, discuss American authors in details here as you have a full course on it.

5.20.5. British Colonialism: Further Expansion of English across the Globe

In the earlier section, we have discussed the migration of English across the Atlantic, in this section we will discuss how it spread across the British colonies. This phase witnessed not only a wide-spread dissemination of the language but also radical nature of the changes brought about by its contact with local languages and cultures.

5.20.5.1. Colonial Expansion and Hegemony of the English Language

Expansion of English through colonisation started with the establishment of the East India Company in 1600. You already know that the company, though established for the purpose of business, was instrumental in the making of the greatest colonial empire in the nineteenth century. When queen Victoria ascended the throne, the British had the largest empire enjoying territories in Asia, Africa, America and Australia. The effects of colonisation have been tremendous on these colonies. There is an entirely new branch of literature, namely the postcolonial, that deals with the effects of interactions between the English and the natives, both

during colonisation and after the independence of the colonies when the long effect of colonisation continues. Edward Said observes:

> Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination.... Out of the imperial experiences, notions about culture were clarified, reinforced, criticized or rejected. (9)

The quotation above should explain why language, a major cultural artefact, is so important in the experience of colonisation. Depending upon the maturity and strength of the native language, the English tongue either fully or partially substituted it. During the process a sizeable portion of the populace, who have learnt the language of the masters received socio-political privileges, and in fact in almost every colony after the independence this upper or middle tiered, English-educated class retained the political power at least for the initial period. Consequently, English becomes the language of power and social respectability, very much like the sixteenth and seventeenth century when correct English was one of the indices of class. Due to this colonisation procedure, English became a language that has maximum number of non-native speakers. And very much like the older days, when Scots, Gaelic, Welsh and Irish gave space to English, the native tongues in the colonised countries also gave up space for it to prosper.

Thus, for English, expansion due to colonisation is categorised by Braj B. Kachru as the third phase of dispersion. In Module 1, we have already noted that in the first phase it had spread to Wales (1535) and Scotland (1603) due to the political unification of the British Isles; in the second phase of dispersion it had spread to North America, Australia, New Zealand and Canada due to the mass-migration of the native speakers into these parts of the world. Both these two phases did not increase the number of native speakers significantly. But the third phase of dispersion or the 'second diaspora' led to the spread of English into Asia, Africa, Latin America and Philippines, and this altered the nature of both the languages, (i.e., English and the native language) in the contact zone, resulting into complex multilingual situation.

In his essay "Power and Politics of English," Braj B. Kachru points out the various methods through which the linguistic power can exercise: namely, by

establishing a linguistic hierarchy in a multilingual society, the functional allocation of the language or the dialect (who is speaking it), the attitude towards the users, and the domain control by the language where three types of situation can evolve: (1) the language can dislocate the native language (e.g., Singapore); (2) the language can come into conflict with the other native languages (e.g., India); and (3) both the languages exist simultaneously (e.g. Switzerland). Kachru points out the range and depth of the penetration of English depending on the position of the country in these three contexts. He argues that English has been able to achieve such total control because of the various strategies that were used by the colonial powers. He lists five strategies: (1) the camel-in-the-tent strategy, that was used in Africa and South Asia where English was first put in the position of hierarchy and then it expanded its range; (2) the linguistic elitism, that was practised in India; (3) the close-the-rank strategy that was used to establish a shared code among the speakers; (4) the information and control strategy where English controls all the major sources of linguistic, scientific and technical information; and (5) the marketability strategy where English is the language of trade and commerce and advertising.

5.20.5.2. Decolonisation of English

The tremendous expansion, however, changes the nature of the English language. There is no reason to think that the transmission of power is unidimensional, that it always flows from the colonisers to the colonised – the non-native speakers also influenced the masters' language. Just remember that English has one billion users, most of whom are non-natives. Many of them are bilingual. Edgar Schneider in his book *Postcolonial English* has observes:

> English has managed to stay, not only in formal and official functions; it has indigenized and grown local roots. It has begun to thrive and produce innovative, regionally distinctive forms and uses of its own, in contact with indigenous languages and cultures and in the mouths of both native populations and the descendants of former immigrants, making ever deeper inroads into local communities.... From Barbados to Australia, from Kenya to Hong Kong a traveler will today get along with English, but he or she will also realize that the Englishes encountered are quite different from each other—pronounced with

varying accents, employing local words opaque to an outsider, and even, on closer inspection, constructing sentences with certain words in slightly different ways. (2)

The cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contexts forced English to interact with the group of other languages belonging to different language families like Niger-Congo, Dravidian, South-Asian, Atlantic and so on. English becomes one of the many languages spoken in such zones. English thus alters in every aspect—phonetically, lexically, grammatically, and morphologically.

The decolonisation of English and its localisation have given rise to the concept of many Englishes, and several studies on this matter can be found: for example, John Pride calls it 'New Englishes' (1982), Braj Kachru terms it 'World Englishes.' Kachru also founded an organization called *International Association of World Englishes* in 1982.

Kachru in his essay, "The Second Diaspora of English" has referred to two distinct features of this third phase of dissemination. He uses the terms 'nativization' and 'acculturation' to describe the process:

> Nativization is the linguistic readjustment a language undergoes when it is used by members of another speech community in distimctive sociocultural contexts and language contact situations. A very common linguistic phenomenon in most of the world, nativization involves the approximation of a language to the linguistic and discoursal characteristics of the native (or dominant) language of the area into which it has been transplanted. On the other hand, acculturation focuses on the people learning the transplanted language; it refers to the reflection of their sociocultural identities in a nativized language. (235)

These two processes make the foreign language a part of the multilingual environment. Thus, one can have Indianisation, Africanisation, Singaporeanisation of English. Many of these varieties are institutionalised. A good example of this can be the language setting in your MS Word in computer, where you can find several types of English, which you can set as your preferred language-setting. Thus 'World Englishes' is a re-structuring of the language to include distinct traditions and canons unrelated to the traditional register.

From this perspective, the **postcolonial English** expands the canon of the

English language to include all the varieties of the language spoken around the world and appropriates the language to the cultural reality of the once-colonialised nation. Similar to Kachru's thesis, Schneider in his study has referred to five distinct phases through which the dynamic model of the postcolonial English develops, namely 'foundation' (the original English language), 'exonormative stabilization' (the process of colonisation), 'nativization' (cultural and linguistic transformation of the language), 'endonormative stabilization' (characteristic of the postcolonial phase and how the native speaker relates to this experience of colonisation), and 'differentiation' (stable young nation using the language in its own way). Each of these phases is characterised by specific ecological and linguistic characteristics, different socio-historical realities, sociolinguistic determinants, the identity constructions of the parties involved in a contact zone and the resultant sociolinguistic conditions and effects of these factors (Schneider 21-57).

The linguistic hegemony can also be countered through another method, that is, through the creation of an **International English** (IE) or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). It is a kind of English that minimises the standardisation/regulations imparted by the colonial imperialism of Victorian England or cultural imperialism of the United States after the World War I. It uses the language as a global means of communication in numerous dialects, and moves towards achieving an international standard of the language. Though the international standardisation process is a contested idea, most of the nations opt for a more accessible English language. Certain features of IE are listed below:

- It shows that the English language is a developing language which is in active communication with other languages of the world.

- The language is no longer owned by the native speakers but is a channel of communication between international communities.

- Only those words are to be used that are used and understood throughout the English-speaking countries as opposed to localisms like American English, Canadian English or Indian English.

Jean Paul Nerrière coins the term **Globish** in his two French books, to refer to a highly simplified form of English, without grammar or structure, but perfectly understandable to the non-speakers. A utilitarian vocabulary of 15000 words designed for the non-native speakers, widely accepted by European Union is often referred to by Europeans who use English in their everyday interactions. It is not a dialect but a means of international communication.

- A practical approach to the language must be underscored.

- The IE is mostly used among the academic and scientific community where a formal language is used and the creative aspect of the language is kept to the minimum.

However, the possibility of a successful development of IE is debated since the hegemony of correct English still predominates even in countries like India. On the other hand, many non-native speakers of English learn to speak a more localised and non-standard dialect of English though their knowledge or written English is closer to the standard form. This is known as diglossia. In a country like ours, knowledge of English is still associated with a social status and increased social practicality. And in many cases acquisition of knowledge is still a prerogative of the upper and middle classes.

5.20.5.3. Exploring Indian English

Raja Rao in his "Caste of English" wrote, "as long as we are Indians—that is not nationalists, but truly Indians of the Indian psyche—we shall have the English language with us and amongst us, and not as guest or friend, but as one of our own, of our caste, our creed, our sect and of our tradition" (qtd. in Kachru, *The Indianization of English* 2). Indian English has become a distinctively Indian language, and not a foreign language.

Indian English is a distinctive variety. From linguistic perspective of a monolinguist, this event is known as 'interference' where the language is so re-constructed as to approximate the linguistic behaviour of the non-native speaker in the contact zone. From a multilingual perspective, all the languages interact among themselves and influence each other. Thus, Indianisation of English and anglicization of Hindi, Tamil or Bengali are parallel processes. It is comparable to the influence of Persian, which also underwent a process of acculturation. However, English is considered to be the second language or L2 which is acquired at different intensities and proficiency-levels after the acquisition of the mother tongue or the first language or L1. An interaction between the L2 and L1 languages is a hallmark of the multilingual contact zone.

The history of the development of English in the Indian subcontinent can be divided into three phases. In the first phase it was brought by the missionaries

who came along with the East India Company for religious purposes. The second phase witnessed a local demand when the indigenous intellectuals asked for the language to be introduced for the purpose of education. Raja Rammohan Roy's letter to Lord Amherst written on 11 December 1823 is a case in point. The third phase is the spread of the language through government policy. In the Indian context, the publication of Macaulay's Minute on 2 February 1835, which raised great controversy, was a significant development. The colonial ideology behind the institutional introduction of the English language can be traced to Macaulay's assertion that acquisition of the language by the Indians would create "a class who may be interpreters between us [the British] and the billions whom we govern— a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (qtd. in Kachru, *The Indianization of English* 22).

In his 1965 essay titled "Indianness of Indian English," Kachru categorises the proficiency level of the L2 speaker as the 'cline of bi-lingualism.' This comprises three measuring points: zero point (speaker has simple functional knowledge of the language like Babu English, also called 'Cheechee English' in a derogatory sense, Bearer English, Butler English, Kitchen English), central point (speaker shows expertise in the language in one register like law court, administration, scientific writing, and so on, but is compromised in other registers) and ambilingual point (extreme proficiency where the speaker can speak both the languages fluently). Kachru has shown that ambilingual is a rare phenomenon and may not be the goal of a bilingual. Most speakers aim at achieving a standard point, where they can use the language for various purposes (different registers), be intelligible to each other and be capable of using the language for social control.

Indianisation of English has changed the lexis, morphology, syntax, and phonology of the language. The process is long and complicated. We shall only look at a few of them as examples.

- The whole idea of Indian English owes much to the writers of Indian English literature. Just as you read about Chaucer, Shakespeare or the translators of the Bible in the context of standardisation of British English, similarly you must read the novels of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand who first used the 'foreign' language to narrate stories soaked in Indian ethos. Thus, Indian writers practised a transfer of context where they used Indian contexts and plot structure and used the language for a different cultural register.

● Transfer of L1 meaning to L2 items to suit the requirement of words that otherwise does not describe the Indian ethos. For example, *flower-bed* in Indian context is *nuptial-bed* (literal translation of the Bengali *phul-sojja*) and not a gardening metaphor.

● Transfer of the L1 form to suit the requirement of the L2 context for specific speech functions like, abuses, curses, greetings, blessings, flattery and so on. For example: *may thy womb be dead, you goose-faced minion, bow my forehead, fall at your feet, let the sindur-mark ever trace the parting of your hair, thy shall write from an inkwell of gold,* and so on.

● Sometimes translations are done to establish the linguistic equivalence or partial equivalence, like *namak haram* is translated to *spoiler of salt, dwija* to *twice-born, anna data* to *salt-giver* and so on.

> Of all the modern writers, the name of Salman Rushdie must be mentioned for his experiments with language. In his well-known novel *Midnight's Children*, he has used many such innovations which have increased the scope of Indianism in English. He has used Hindi or Urdu words like 'haihai' (exclamatory expression), 'sab kuch' (all things), 'bas' (enough is enough), 'chi-chi' (an expression of contempt), 'yaar' (friend), 'gora' (white-skinned one), 'pyar kiya to darna kya' (why to fear in love); hybrids like 'feroniaelephanticus', 'sunt lacrimae rerum, compounds like 'downdowndown', 'suchandsuch', 'noseholes', 'birthanddeath', and so on. His style has been called the 'chutnification of English.'

● In many cases of lexical transfer, an elaborate adaption is preferred since the L2 context is extremely different. For instance, *caste mark, caste dinner, dung waste, eating leaf, turmeric ceremony, hair cutting ceremony, sacred paste* and so on are called rank bound shifts as they are entirely foreign to the L1 context.

● Due to the prolonged period of borrowing, many words and contexts are formed that will have perfect meaning to the Indian speakers but would convey no sense to the native English speaker. Such examples are also called Indian English collocations. These collocations can be grammatically deviant, like *America-returned, England-returned*; they may involve loan-shifts or word bound translation like *three-eyed, salt-giver*; it can be contextually deviant but grammatically non-deviant, like *cowdung cakes, bangled-widow, forehead marking* and so on.

● Use of idioms which can only be meaningful to the L2 speaker, for instance, *as honest as an elephant, as good as kitchen ashes, helpless as a calf, lean as an areca-nut tree*. Kachru takes all these examples from Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* ("Indian English" 21).

● Like the British hybrids that you have read in the earlier units, the Indian English also has hybrids formed by two different language sources, where one is English. The hybrids can be of two types, open hybrids like *attar-bottle, congress-pandal, Kumkum-mark*, or closed hybrids like *policewala, goondaism*, and so on.

● Braj B. Kachru also speaks of code mixing and code switching in the speaking habit of the Indian English speakers, where they mix words from both languages or speak different parts of the sentence in different languages. For example, *marriage karna, anger karna, daktari* (as an adjective from *doctor*) are examples of code mixing. Code switching happens in sentences like *tum nehijanti, he is chairman* (Kachru, *The Indianization of English* 195). Modern-day advertisements, songs in Bollywood movies are great examples of code mixing: for instance, *yeh dil mange more*.

● We have so far spoken about the transfer of meaning or formation of collocation. A whole list of words entered the British lexicon that are directly taken from Indian context and are now used even by the native speakers. *Hobson-Jobson* is an important compilation of such list. Oxford dictionary systematically adds words from other languages and many Indian words have found place in it.

The Indian English grammar is also deviant from the native English. Here we must make a distinction between a 'deviance' and a 'mistake.' A mistake is an error which rejects the code of the native English language, and may not be justified even in the L2 cultural context. Deviation, on the other hand, can be un-English, but is systemic in the variety and fully explained in the new linguistic and cultural register. For example, the be+ing+verb construction. The native speaker will rather 'see' or 'hear' but for the Indian English speaker 'seeing' or 'hearing' is closer to the mother tongue usages like *mein dekh raha hu, mein sun raha hu*, hence, *I am seeing, I am hearing* is preferred to *I see* and I *hear* (kindly take a look at the extract from Nissim Ezekiel's poem in 5.20.6. "From 'English

Literature' to 'Literatures in English'" of this unit). Another grammatical deviation is the use of 'reduplication' like *small, small things, hot hot coffee, long, long hair*. Formation of the interrogative sentences without changing the position of the subject and auxiliary verb is the most common form of deviation. Sentences like *What you would like to eat?* instead of *What would you like to eat?* and *You are finished?* instead of *Are you finished?* are extremely common even among the elite speakers. Sometimes, *isn't it* or *no* (See the extract from Ezekiel's poem discussed in) is added as tag questions, for example, *she borrowed my book, no? He has left, isn't it?* and so on.

The Indian English sounds different. Apart from the accent and intonation which are quite clear to the native speaker of English, there are certain systemic changes in the sound pattern. For example, /f/ being pronounced as /ph/ is normal since the fricative is absent in the Indian languages. Several other consonant pronunciations vary like that of the rhotic 'r', distinction between /v/ and /w/ which is not done in the Indian variety, or the pronunciation of /ð/ and /θ/ require much practice. Again, *sk, st, sp* do not occur in the initial position in Indian languages, thus *school* is pronounced as /iskûl/, *stool* as /istûl/, *speech* as /ispic/. These are common occurrence of deviation among the North Indians. Many Dravidian languages use aspiration whereas in English aspiration is used in specific contexts. Thus, for such Indian speakers, the pronunciations change.

Once Indian English, both the language and literature, were not considered to be a part of the canon. The university syllabi would reject such writers. Such English would be considered wrong or mistaken. However, things change; though the grammatical purity is never compromised, certain linguistic deviations are now considered acceptable, at least in the spoken language. The Indian English writings have also formed their own canonical space and found acceptability in the global market. This is an expanding field. A language like English would continue to re-form and re-structure itself, for change is the only certainty in human history.

5.20.6. From 'English Literature' to 'Literatures in English'

In Unit I of Module I, we made two important points: **first,** our discussion traced the trajectory of the spread of the English language – it was pointed out that it spread first from England to its neighbouring parts, and then gradually

migrated to other parts of the world, to the countries belonging to 'inner circles,' 'outer circles' and 'expanding circles.' In Units 2, 3 and 5 of Module I and the preceding sections of this unit elaborated on this trajectory of the expansion of the language. **Secondly,** it was asserted that right from the beginning the English language represented a site of assimilation of different cultures and multicultural influences are manifested not only in contemporary times but also from the time of its very genesis.

English literature represented a similar trajectory of 'migration' and assimilation and its multicultural manifestations are getting more and more prominent in recent time. The term 'English literature,' in the sense we used to understand it in our academic courses, is in fact more a 'British literature' than the literature of England, including, as it does, literatures from Ireland, Scotland and Welsh. We also mentioned in Unit 1 that England and Englishness figured prominently in the scheme of things. In fact, C. L. Innes in *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* speaks of the growing tendency of the writers and critics from the post-colonial countries to align themselves with the Irish literature as a site of colonial aggression and postcolonial resistance. Innes argues that Ireland is "England's oldest colony and the testing ground for many of her later colonial policies" (viii) and points out that "Ireland's literary revival is acknowledged by many postcolonial writers in other countries as a model for their own construction of a national literature" (viii).

We have mentioned in our discussion of twentieth-century literature that in the second half of this century British literature became more and more multicultural as immigrant writers from former colonies settled in Britain and their creative works became more and more visible. This is reflected in the academic circles where syllabus of English literature at the higher studies includes literary texts written by non-British writers. Even in the site of its birth, non-white writers make their way into the syllabus. Alka Sehgal Cuthbert, for instance, observes, "It is striking that the GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education] set texts lists for the exam boards offer a very limited range of modern prose. Most lists leap from *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Lord of the Flies* (1954) to novels mostly from the 2000s. The latter group range from Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2011) to the debut novel *Anita and Me* (1996) by comedian/actress Meera Syal" (61-2). The disapproving tone in Cuthbert seems to be due to the emphasis on

mostly 'modern' texts; for us, however, what is also striking is the fact that even the boards at the secondary level of education prescribes texts which includes non-white, ethnic writers like Ishiguro and Syal.

Thus we can say that "one major and unintended consequence of British colonialism has been an enormous flowering of literature in English by postcolonial authors, presenting the story of colonialism and its consequences from their perspective, and reclaiming their land and experience through fiction, drama and poetry, a representation and reclamation requiring a reinvention of the English language and English literary traditions" (Innes viii).

As soon as the people in the colonies picked up the language and felt confident about their use of it, they began to produce literature. We know of many postcolonial authors who have won fame for their works. The African continent has produced litterateurs of the stature of Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958; *No Longer at Ease*, 1960, *Arrow of God*, 1964), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (*The River Between*, 1965; *A Grain of Wheat*, 1967); *Petals of Blood*, 1977), Wole Soyinka (*The Swamp Dwellers*, 1958; *A Dance of the Forests*, 1960), Nadine Gordimer (*The Conservationist*, 1974, *Burger's Daughter*, 1979), J.M. Coetzee (*Waiting for the Barbarians*, 1980; *Foe*, 1986) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (*Purple Hibiscus*, 2003; *Americanah*, 2013). The Caribbean experience is embodied in the works of authors such as V.S. Naipul (*A House for Mr Biswas*, 1961; *A Bend in the River*, 1979; *The Enigma of Arrival*, 1987; Jamaica Kincaid (*At the Bottom of the River*,1983; *Lucy*, 1990); Kamau Brathwaite (*Rights of Passage*, 1967; *The Arrivants*, 1973), Wilson Harris (*The Mask of the Beggar*, 2003 and *The Ghost of Memory*, 2006), George Lamming (*Castle of My Skin*, 1953; *The Emigrants*, 1954) and Derek Walcott (*The Castaway*, 1965; *The Gulf*, 1969; *Dream on Monkey Mountain* produced in 1967). In the world of international awards and prizes, postcolonial writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Abdulrazak Gurnah and Salman Rushdie have made their presence felt. Innes rightly says,

> Writers as diverse as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy from India, Derek Walcott from the Caribbean, Seamus Heaney from Ireland, Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje from Canada, Peter Carey and Patrick White from Australia, and J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer from South Africa

have been prominent when major literary awards such as the Booker Prize or the Nobel Prize have been announced, and their works now appear on numerous school and university syllabuses. (1)

The postcolonial creative writers from around the world also experimented with the English language, its words, sentences, and style, infusing their works with local cultural nuances, idioms, speech accents, and inflections. In the "Foreword" to his well-known novel *Kanthapura* Raja Rao famously observed,

> The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own; the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up, like Sanskrit or Persian was before, but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it. (5)

Similarly, Chinua Achebe also observed: "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings." (https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/new-english-chinua-achebes-things-fall-apart)

You will find two interesting examples of such experimentations below. In the first example (a poem titled "The Goodbye Party for Miss Puspa," https://allpoetry.com/poem/14330576-Goodbye-Party-For-Miss-Pushpa-T.S.-by-Nissim-Ezekiel), Nissim Ezekiel describes a farewell party in which the employees gather in a meeting to bid farewell to one Miss Puspa in an English that attempts to catch the accents, rhythms and style of a class of Indian speakers. For example, the tendency to use continuous tense indiscriminately is reflected in the following lines from

Pushpa Miss is never saying no.
Whatever I or anybody is asking
she is always saying yes,
and today she is going
to improve her prospect
and we are wishing her bon voyage.
Now I ask other speakers to speak
and afterwards Miss Pushpa
will do summing up.

Similarly, Louise Bennett, a Caribbean poet, represents the immigrants' celebration of mass access to civic facilities enjoyed by them (see Bennett's poem "Colonization in Reverse," https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/colonization-in-reverse) . This supposedly amounts to a 'reverse colonisation' and the irony inherent in the situation is expressed in an English which is creolised and often difficult to understand:

Wat a joyful news, Miss Mattie,
I feel like me heart gwine burs
Jamaica people colonizin
Englan in reverse.

By de hundred, by de tousan
from country and from town,
by de ship-load, by de plane-load
Jamaica is Englanboun.

Thus we find from our discussion above that postcolonial literature is unique not only because of its deviant content and style but because of its attitude of contestation and challenges posed to the British English. The 'writing back' is very much evident in the above examples.

1.4.7. Summing Up

● English language spread across the globe in two phases: in the first diaspora it spread to the countries belonging to the Inner circle, where the English

established settlements; in the second diaspora it spread due to colonisation to countries in Africa and India.

● There are several models of expansion of English language that suggest the rise of a world language. The concept of World English counters the hegemonic notion of linguistic expansion and proposes a more inclusive outlook of language acquisition.

● The American English showed a greater tendency for spelling changes to make the language more phonetic.

● English in America acquired certain new features which changed as the speakers settled down in a new geographical location and was exposed to other cultures.

● Due to colonisation English spread to different parts of the world and made some considerable changes in its morphology, phonetics, and vocabulary. An example of this is Indian English which shows interesting features of translation and transformation.

5.20.8. Self-Assessment Questions

Broad Questions:

1. Oscar Wilde said, "We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language.' Do you agree with this view? Give reasons for your answer.

2. How did colonisation impact on the English language?

3. Would you consider Indian English to be a separate category of the language? Give reasons for your answer.

Mid-length Questions:

1. Write a short note on the spelling reform in America.

2. What is International English? How successful is it as a means of global communication?

3. Write a brief note on Braj B. Kachru's three circle model of English acquisition.

4. Write a short note on American English.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. What is 'Globish'?

2. Who proposed the concept of 'World Englishes'?

3. What is code mixing?

5.20.9. Suggested Reading

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